

A WEE WORKOUT

These gyms have no dumbbells or treadmills, no spinning or step aerobics classes. But the results at these little fitness centers have just as much of an impact on kids as the typical gym does on adults.

The West Side has seen a surge of health centers for children with franchises like Little Gym, which offers classes such as cheerleading and karate, and Fit by Five, where children learn academics through activity as opposed to the traditional classroom method.

The children's workouts are designed to not only keep kids active, but to improve their social and motor skills, according to Miro Tabanji, owner of My Gym in Westlake.

"It's absolutely a trend," Tabanji says. "What parents love about [the gyms for kids] is that they are watching their kids growing their motor skills."

At the children's fitness center Tabanji has operated since 2005, noncompetitive gymnastics classes, relays, games, songs and dances are offered, with every workout choreographed to music. It teaches kids from six weeks to 13 years old how to roll, do scales, hop on one foot — simple exercises they can do at home to keep themselves active.

Not a typical gym setup, the equipment at My Gym is more unique with a castle to climb on and bolsters to jump over. The setup is changed every Monday so the kids don't get used to one setting.

"So it's never boring," says Tabanji, a resident of Rocky River whose two sons, ages 6 and 14, inspired her to start the gym.

Always active, her boys first started "working out" with home videos. "Then I started thinking, 'Oh my gosh, wouldn't it be nice to have something like this for kids?'" she recalls.

Today, Tabanji loves watching other kids develop. When 2-year-old twin girls started with Tabanji three months ago, she says they were always in a corner just standing.

Now, she can't get them to stop moving.

— BS

Doubling Efforts

WESTSHORE MOTHERS OF TWINS CLUB OFFERS SYSTEM FOR MOMS RAISING MULTIPLES.

A mother of 12-year-old twins, Patty Walters knew just what she needed when she moved to Avon in 1999: a group of mothers with twins. She wanted a support group that would "get it" when it came to raising sets of kids.

"Just having multiples is truly unique," Walters says. "To have that support and to meet other moms with multiples was just what I was looking for."

Walters and nearly 200 other West Shore mothers have found support from the Westshore Mothers of Twins Club. The group for mothers of twins and higher-order multiples meets once a month at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Westlake for social interaction, special programs and discussion groups.

"You're always dealing with issues. Do you keep them in the same classroom or do you separate them?" says Avon Lake resident Jan Sauppe, who joined the club in November 1986 when her twins were 4 months old. "What if one gets invited to the prom and the other doesn't? There are always things you go through."

The club, affiliated with the state and national organizations, has been helping mothers since 1955. It now features internal groups such as Helping Hands, which assigns members to make and deliver meals, run errands, find babysitters and help new mothers, says immediate past President



Jennifer Revas, mother of 4-year-old twins in North Ridgeville.

And these moms have lots of advice for other mothers, from picking your battles to finding a regimen that fits your lifestyle.

"Granted, it seems like it's overwhelming and you can never leave them, but

you've got to take time for yourself," Sauppe says. "Let your husband take care of them. He is capable of it, even if he doesn't think he is at first."

— Tshanen Niederkoher

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