

Work out only 30 minutes a week: Unique Baton Rouge gym focuses on slow-motion

• BY GEORGE MORRIS | GMORRIS@THEADVOCATE.COM

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When John Neyland learned his wife's personal trainer was leaving town, he looked for someone in Baton Rouge who used the same training method. He couldn't find one.

So, he started his own gym.

Strength Science Studios, which opened in August at 16645 Highland Road, is different not only because of its emphasis on once-a-week, slow-motion resistance training but also because of what motivated its creation. Neyland, a financial planner, began the studio to benefit his wife and his clients, many of whom are middle-age and older.

“All of a sudden, you walk in one day and you’ve gotten older,” Neyland said. “The biggest single thing you think about old people is they have no muscle. That’s why it’s hard to get up, hard to move.”

His wife, Karen, 55, wasn’t in that situation, but diabetes runs in her family. She wanted to lose weight but didn’t like exercise. Then, they discovered Celeste Fortier, a trainer who offered what sounded too good to be true — strength training that would produce results in 30 minutes a week.

In a year, the exercise and dietary changes enabled Karen Neyland to lose 60 pounds.

“I really started to look forward to it because it was one-on-one,” she said. “It’s a hard workout. We got to be friends. It was once a week. I’m an occupational therapist, and the science behind all of it as I started to learn about it just made total sense.”

So, when Fortier announced she was moving, the Neylands’ search for a new trainer took them to New Orleans, where Ryan Hall has a gym that teaches the same methods. Karen Neyland worked out there several times, so her husband decided Baton Rouge needed a similar facility and hired Hall to develop a group of personal trainers to staff it.

Hall is a proponent of what he calls super-slow, high-intensity strength training. Instead of using multiple weekly sessions of high-repetition weightlifting, Hall’s method uses resistance machines in which clients move extremely slowly until they reach muscle failure. Slower movements work muscles harder, Hall said, and reduce the likelihood of injuries during workouts. The method grew out of a treatment designed for osteoporosis patients.

A bigger difference from traditional training is that the workouts happen just once a week. It’s counterintuitive, but Hall said weight training more often is in many cases a waste of time and can actually damage muscles. A week gives muscles enough time to recover, a key component of gaining strength, he said.

That tracks with Hall’s own weightlifting experience as a younger man.

“I was working fulltime, putting myself through college, and I had to take time off, and I came back stronger,” he said. “Why am I taking six days off and becoming stronger? That didn’t make sense at the time. It did later. It made a lot of sense.”

The last component is the equipment, built by MedX, which maintains the same level of resistance throughout the movements, Neyland said. The 17 machines work muscles throughout the body.

“I’m stronger than I’ve ever been, even in my 20s and 30s when I was living at the gym,” said Anne Clouatre, who has been using the super-slow method. “I have muscle tone and shape I’ve never had in my life. Even my brothers, who have been workout people, they just say, ‘Anne, what are you doing?’”

After making the workouts available to his clients, Neyland has opened it to the public. Sessions cost \$40 and can be made by calling (225) 800-7562 or emailing strengthsciencestudios@gmail.com. It’s more expensive than gym memberships, but each workout is supervised by a trainer, so the costs are more comparable to using personal trainers. And cost, Neyland said, is not the biggest concern.

“You cannot buy your health,” Neyland said.

You can, however, buy your own health club.