

“Coach Takes Therapeutic Approach”

(By George Lenker, from The Republican (Springfield, MA), July 25, 2004,
Section: Lifestyle/Your Fitness Page, Reprinted with permission.)

For health and lifestyle coach **Stephen Black**, a front-page headline in The Republican, April 28th, could have served as an advertisement for his work:

The headline read, "WMass fat, depressed, survey says"

For Black, the article under that headline simply reinforced his decision to open **Rocky Mountain Human Performance Center**, a new lifestyle and fitness facility at 1111 Elm St., West Springfield.

The story cited a Massachusetts Department of Public Health survey that said the region's adults have the highest asthma, diabetes and depression rates in the state, along with being the second-most overweight.

Because Black sees health as a holistic scenario comprised of issues relating to both mind and body, he feels there is ample room for his type of therapeutic approach in the area and hopes to use his expertise culled over 28 years in the sports-fitness field.

While this comprehensive model of well-being is nothing new, Black feels many people still don't approach their health in this manner. But his success with fitness-related businesses in other parts of the country have now led him to settle back in Western Massachusetts and open the new center.

"While we all know you need both nutrition and exercise for health, what a lot of people miss is the psychological and emotional - and even spiritual - side of health," he said.

A New York native, Black first came to Western Massachusetts to attend Springfield College. He was invited to stay on to get a master's degree and teach anatomy while studying. This course of study sparked his interest in rehabilitation and prevention of injuries, which eventually led him to found START Inc., (now named NovaCare) a rehabilitation and treatment facility for athletes at School and Union streets in Springfield.

START grew to encompass 16 sites including free-standing facilities as well as ones on campuses of hospitals and companies.

(Continued)

Black sold his interest in START to pursue his goal of not only helping people with rehabilitation of injuries, but also preventing them through proper preparation and lifestyle choices. To this end he moved to Boulder, Colo., where he began working primarily on preventing sports-related injuries.

"It was a mecca for endurance athletes and gave me the chance to work with injuries related to those sports," Black said.

It was there that Black forged his ideal: Accentuating prevention of health problems will decrease injuries and improve the overall quality of life. This concept dovetailed into the growing idea that "well-care" was as important as sick care. Black was soon recruited to set up this type of wellness program at Stamford (Conn.) Hospital.

Along the way, Black has worked with professional sports teams in the NFL, NBA and WNBA, as well as volunteer work coordinating care for physically challenged athletes at the World Triathlon. He also is an avid competitor and has completed numerous endurance events, including the Ironman World Championship in Hawaii.

Now, Black is weaving all his expertise and experience together by opening Rocky Mountain Human Performance Center. Black hopes the center will provide people with the tools to achieve both health and other life goals to improve the overall quality of life.

While other coaches focus on physical wellness, Black's method involves a holistic view of mind and body. Black believes that willpower and mental discipline can go a long way toward achieving goals, whether they are the rehabilitation of injuries, losing weight or getting a new job.

"The body is the vehicle, the mind is the engine and emotion is the fuel," he said. "A person's dedication, diligence, discipline and resolve are often more important than their current health status or genetics."

Black believes that now is a crucial time for many people's health concerns. As the percentage of people deemed obese grows each year, the population becomes more at risk for heart disease, diabetes and other health problems. By devising overall health plans that focus on both curing ailments and preventing new ones, Black believes he can assist people in turning their lives around in some cases, and head off problems in others.

"With the media reporting on obesity, people are now saying that they have to stem the tide," he said.

(Continued)

Using people's history and sense of self, Black helps them make changes in behavior and attitude. He then uses his coaching expertise to get them top a place where they can reclaim their former health. His coaching style comes from his natural wellspring of enthusiasm - one that comes across strongly without being overbearing. In person, Black is both energetic and soft-spoken, and listens with a keen intensity.

"Someone may come in and want to lose 10 pounds," he said. "So the first thing I ask is 'When were you 10 pounds lighter and what were you doing then, and what has changed since then?'"

He also believes that women have been largely ignored by sports culture over the years. Black hopes **Rocky Mountain Human Performance Center** will continue his work to provide women with sports and health opportunities.

"Women are dramatically underserved," he said. "A lot of women want to exercise but haven't been exposed to sports or fitness."

Rocky Mountain Human Performance Center will focus on three primary aspects of wellness: weight management, sports performance and general health an fitness. But Black said it will also incorporate the psychological component that Black sees as a key to unlock a person's potential.

"I want to know what makes you tick; what motivates you," he said. "What are the key components of your life that we can tweak a little bit to make you healthier?"

* * * * *