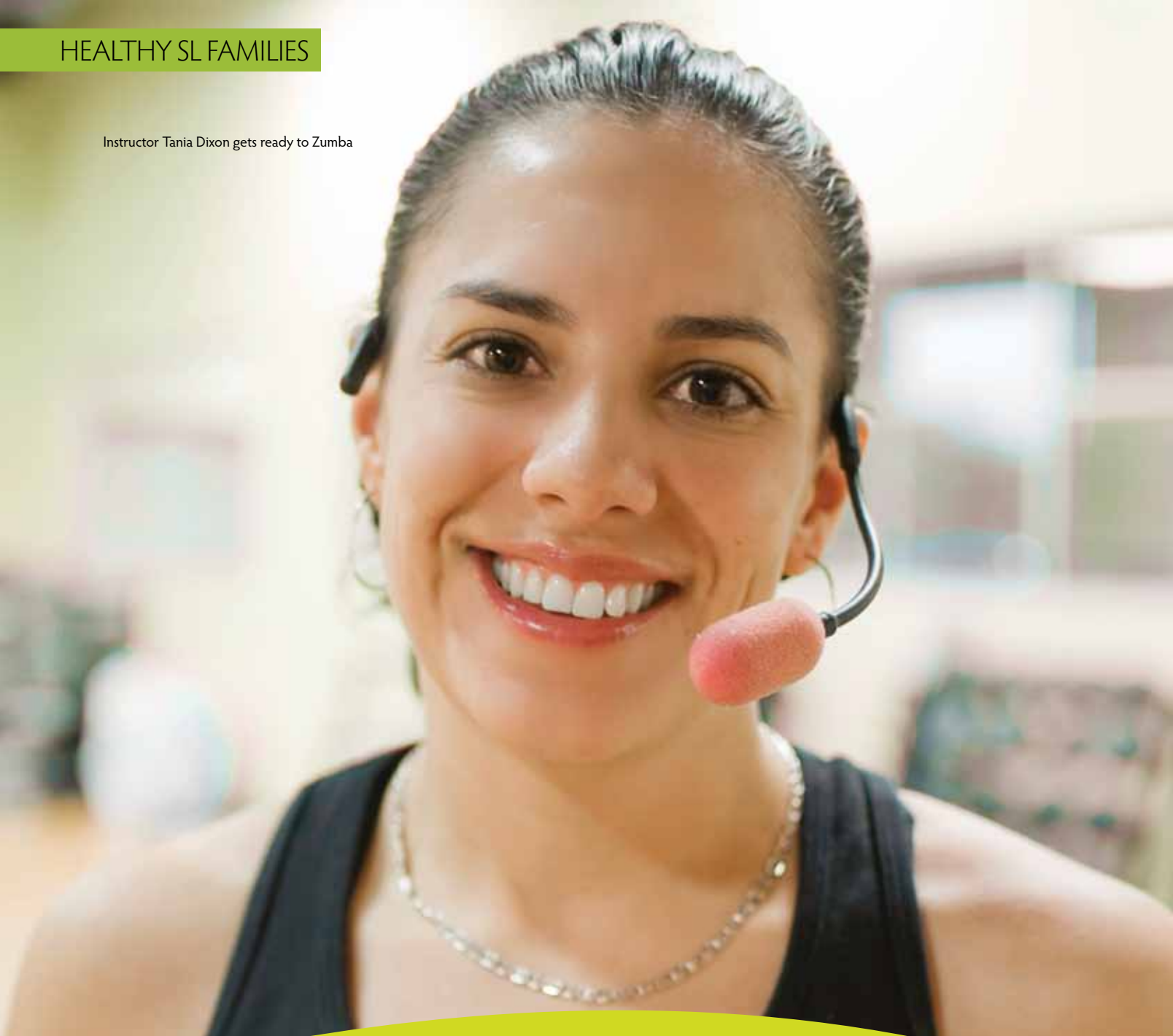


Instructor Tania Dixon gets ready to Zumba



ZUMBA TIME!

**Sugar Land Shapes up with Rhythmic
Aerobics set to Salsa Beats**

Written by Jen Petty Select Photos by Marisa Hugonnett

Sugar Land residents seeking a fun, effective workout have discovered Zumba, a program that fuses Latin dance moves with aerobics basics. More than just a fad, Zumba offers the health benefits of aerobic exercise, set to the beat of rhythms like Salsa, Merengue, Cumbia, and Reggaeton. What began as an improvised workout, when celebrity fitness trainer “Beto” Perez forgot music for an aerobics class, has spread worldwide to 75 countries and 5 million participants, touts the program’s official website, zumba.com.

Power-Packed Fun

Instructor Tania Dixon has been teaching Zumba classes at Embody Fitness in Missouri City since the studio began offering them a few months ago. Dixon, who moved to the Sugar Land area from Los Angeles, says, “I got into Zumba because at each of the gyms I worked at in L.A. the classes were super packed.” Even though Zumba hasn’t been offered in Sugar Land for long, it is definitely picking up speed, she says.

Pamela Rand has been going to Zumba classes since they started at Embody and says the classes are some of her favorite group exercise classes. “It’s really enjoyable, but you also feel like you are getting an awesome workout,” she says.

Salsa for Stamina

A typical Zumba class starts with a warm-up and then moves quickly into dance routines that incorporate fast-paced Latin and popular music and choreographed dance steps. “It’s like Salsa dancing,” says Dixon. “The idea is that you don’t ever have to have danced before to participate, plus you don’t think about working out while you are doing it.”

After her first class, Joyce Compton says, “I enjoyed it. It was a little fast paced for me and I haven’t taken a dance class in a while, but I liked the music and the moves weren’t hard. I think it will get easier as my stamina improves.”

The Creation of Zumba

Celebrity fitness trainer, Beto Perez, stumbled upon the concept of Latin inspired fitness in his native country of Colombia in the mid 1990’s. One day, he walked into his class and realized that he had forgotten his aerobics music, and his only option was to grab whatever tapes he had in his car. Beto’s tapes were comprised of the songs that he loved, the traditional Latin salsa and merengue music with which he had been raised. But it was a challenge to improvise a whole class on the spot using non-traditional aerobics music. Beto rose to the challenge and from this last-minute improvisation was born the revolutionary fitness program of Zumba. The class soon became the most popular at his fitness facility.

In 1999, after his success in Colombia, Beto brought the class to the U.S., where he was approached by entrepreneurs Alberto Perlman and Alberto Aghion to create a global company based on the Zumba fitness philosophy. The three young entrepreneurs then set a goal to offer Zumba classes all over the world.

Adapted from zumba.com



During a one-hour class, about 420 to 800 calories can be burned

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Zumba with Tania Dixon

Zumba classes begin with a warm-up, moving quickly into dance routines



Moving to Merengue

Class participants move through about eight different dances that use dance steps set to four basic rhythms - Merengue, Salsa, Cumbia, and Reggaeton. When giving advice to beginners, Dixon says, "Don't be intimidated. The full hour is a wide variety of Latin dance styles and other popular dance. It's about doing it and having a good time."

"It's just a fun-filled, power-packed, purposeful class," says Rand. "Give it a try!" SLM

JEN PETTY is the editor of Sugar Land Magazine and had a blast when she attended her first Zumba class in preparation for writing the article.



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