

Wyoming School of Gymnastics Cheyenne

Is it too much to dream that one day an Olympic gymnast will call Wyoming home? A top American female gymnast already does. But, it's Wyoming, Ohio, that Alyssa Beckerman calls home.

Who would have thought that a Wyoming farmboy from Afton could end the reign of the unbeatable Russian, Alexander Karelin? Rulon Gardner did and it is not beyond the realm of possibility that one of Wyoming schools of gymnastics could produce an Olympic gymnast.

That certainly doesn't have to be the goal of parents enrolling daughters (some sons) in Cheyenne's Wyoming School of Gymnastics. Even if the purpose is just to introduce the child to an activity that can be fun and physically developmental, children can begin gymnastics almost as soon as they can walk.

Amy Chow, well-known American gymnast, began lessons at the age of three in Cupertino, California.

Cheryl Macchia founded the local school of gymnastics about five years ago and, for the first four years, operated from a location in Wyo Plaza on Nationway. In January of this year, she septupled the size of her facility to 17,000 sq. ft. by moving it to the former grocery store and bingo hall in Indian Hills Shopping Center on Carlson Street in north Cheyenne.

Her school offers activities from recreational gymnastics to competitive teams. The spacious (once Safeway) site was remodeled for purpose of this school and the expanse has every apparatus common to women's gymnastics.

Those events, which are a highlight of Olympics coverage every four years, encompass the floor exercise, uneven bars, vault, balance beam, and even trampoline. Female gymnasts from the United States have become household names. Cathy Rigby, Mary Lou Retton, Shannon Miller and Kerri Strug, to name but a few.

At this point, the school does not have still rings or the pommel horse, which are men's events of the Olympics, but there are male students.

An "air track," a 60' long bubble provides the runway for the first tumbling experience for students. A recently installed "pit" provides a safe and secure landing area for those tumbling or vaulting, practicing balance beam dismounts, etc.

Ms. Macchia was a U.S.A. gymnast in Colorado and enjoyed it to the point that she chose to open her own business to teach gymnastics. She currently has 20 instructors for the various activities and hours the school covers. Her students reach grade levels and she has a "team" of gymnasts that has traveled as far as Cancun, Mexico, for competitions. At that meet, her students took two bronze and one gold team medals. Level 10 is the highest in U.S.A. Gymnastics and this school has students at Level 8 now.

Cheryl expects that current students will achieve Level 10 and could be considered for college scholarships. Gymnastics are not taught or available at the high school level in Cheyenne.

More students at her school at this time are between the ages of 5 and 12 than any other. "Competitions" have been conducted even for entry-level gymnasts - for fun, not graded - so all students are involved in the spirit of competition.

The pit mentioned above is six feet deep and has a trampoline at the bottom of the opening. On top of the tramp are foam blocks, then on top of that can be placed mats - single, double or triple.

The school also offers adult classes and cheerleading classes. Month to month commitments are all that is asked. Most individual classes are conducted Monday thru Thursday, with team classes conducted on Friday and Saturday.

There will be an open house on September 16 at the facility to show residents of Cheyenne, Laramie County, and the region, what the school has to offer. Students will be there to demonstrate the activities available at the school. A rock climbing wall and the Cheyenne Grizzlies mascot are added attractions.

Call the school for details - 433-1881.

Gilchrist mold

(Continued from page 1)

The initial assignment of tearing out a portion of the wall was progressively expanded into taking out the entire wall, insulation and studs. The worker estimates that he was exposed to the mold for about 16 hours, during the days August 10, 11 and 12.

After this exposure, he was told that four teachers had left Gilchrist, complaining of similar health problems. None of them, he said, taught in the room he worked and the other rooms have not been "touched" to determine the presence of stachybotris. One of those former teachers has gone public with her story.

He said the condition of the interior wall was such that a spoon could be dug into the material - it was that wet and soft. He also said that, upon entry to the room, the smell of mold was strong.

By early Friday morning, the guys had gotten sick enough that they could not complete the work on replacing the sheetrock - they replaced the studs but did not place new insulation or sheetrock.

When he told his supervisor about how he felt and about the mold, she told him (according to him) that "not all black mold is bad. You're thinking of stachybotris and this isn't that."

Laboratory analysis proved that it was. That it was the mold she told him it wasn't. And stachy is bad. The full extent of health problems associated with that type of mold is still being determined. But, suffice it to say, those known to this point are not minor or easily dismissed.

Mycotoxicoses is a disease caused by the mycotoxins produced by mold. The medical field has a hard time recognizing this disease unless a great number of people are afflicted at the same time.

A professor at North Dakota State University has written extensively on stachybotris. His findings are that children who complain that "school makes me sick" may be telling the truth. That the school building they are in makes them sick. And that the culprit is "a mold fungi named Stachybotrys." He wrote that "It's become notorious as a toxic mold that can cause health problems in humans ..." He also thinks that public awareness of the potential problem needs to be heightened. That is part of the purpose of this story in the Cheyenne Herald.

This particular mold produces such a powerful mycotoxin that touching it can give a person a rash. Scientists do not know what might be considered a safe exposure level. The most common place to find this mold is "on the paper covering the back of sheet rock," exactly where the two Laramie County School District No. 1 construction workers found it at Gilchrist Elementary School.

The professor from NDSU regards stachybotris as "a serious enough health risk that he recommends only trained professionals should be used to get rid of it." The two workers for the school district were not trained professionals.

Asked if the Cheyenne PD had spoken with him about the two bags found at the WT-E and City/County Health Dept., that presumably contained some of the materials removed from Gilchrist, he said no. He and his co-worker had put the bags in a dumpster at Gilchrist and don't care to see them again.

More in a future issue on his difficulty in retaining legal counsel on this matter.

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