

# Success Story

Suzanne Martin



## How WaterART Exercise Has Changed my Life

I have been exercising in the water for over 32 years, my first exposure to aquatic fitness being a prenatal class when I was expecting my first child. I continued with aquatic fitness for all three pregnancies, and then again when the kids were growing up for a time. I then had bunion surgery done on both feet, prohibiting me from getting in the water, as well as having developed arthritis in my knees. Both my doctor and specialist both recommended aquatic fitness as an exercise regimen. I got back in the pool once the healing process from my surgery had begun, and I have never looked back! In fact, the standard Christmas present from my husband for years would be a clip card to the local pool for the classes. I was attending classes three times weekly, and when I wasn't able to attend a class or two, I missed the exercise both physically and mentally. When I turned 50, I decided I wanted a career change from my present full-time position as an office worker, and decided to become certified with WaterART. I have never looked back!

I have been an instructor with WaterART for six years now and LOVE it! I have the good fortune of teaching four to five classes weekly at the St. Catharines Kiwanis Centre, both aquatic fitness and special gentle fitness programs for people who need more TLC. I also teach classes during the summer at an outdoor pool (Allen Gretsinger) in Beamsville. The benefits are plentiful! I have met some wonderful people, such as fellow instructors, supervisors, and the participants themselves. Physically, I notice that my endurance is strong, and the biggest health benefit is the lack of stiffness in my joints. I feel limber once I am done a class, and I sleep great at night!

There are so many success stories with the participants I have the pleasure of working with. One gentleman in particular who comes to mind is an octogenarian who wasn't able to swim when he started coming. He had recently lost his wife due to complications from diabetes, and was told by his doctor that he would face the same fate if he didn't lose weight. After one year, he was down to his goal weight, but I believe the biggest benefit for him is the friends he has made. On average, he attends three classes daily during the week!

I have stressed to the participants that aquatic fitness does not have only physical benefits. Any exercise is beneficial physically, mentally, emotionally and socially. My programs contain lots of functional movement to help with daily activities with the emphasis on FUN! I always tell the class(es) that if you're not having fun, you won't stick with the program. The lifeguards keep telling people who come to the pool that my classes are fun and therefore are always well attended. Music is definitely key to making or breaking a class as well. We have been known to sing along with the music when we're exercising!

I have made some good friends over the years. Some participants have passed away due to health complications. One gentleman in particular comes to mind – he passed away suddenly of a heart attack one night at home. I had everyone in the class sign a condolence card and I mailed it to his widow, whom I had never met. She called me one night shortly after receiving the card to thank me, saying that participating in an aquatic fitness class meant the world to her husband.

Many of the participants I have the honour of working with are an inspiration to me. In my special classes, there are those who are dealing with Lupus, Fibromyalgia, Parkinson's, Arthritis, hip and back replacements, etc. Many of them proclaim that the water exercises they are doing are improving their life functional fitness. There are so many success stories, and it's reassuring to know that so many professionals in the health field recognize the benefits of WaterART and are recommending their patients get in the water!

It is my hope that I can say in 20-30 years' time that I am still an active Certified Aquatic Fitness Instructor!

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