Saint Anthony's Starts Sports Conditioning for Adult Athletes

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(ALTON, IL) – The Outpatient Therapy Services of Saint Anthony's Health Center is expanding to

include sports medicine and a new sports conditioning and enhancement program for mature athletes, beginning February 22.

"By mature, we mean post-high school athletes who still want to perform at an optimum level," said Physical Therapist Kelly Bogowith, lead trainer for the new program. "The goal is to help athletes improve their competitive edge by increasing speed, agility, strength, explosiveness and endurance."

Athletes targeted for the classes include triathletes, runners and those who participate in team sports who want to take it to the next level. In addition to improving athletic performance, supervised training classes and physical therapy of this kind can reduce or prevent athletic injuries.

Bogowith is a member of the National Strength and Conditioning Association and is a strength and conditioning coach for the Edwardsville YMCA's competitive gymnastics team. She has a bachelor's degree in exercise science, and a master's and doctorate in physical therapy – all from Saint Louis University.

As an athlete herself, Bogowith played Division 1 hockey in college and continues to play indoor soccer, club field hockey, softball, sand volleyball and triathlons, not to mention biking, running and swimming.

So she's all about being in top condition for sports and knows where other athletes are coming from.

“I love athletics and I’m drawn to helping that population,” Bogowith said. “Even though it’s a group setting, we will work on doing advanced work for each individual level.”

Because people will come into the class at different levels and different ages, training will be individualized as much as possible to help each person receive optimum benefits. Periodic testing will check individual progress.

“It will be a fun environment, but intense,” she said. “It’s different than a traditional fitness center.”

Separate from the class, the sports medicine division of Saint Anthony’s Outpatient Therapy Services will offer physical therapy by a team specializing in evaluation and treatment of athletes. “Our staff will cater to people who have suffered injuries during athletics and want to return to full sports participation,” said Hellenga.

Sports medicine physical therapy progresses from rehabilitation to plyometrics (exercises to improve muscle power), high intensity interval training, flexibility and resistance training to bring the athlete to his or her full potential at discharge.

Bogowith said such anaerobic training brings about adaptations in the nervous system leading to greater muscle recruitment, synchronization, firing rate and improved overall muscle function, helping athletes return to their full potential.

Sports injuries may include sprained ankles, hamstring strains, shin splints, rotator cuff problems and knee tears or pain. Ankle sprains are one of the most common sports-related injuries – affecting two million athletes every year, occurring in all types of sports.

Sue Curfman, Director of Therapies and Acute Rehabilitation, also happens to be an avid runner. Just this past fall, while training for the United States Marine Corp Marathon, she injured her ankle when she was literally run off the curb by another jogger and her dog.

With severe ankle trauma, a complete ligament tear and damage of another one, a bruised bone and fluid in the joint, Curfman was forced to face the fact she was not going to make it to the marathon just two weeks later.

“There were no broken bones, so I tried wearing a splint and even tried running, but my ankle was just ‘floppy,’” Curfman said.

In the end, her ankle required surgery to repair the torn ligament with metal anchors placed in the bone. John Lindsay, doctor of podiatric medicine, performed the surgery. Curfman wore a non-weight bearing walking boot and used crutches for about a month after, and received intense physical therapy with Bogowith.

“I wanted to work with Kelly because I’ve seen her work with athletes before,” Curfman said. “After five visits my ankle range of motion, strength and stability came back.”

She began running again and set her sights on the Walt Disney Marathon in January, with several more planned throughout the year.

“It feels great,” Curfman said. “I’m continuing to work on conditioning and pushing myself to a higher level.”

Debbie Fisher, a physical therapist and Supervisor of Therapies for Saint Anthony’s, helped develop the sports medicine program, and she and Curfman will both continue to provide supportive services.

Recently, the therapy department as a whole has expanded to more than double its space, added computerized equipment and private treatment rooms.

Fisher said during the last 18 months, the department has also doubled its outpatient volume. “It’s impressive especially in the current economy,” Fisher said. “We have concentrated on more patient focused care in therapies such as those focused on multiple sclerosis and stroke patients, and have developed very comprehensive programs.”

Saint Anthony’s outpatient rehabilitation service has provided a variety of therapies for more than 35 years.

The new sports conditioning and enhancement classes will be held from 5:30 to 6:30 p. m., Tuesday and Thursday at the Saint Clare’s campus in the newly designed sports medicine room. Cost is $60 for a six-week program. To register, call (618) 463-5171.