

TECHNIQUE[®]



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF USA GYMNASTICS UNIVERSITY

**REST AND RECOVERY STRATEGIES
IN INJURY PREVENTION**

**POST NATIONAL
LETTER OF INTENT/
EARLY ADMISSIONS
COMMUNICATION
WITH COLLEGE COACHES**

AUSTIN NACY
2017 TRAMPOLINE & TUMBLING
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS
SILVER MEDALIST

**SMALL FACILITIES:
BIG BENEFITS**

...AND MORE!



WINTER 2018 — VOL. 38 — #1

USA

FEATURE

BY JOANNE CASTAGNA, E.D.D.



SMALL FACILITIES: BIG BENEFITS

A group of children are screaming with excitement as they're being surrounded by bubbles, high energy dance music, and colorful lights from a spinning Disco Ball. It's a Bubble Dance Party at NYC Elite, a gymnastics school in New York City.

"It's a tradition. At the end of class, students move to a small space in the gym to have a party. The kids dance around like cute hooligans. They love it," said Tina Ferriola, Founder & President, NYC Elite, a family-owned and managed company.

She came up with this creative concept because she had a small piece of space in her gym that she didn't know what to do with. It's this type of out-of-the-box thinking that has led her to have three successful gyms in the city in what would be considered unconventional or small gym space. She wanted to provide gymnastics for children living in the city, so she made it work.

Ferriola is not alone. According to the 2016 USA Gymnastics Survey of the Member Clubs, many gym owners have moved away from getting large warehouse facilities in industrial areas and are now operating their businesses in facilities closer to the communities they want to serve.

Ferriola said that in order to reach clientele, prospective gym owners may have to purchase or rent unconventional or small spaces for their facilities. With some creative thinking and organizing of the floor plan, equipment and students, they can have a rewarding and profitable business.

USE CREATIVITY IN THE FLOOR PLAN

Ferriola said that once a gym space has been acquired, a gymnastics suppli-

er should be used to lay out the floor plan and equipment needs. "They can come up with some amazing ideas to maximize your individual space and they are always happy to do this for customers for the return of a gymnastics equipment purchase," said Ferriola.

This helped her when she was doing the layout for her facilities that are average to large in size — approximately 15,000 square feet.

She has the size, but being located in the city has its challenges. "Our space is very restricted. Our facilities are housed in high story commercial and residential buildings that are filled with columns, beams, low ceilings and enclosed spaces," said Ferriola.

She continued, "This means our space is much more chopped up than the average facility." For example, in one of her locations, she has to operate on three levels to use her full square footage of space.

This has forced her to think creatively with her space. One example of this is the Bubble Dance Parties. "When we have a chopped up small space within our facility — about 200 square feet — we turn it into a Bubble Dance Party Room for our student's ages nine months to five years old," said Ferriola.

Another restriction she faces in the city, is a lack of underground space that prevents her from digging down into the ground to build out foam and resi pits for gymnastics training purposes and equipment. Some buildings don't have basements and some have subway systems running below them.

Once again, Ferriola put on her creative thinking cap. "In one facility, we created a raised platform to provide a pit. We built an entire raised platform up — like a sub

floor — and then we placed our equipment into the pit."

In another facility, she had the opposite problem — very low ceilings. High ceilings are needed for equipment, such as the uneven bars.

For this situation, Ferriola was able to dig a gigantic hole in the gym and place the uneven bars and other equipment that needed the ceiling height into the pit. Ferriola said, "We call it our Bar Pit."

Once the facility is laid out, there are ways the equipment can be organized to further maximize space.

ORGANIZE EQUIPMENT TO MAXIMIZE SPACE

When purchasing equipment, Ferriola said there are certain items that can make the best use of space and money. To see some of these items, please see the sidebar "Top 10 Equipment for Space & Money Savings."

Once a gym has its equipment, there are ways it can be stored that will maximize space.

Ferriola does something innovative. She said, "We line our walls with carpet bonded foam and stick Velcro on the back of the light equipment and mats. This allows us to stick the equipment up on the wall in a tidy manner when we are not using it."

"Everything that was taking up floor space is now on the wall. It looks nice and it is up and out of the way and it frees up square footage in your space."

With the floor plan and equipment squared away, it's time to bring in the students. Ferriola has ways of organizing students to create space for a full student body.

SCHEDULE TO ACCOMMODATE STUDENTS

Ferriola said that an unconventional or small gym space doesn't mean a small student body.

NYC Elite serves 4,500 families in New York City, has a robust student body of 1,500 students per location and provides a wide range of classes for preschool, recreational and competitive team groups.

Ferriola said that in order to accommodate these students, she created a scheduling format that allows her to have the same number of students as larger facilities.

"To do this we stagger our class times. Most gymnastics facilities run classes on the hour or half hour. We start classes at all different times. So kids are coming in and out at different times," said Ferriola.

She said she puts through a lot of classes so she has very detailed rotation sheets and the coaches must work diligently to follow them.

The class format is also organized to move the students along. "At every minute of a 50 or 55 minute class, a class or a competitive group is scheduled to be on a certain circuit or rotation," said Ferriola. "The first seven minutes students are on the floor for warm up, and then five minutes for conditioning, and then they rotate to circuit one, and then they rotate to the foam pit, and then a trampoline."

Ferriola added that an organized small space can create a controllable environment that leads to better class engagement and focus. "When preschoolers are working in a small and colorful space they tend to be much more attentive, focused and engaged in activities," said Ferriola.

She said that in the opposite situation, when children are working in a larger open floor, they tend to get distracted or overwhelmed and the class disperses.

Thinking creatively about the floor plan, equipment and students results in a profitable gym.

THINK SMALL TO MAKE A PROFIT

Ferriola said to think small to make a profit, especially if you are just starting out. "Start small and grow from that point. Do not bite off more than you can chew. Some of the most revenue generating gymnastics schools operate out of some of the smaller facilities," said Ferriola.

She said that most people think big and it ends up costing them. "People entering the business make a very common mistake. They always think that bigger is better," said Ferriola.

She said that many of them get a cheap 20,000 square foot warehouse in the middle of nowhere, instead of paying a little

more per square footage for a smaller space in a better area, much closer to families and higher end clientele.

"You need to be where the clients are and where it is convenient for parents," said Ferriola. "If this means your gym is 5,000 to 8,000 square feet less than it would have been in the middle of the woods, you are going to make more money in the long run."

She added that gym owners of smaller facilities will also benefit from additional savings from having lower costs, less property to maintain and by making the most of the space they have.

Ferriola said, "People should maximize the least amount of space to make the biggest profit. They should focus on using every square foot that they're paying for. Even if it is an odd shaped area that you don't think there is a purpose for it, there is always a purpose for it. Use all of the space you have. Don't waste it if you are paying for it!"

Ferriola is doing this. She turns small odd shaped spaces in her gyms into Bubble Dance Party Rooms. It's an example of thinking creatively to make a facility work in order to reach and please a certain clientele. If the children's screams of happiness are any indication, it's working.

To learn more about NYC Elite, please visit www.nycelite.com or email Tina Ferriola at Tina@nycelite.com.

Dr. JoAnne Castagna is Founder of 2 Bourkes PR, a writing and marketing agency. She can be reached joanne@2bourkespr.com. Her work can be viewed at www.2bourkespr.com.