

PINK POWERHOUSES

Women's boxing gym welcomes members with open arms

Courtney Walston

TOP LEFT:

Pink Gloves Gym member Heather Dyl goes down for a push up during the class warm up.

TOP RIGHT:

Pink Gloves Gym member Sara Durante practices punching drills.

BOTTOM LEFT:

Pink Gloves Gym member Erika Cole practices punching drills.

BOTTOM RIGHT:

Pink Gloves Gym member Michelle Gonyo practices punching drills with classmate Katie Frost.



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Rebekah Sweet



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By Carolyn Tomanek
Contributing Writer

“On the count of three.
“One, two, three.
“Badass Boxers!”

So ends another class at Pink Gloves Boxing, a program under the newly established Arena Training Institute, Cheyenne's only non-contact, all-female boxing gym.

The Pink Gloves Boxing (PGB) program began in Montana about 15 years ago and has spread internationally with gyms as far as Sweden and Saudi Arabia, says Janell Mellish, owner of Cheyenne's PGB. Mellish opened PGB in Cheyenne four years ago after moving here from Great Falls, Montana, where she was a member of PGB.

It is structured similarly to that of a Karate system. There are seven tiers to conquer before becoming a “hall of famer,” each taking about 4 months to complete. At the end of those 4 months, in order to advance to the next tier, each boxer must perform a combination of punches and maneuvers correctly. Additionally, there is a test night at which the boxers must complete a variety of physical challenges — such as burpees and ladder drills — specific to each tier. Mellish joined

PGB in the midst of a deep personal crisis. She wanted to throw herself into something solitary, where she wouldn't make friends, where should could be left alone. Little did she know PGB is not that kind of experience.

“Eventually, I noticed that even though they didn't know about my personal background, they still cared about me as a person,” said Mellish. “It's kind of cool that they were my biggest cheerleaders and it was a genuine relationship.”

This is a theme of the program. The PGB Member's Manual lists core habits, the first one being “Welcome with Open Arms — you never know when you're going to meet a new friend or fun experience.”

Speaking with members of the gym, this core habit comes to life. “I love the comradery, it's just a great group of women,” Lesley Worley, a tier three member of PGB, said. “They're very supportive and you're never judged for where you are in your journey or where you come from.”

Mia Levery, a tier four member of PGB, said, “I like the comradery, that's what brings me back again and again, the support.”

Christina Bowman, a tier six member and trainer at PGB, said one of her favorite things about being part of the gym is



“the support that the women give each other. It's a safe place, no one really disparages anyone else, and they just lift you up. It's women empowering women.”

Aside from being a fitness program, PGB is active in the community. In the summer months the gym often forms teams for various 5k runs and tries to have a presence in contributing to various charities.

“My biggest thing when we started this was, I wanted to be a part of a group of women who weren't in your face telling you how strong they were,” Mellish said. “But you just saw it, and the community would see it. And they would see us, and what we were doing, and know we had a good heart, and we had strong characters.”

In November PGB began the Rock Steady program for community members with Parkinson's disease. This program has given the opportunity for those boxers to meet others in the community with Parkinson's and to learn a new skill that can help with the physicality of the disease.

In December, Mellish announced the new direction her

business would be taking. Arena Training Institute will be the umbrella organization under which PGB, Rock Steady, and other programs such as life coaching, personal training, and The Warrior Challenge — seminars combining boxing and yoga — will be organized. The new organization will allow the women of PGB to continue doing what they do best — be badass — while allowing Mellish to diversify the programs she offers to make a larger impact on the community.

“The stuff we do for the community I think is just part of what strong women do, they care about each other, they jump in the fight for other people,” Mellish said. “No matter if it affects them personally or not, they still care about other people.”

Speaking to the women at PGB it becomes clear that for them the program is more than a workout. Each one points out the personal relationships they have built and the mental and physical challenges they have faced.

Bowman said, “The best part of boxing is that every day, even if we are working simple five-

movement drills, it is a challenge every day, a challenge to throw better, to be better. If you mess up, you just keep trying until you get it. My favorite classes are the ones where I keep messing up, then I finally get it. There's so much satisfaction.”

The challenge taunts members, keeps them coming back.

“What I think is special about Pink Gloves Boxing is there is always a challenge. You're on tier one and you think it's the hardest tier ever. Then you pass it and you're on to tier two and you're like ‘this is incredible, tier one was nothing!’ There is a constant challenge, always something to work on and achieve,” Levery said.

Every day Mellish gets to witness the growth of the members.

“The transformations with women are definitely my reward. Just to see people come in, not believ-

ing in themselves, be freaked out over boxing, then they get on their own journey here,” Mellish said. “They do their own things, in their own way, in their own timing, and then they find themselves along the way.”

Before a new set of tiers begins, PGB hosts a “Demo Night” at which women who are curious about boxing and the gym can come test out the program. They learn the basic punches and gain information about membership. Demo Night will take place at 6 p.m. Feb. 27 and Mellish encourages anyone with the slightest interest to attend. She said she looks forward to continuing to see the growth of the members and how that spreads into the community.

“The cool thing about strong women, when they tap into their strength, they can change the world,” Mellish said.

For more information go to

ArenaTrainingInstitute.com

to learn more about Pink Gloves Boxing