

12 Fitness keeps it fresh and clean

After years of planning, B.J. Nichols establishes Mt Laurel fitness studio

BY SAM CHANDLER

Clients must follow one rule when choosing their workout music at 12 Fitness Studios in Mt Laurel: The lyrics can't contain profanity.

That's why you're more likely to hear Chris Tomlin than Chris Brown at the faith-based workout space, which Chelsea resident B.J. Nichols opened in April at 15 Olmsted Street in the Mt Laurel Town Center. Nichols, 37, has a background in both ministry and fitness. He had aspired to open his own gym since earning his personal training certification at age 19.

"Leading up to it, it's been 18 years of just planning, planning and more planning to get to this point," said Nichols, whose chiseled frame resembles that of a bodybuilder.

But this isn't his first foray into studio ownership. Seven years ago, he opened a workout facility in Chelsea called The Rock, which eventually folded. The shortcoming stung, but it helped shape Nichols' path — and vision — moving forward.

"That was a complete failure," he said. "God kind of showed me how it worked if you try it your way, and then do it his way," Nichols said.

The result is 12 Fitness, which offers small-group and one-on-one training sessions tailored to each individual's needs and goals, whether losing weight or adding muscle. Nichols also writes nutrition plans.

The studio features free weights, a few machines and its signature kinesis wall. The innovative, four-section wall contains sets of weighted cables that limit joint stress and allow for increased range of motion. The versatile device, Nichols said, is designed for

use in physical therapy and targets the core in every movement.

Though the wall finds its way into each session, workouts change daily.

"It keeps it dynamic, keeps it fresh," Nichols said.

Above his first-floor fitness space is the studio of his friend and business accomplice, Doug Beard, a flexibility coach and muscle therapist. The two previously met at another fitness studio along 280. When Nichols decided to open his own place, he thought Beard's nearby presence would make a great addition. The pair offers complementary services, but maintain a mix of shared and unique clientele.

"We want the same things," Nichols said. "We want to make a living obviously, but help people first and make a living second. That's kind of both our mottos we like to live by."

Beard worked as a full-time massage therapist with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers for more than a decade, moonlighting in the offseason for Tampa's professional soccer team. Signed jerseys and framed pictures of players he worked with during his career adorn the walls of his second-floor workspace.

"The treatments that they get are the exact same things that I've done for every person on these walls," said Beard of his current clients. "Both [me and B.J.] tell people you don't have to be a professional athlete to be treated like one."

In addition to their common philosophy, Beard and Nichols also share a common faith. Next to Beard's framed athletic jerseys are replica crosses, and painted on Nichols' first-floor walls are verses of Scripture.

In fact, Nichols said he chose the name of



12 Fitness Studios owners B.J. Nichols and Doug Beard, pose in their new place of business. Nichols works as a trainer while Beard partners as a flexibility coach and muscle therapist for clients. Photo by Sarah Finnegan.

his business because 12 represents a Biblical number of completion.

His goal is to help people finish what they start.

"I want people to realize, 'Hey, when you come in here, it's not where you start, it's where you end,'" Nichols said.

For more information about 12 Fitness Studios, contact Nichols at 678-1237 or visit 12fitstudios.com. Beard can be reached at 225-485-9233.

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