

Grays Harbor has gone a little spin crazy

**“Moving Grays Harbor”
By Maryann Welch**

I finally did it. Two of my friends and County co-workers, Marilyn Lewis and Lee Napier, have been at me for a couple of years to try an indoor cycling class. “You have to try it,” they urged after the yoga class we attended together ended. What I knew of spinning intimidated me because it looked intense and, of course, I presumed I would be unable to keep up with the likes of Marilyn and Lee who are younger and more fit than me. Spinning sounded and looked scary!

When the YMCA initiated classes last fall, my daughter, Katy, decided to give their indoor cycling classes a try. After her first class she called to say “You have to try it!” Sounded familiar. I spent the next couple of months making excuses – no time, everyone’s younger, I’m out-of-shape, etc. I am happy to report that I finally took the plunge and really like the variety it has added to my regular routine. And, all of them were right – it’s a great workout and I can do it! Now, I love to start my Saturdays with an early morning class. Marilyn and Lee spin several times every week while I am only able to fit one class in to my schedule. Spinning is not the core of my exercise routine, but it’s been great to add one more option.

So, what is “spinning”? When this word came up in a recent conversation with friends the response was “I didn’t know you had a wheel” and “where do you get your wool?” Well,

there is another use for this word. Spinning, or indoor cycling, is a form of exercise that involves using a stationary exercise bicycle in a class setting. A typical class involves a single instructor at the front of the class who leads the participants in a number of different types of cycling. The routines are designed to simulate terrain and situations encountered in actual bicycle rides, including hill climbs, sprints and interval training. The design of spinning bikes makes them ride in a similar way to outdoor bikes.

As it turns out, “Spinning” (a trademark name) has been in existence since 1989 and was first introduced in Santa Monica, California. When Catherine Kom moved to the Harbor 2½ years ago, she wanted to continue the spinning routine she had enjoyed living in Lake Tahoe, so she started teaching classes in Montesano. Currently, the classes are so popular that it’s become a challenge to score a free bike. My friend Lee has become a certified instructor and reports that her early morning classes in Montesano are a good bet for availability.

Last year our local YMCA added the classes. “The timing was finally right for us to purchase a fleet of spinning bikes and to be able to get some instructors certified”, states Dan Brown, fitness director at the YMCA of Grays Harbor. “From day one in the new building adding Spinning has been a goal of our fitness center and last year it became a reality. I can’t imagine our program menu without it now. Every class is full, even though I still can’t believe that people are competing for bikes at 5:30 in the morning! We even have a kid’s class that has also been very popular. The nice thing about Spinning is that anyone can do it” Brown comments “we have an age range of 9 to 70+ and every rider is getting a level of exercise that is appropriate for them.

You can be a first timer with no cycling experience or an elite athlete with racing experience and still take the same class. It's bicycling without having to dodge the potholes, traffic or dogs that you might encounter on an outdoor ride."

Both Lee and Catherine, as instructors, agree. Catherine emphasizes that the bikes are adjustable so that each cyclist can go at their own pace. Lee strives to have each class member find the right resistance level that provides a personally regulated breathing and heart rate challenge. She adds, "You're there to challenge yourself." When I wondered if spinning is really for everyone, Lee only cautioned that people with back or knee problems may want to consult their healthcare provider. Regardless, she states, "everyone should know and pay attention to their limits."

Marilyn points out that the workout routines vary somewhat by instructor so finding a good fit is important. All in all, Marilyn is a spinning enthusiast who likes "a strenuous workout with fun music!" I'm impressed that she even has special shoes for spinning and I'm happy her cheerleading finally worked on me!

If you think you want to try a Spinning class, there are a lot of classes to choose from in the Aberdeen/Hoquiam/Montesano area. The YMCA (537-9622) has 13 classes every week; Timber Gym (532-8339) has 2 classes a week and Monte Fitness (249-0073) has 8 classes a week. It's a good idea to call ahead for class times and availability since Grays Harbor seems to have gone a little spin crazy!

Maryann Welch is the director of Grays Harbor County's Public Health and Social Services Department.

If you have questions about becoming more active or have information about free or low-cost activity in the area, contact the public health and social services department at 532-8665 ext. 483, e-mail us at moving@co.grays-harbor.wa.us or visit our web site at www.ghphss.org.