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BUSINESS

Owners of gym say future of fitness has a 'retro' theme

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Matt Mauriello remembers his initial reaction when he walked into a RetroFitness gym and saw the "Retro Theater."

"First of all, that's really strange," Mauriello said.

In a large, darkened room, the gym's patrons were on stationary bikes and treadmills watching a movie on a huge screen while they exercised.

The concept was unusual, but Mauriello found no shortage of people taking advantage of it.

"It's a really popular concept," he said.

Now Mauriello has brought that concept to Timonium, where a new 13,500-square-foot RetroFitness gym will open this month.

The stationary bikes and weight machines will be new, but the style will not. Hence the name — RetroFitness.

"The play on words is you can 'retro-fit' your body," said New Jersey resident Eric Casaburi, who started the RetroFitness chain in 2005.

There's more to the retro name than trying to turn back time on customers' figures. The floor is black and white checkers, the stools at the juice bar resemble those of a 1950s-style diner and the color scheme of the whole facility is bright red and yellow.

Some of the movies shown in the Retro Theater are recent, but films from the 1980s are sprinkled into the mix, such as "When Harry Met Sally" and the like.

Music playing over gym speakers also captures the retro feel. While top-40 tunes might be the majority on the playlist, "You might hear a track from Motley Crue in 1985," Casaburi said.

Casaburi said the goal of the theme is to make the gym fun, rather than a place where people with stern faces bulk up.

"It's not a hard-core gym or anything like that," Casaburi said.

The gym has all the equipment necessary to serve a college-level sports team, but is marketed toward regular people, he said.

"The environment and atmosphere is geared toward people who want to get in shape for the first time," Casaburi said. "You're going to see regular, normal people in there, just trying to stay healthy."

RetroFitness has more than 70 gyms in 10 states in and around the mid-Atlantic region.



STAFF PHOTO BY JEN RYNDA

Matt Mauriello stands in front of what will be the juice bar at RetroFitness, in Timonium. This the second of three gyms Mauriello will be opening in the Baltimore area. The Timonium location is set to open May 25.

Each employs between 15 and 20 people, Casaburi said.

The Timonium location will be the company's second in the Baltimore area. Mauriello said business is good at the Jessup location, which opened in October 2009.

"We have about 3,000 members," he said.

Mauriello, 50, was a Wall Street stock broker for about 20 years, but after the terrorist attacks of 2001 and the "damaging blow" the attacks served to the stock trade, the New Jersey resident started looking into more entrepreneurial endeavors.

Mauriello was attracted to RetroFitness because of the company's \$19.99 per month membership.

"I believe that people overpay for mem-

berships to gyms," he said.

"We're not a hard-core gym," he said. "We really care about the attention and the success of our customers."

People who join the Timonium franchise in particular will get something special, Mauriello said.

"We're going to be the first RetroFitness gym to have a 'fitness-on-request' gym," he said.

While the Timonium location will offer personal trainers, classes, tanning, a juice bar, chiropractic services and more, the gym can't have everything.

The on-request concept allows customers in Timonium to take classes in a "virtual fitness room," where the instructor for, say, a

spinning class, appears on a large projector screen rather than being physically at the gym, Mauriello said.

"It's all virtual through this company in California," he said. "It's cutting edge — we're a step ahead of everyone else."

The Timonium location won't open until May 25 or so, but Mauriello already plans to open a third gym in the Baltimore area. He's not sure where.

"North maybe, or Bel Air, or maybe near Towson," he said.

The RetroFitness gym is at 2125 Greenspring Drive, Timonium. To learn more about RetroFitness, go to www.retrofitness.com.