

Boot camp keeps firefighters in shape

BY PAUL R. PACE
STAFF WRITER

It's not often you see firefighters doing high-energy aerobics outside a fire station, but that's been the case for some Farmington Hills firefighter recruits this summer.

Called a "boot camp," the classes are being taught by Omar Akl, fitness instructor at the Powerhouse Gym in Farmington Hills and world Maui Thai boxing champion.

Akl is hosting the boot camp free of charge as a way to do his share for the firefighters who risk their lives and out of respect for the firefighters who lost their lives on Sept. 11.

Michael Schultz, firefighter and drill instructor, said the class is good way to stay in shape. Though he teaches drill instruction using firefighting equipment, he said the boot camp is a real workout.

"It's different than drill instruction, because you're



Omar Akl leads the conditioning class.

and toes. Energized by dance club music, the recruits range in age from 19-47 and they do a good job of synchronizing their moves along with Akl's instruction. The camp is held on Monday evenings at Fire Station No. 4 on Drake Road before book training class.

High energy music sets the tone for the half-hour session, which fuses boxing, kickboxing, self defense and aerobics, with a military twist.

More than 25 new recruits attend. Akl, both instructor and drillmaster, requires trainees to shout out reps army-style.

If they don't shout loud enough, are late or fall out of formation, it's a mandatory 10 push-ups. Akl said at first, the boot camp had its skeptics, but after doing it a few times, they took the sessions seriously because they knew it was helping them stay in shape.

Now they show up early.

Akl grew up in Lebanon in the late 1980s at the height of



A pleasant grove behind Fire Station #4 is the setting for a grueling workout.


unrest in the Middle East. Although his school was destroyed in a bombing, Akl still had the opportunity to participate in his passion for sports. An all-around athlete, he excelled in martial arts and boxing, so much that he played for and trained the Lebanese Army's boxing, kickboxing and Maui Thai teams.

Akl started training when he was 9 years old. From 1993-2000, he held three championship titles in Lebanese box-

ing, kickboxing and Maui Thai. In 1996, he won the European kickboxing championship in Yugoslavia, and in 1998 he won the world military boxing championship title in North Carolina.

Continuing to want to help the community, Akl said he plans to start a children's self-defense class at the Powerhouse gym in response to the recent abductions of children in the news.

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Autumn is the ideal time to hear the call of the red-nosed, phlegm-throated, lung hacker.

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To find out more about participating in this allergy & asthma study, contact:

Gary T. Ferguson, M.D.
Pulmonary Research Institute of Southeast Michigan
248-478-6561

Tag Days raises funds for high schools

The annual "Tag Days" fundraiser is the time of year when Farmington, North Farmington and Harrison High School band and orchestra students don their uniforms and concert attire and solicit donations. For any donation placed in their canisters, students will issue a ticket or "tag" good for free admission to one of the special concerts performed by each of the high schools.

Concert dates will be listed on the back of the tags.

Set this year for Sept. 20 and 21, students will be outside businesses throughout the Farmington and Farmington Hills in what has become the student's largest annual fundraiser garnering over \$10,000. Proceeds, divided equally among the three high school music programs, will be used for instruments, uniforms,

guest clinicians, music scholarships, band camp, special programs and much, much more.

For more information, please call 248-788-0341.

The Band & Orchestra Boosters provides services and financial support to the award winning Instrumental Music Department at North Farmington High School, located at 32900 West 13 Mile Rd., Farmington Hills, MI 48334.

ROAD WATCH

Information for Road Watch is supplied by the Road Commission for Oakland County (www.roccweb.org). Information is subject to change.

FARMINGTON

- Road: Farmington Road, south of Nine Mile to Grand River — This section of Farmington is closed to southbound traffic as the RCOCC reconstructs and widens the road. During the project, the detour route for southbound traffic is Grand River, Drake and Nine Mile.
- Motorists traveling northbound on Farmington should expect delays and are encouraged to use the detour route as well.
- Completion is expected Sept. 30.

WALLED LAKE

- Road: West Maple Road, Welch to west of Haggerty — As part of the M-5 project, the Michigan Department of Transportation has closed this section of road so that it can be reconstructed as a boulevard. Potential alternate routes are 14 Mile, Welch, Maple, Decker and Pontiac Trail.

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