



Not only did she bring home gold in the 1996 Olympics, Kerri Strug won American's heart as a member of the famed Magnificent Seven of the United States Women's Gymnast Team. Today, the mother remains passionate about fitness and staying active. When she was in town for HERSHEY'S Family Play Day, Tucson-born Strug shared her favorite games and activities for family-friendly playtimes.

**AFM:** Why is being active important to you?

**KS:** For me, physical activity is extremely important. Growing up, my parents were both athletic and encouraged me and my siblings to be involved in sports—swimming, gymnastics, soccer and baseball—because they wanted us to find our passion and follow through with it. Today, as a parent, I'm hoping to do the same with my youngster and show him about the importance of physical activity in achieving a balanced lifestyle.

**AFM:** What are your favorite family-friendly ways to stay active?

**KS:** My husband and I are very involved with our son Tyler, since he's our first child. He is 13-months-old, and the first thing we do on Saturday mornings is take him to a Mover and Shakers class. We also like to head to the park and play on the swings and slides and play hide-and-seek. I'm excited about enrolling him in a baby swim class so we can get in some physical activity as a family and teach him something new. My husband and I are also both big runners.

**AFM:** Are there any specific activities here in Arizona, like hiking, that you recommend to stay active?

**KS:** We love hiking at Sabino Canyon with the baby, and we also love trying out the different parks.

**AFM:** Do you have any suggestions for games that families can play together to stay fit?

**KS:** You can be active and have a lot of fun by playing at home. With HERSHEY'S Family Play Days, I'm encouraging parents to bring back childhood favorites; you can easily play hopscotch, duck-duck-goose, red rover and hide-and-seek right at home. I also like to put cushions on the floor to create an obstacle course for my son. It only takes about 10 minutes a couple days a week to help keep your family active. For additional ways to get active as a family, you can visit [www.themoderationnation.com](http://www.themoderationnation.com).

**AFM:** What are some of the benefits for kids who are active during childhood?

**KS:** It's critical for parents, caregivers and mentors today to set the tone of a healthy, well-balanced lifestyle with their children early on when

healthy habits are more easily engrained in them.

**AFM:** How do you inspire kids to stay healthy and active?

**KS:** I'm fortunate that I had a memorable Olympic moment, so oftentimes I go to speak to youth at schools, athletic organizations and civic groups. For me, I found my passion in gymnastics, and in order to obtain my goal, it took a commitment to being active. Even if you aren't training for the Olympics, I think it's important to create goals that help keep you active because it gives you a great sense of self-satisfaction when you achieve them.

**AFM:** Did your parents work to inspire you to become active in athletics?

**KS:** Yes, my parents definitely wanted all of their children to be involved in sports because it teaches kids to set goals, be responsible and practice time management. Studies show that kids who have more to do after school are often better students and stay out of trouble. In many ways, sports parallel life—you're going to fall down and you have to pick yourself up again, which is a great lesson to learn early on.

**AFM:** Is play important for adults as well as children? What are some of the positive effects of play?

**KS:** Parents and caregivers play an important role in whether or not kids are involved in physical activities. Both adults and kids benefit from active play and time for recreation, discovery and enjoyment, so it's key to find ways to stay active together as a family. That's why I'm excited to be working with HERSHEY'S Family Play Daysto promote well-being, share fun tips to stay active and encourage others to create amazing family moments.

*Interview by Lauren Topor*