

AZ Giving Spotlight: Jyl Steinbeck of Shape Up US

Written by Samantha Giunta

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Shape Up US is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing child obesity across the US. The organization was founded by an enthusiastic and passionate woman named Jyl Steinbeck, who has devoted her time to living a healthy lifestyle and sharing that inspiration with so many. We were very excited and so appreciative to learn more about Steinbeck and Shape Up US through this Q&A.



AFM: Please tell us a little bit about yourself and how you founded Shape Up US.

JS: My name is Jyl Steinbeck; I am so blessed to be a mother of two, now three, with an amazing son-in-law. I am the founder and executive director of Shape Up US and it is a wonderful story. In October 2009, I was creating our first health and wellness expo. I had an incredible team working with me that was also passionate in making a difference as myself. During one of our board meetings I threw out the idea I wanted to create a nonprofit building a healthier future for our children. I wanted it to be all about prevention, not disease, and heal children from the inside out. The next thing I knew Dr. Bob Ruotolo came to me and said he had a wonderful nonprofit he'd created called, "Making a Difference." He had been traveling a lot with business and was unable to put the attention into the nonprofit as much as he would like to and he would like to gift me his creation, since we were both "making a difference" it aligned beautifully. Shape Up US, Inc. was born. I have been awarded the Community Leadership Award from The President's Council on fitness, Sports and Nutrition and dubbed "America's Healthiest Mom." I am a cookbook/lifestyle author, personal trainer and health expert. I have been described by the media as "enthusiastic," "weight loss guru," "America's Super (Healthy) Mom," "national sensation," and "a one-woman business dynamo." I have written over 15 cookbooks selling over 2 million copies. But, regardless of the accolades, I am totally committed to a mission of helping others become healthy and my passion lies in building a healthier future for our children.

AFM: What is the mission and goal of the nonprofit?

JS: Mission: Building a Healthy Future for our Children.

Shape Up US is a 501c3 nonprofit corporation dedicated to preventing obesity. Shape Up US contributes to building a healthy future for America's children by improving the health, fitness and overall well-being of youth and their families through: awareness! Education! Action!

AFM: Can you tell us a little more about the Hip Hop Heart Program, CHOICE, and the Positive Psychology Training that Shape Up Us provides?

JS: The Hip Hop Healthy Heart Program for Children™ is a continuing education program for K-6th grade educators and others who work with groups of children these ages. These eight modules provide learning objectives, lesson plans and activities that are then integrated with core curriculum or other program content so that children learn and develop healthy habits at an early age. The learning flows from teacher to student, student to family members, and to the community through peer-to-peer interaction. The Hip Hop Healthy Heart™ is accredited by and delivered through a partnership with Rio Salado College. Personal, family, and community issues are addressed, including nutrition, fitness, dental health, positive thinking, coping and resilience, money management, and contributing to a healthy planet.

CHOICE™ is delivered to an "assembly" of middle and secondary school-age teens, and incorporates positive messages about-facing peer pressures, decision-making and the consequences that teens bear for choices they make.

Positive Psychology™ is an adult program that promotes development of positive emotions and strengths-based character. This movement has been hailed by *TIME Magazine* as perhaps the "single most important breakthrough in the effort to tap human potential and help people cope with modern stresses and day-to-day challenges." Shape Up US is partnered with Jeff Levy, MD, an expert in this field and Drexel University to make Positive Psychology™ available through distance learning.

AFM: What type of events does Shape Up US host to create awareness?

JS: Shape Up US Health and Wellness Expos are free state-by-state wellness events that introduce programs aove getting thousands of

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participants on-board the wellness bandwagon to further promote health and prevent chronic disease. Shape Up US partners with host communities. There have been 10 events in the past two years with attendance ranging from 5,000 to 15,000. We have two big ones coming up. First, Chandler Mayor's Day of Play Presented by Banner Children's Hospital on Oct. 26 in Chandler at Tumbleweed Park and SUPER Expo at West World on Nov. 1-3 in Scottsdale.

AFM: What are some ways we can prevent child obesity in our own homes and community?

JS: Children do as children see and they model the eating patterns and behavior of their parents. Create opportunities for you and your children to have fun with "active play" activities and you'll be giving your family the gift of fitness for a lifetime of health. Plan adventurous nature walks and hikes and have the children navigate trails with maps and compasses, identifying directions along the way. Play basketball, soccer, tag, or relay games. Whatever the game of choice, you are burning calories. Turn on the music and dance. Also, cut down on TV, video, or computer time and swap it for 30 minutes of walking.

To learn more about Shape Up Us, click [here](#).

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