

Local gym owners excited to open after four month lockdown

Written By ALYSSA PARKHILL

Now that Dufferin County has officially moved into Stage 3 of recovery from COVID-19 as of Friday (July 17), local gyms and sport facilities are now open for the first time in four months.

"Because we are a gym, we knew right from the beginning that we would be one of the last ones to open, that was quite clear," said Hannah Sine, one of the owners at Towne Fitness in Shelburne.

Forced to close back in March, Towne Fitness opened their doors for the first time in months on Monday (July 20), an experience that Sine said was "pretty exciting".

"I likened it to the first day back at school, it was very exciting because we have worked so hard for opening," said Sine. "I just couldn't wait to get here this morning to open the door to our first member and we had a member at the door at 6 a.m. waiting to come in."

With the gym open for returning and new members, Sine says that there have been a few changes to follow health guidelines. Removing equipment for spacing, personalized cleaning kits for clients, and common touch cleaning are some of the tactics the gym has implemented. Key fobs that are given to members even help track who has been in and out of the gym.

"We have a brand new protocol when you come into the gym all our returning members and new members are required to sign a membership declaration," said Sine. "That means they are aware of the protocol in place to make this a safe environment, and that all the changes have been explained to them by a staff member."

Impact Martial Arts, owned by Shelburne councillor Kyle Fegan, also announced on Monday that the dojo would have a gradual reopening starting on Wednesday (July 22) with karate classes.

While karate classes are open, Fegan said they are still playing the waiting game to allow the start of judo.

"Judo is a very, very close contact sport," said Fegan. "We're still in the waiting pattern for that because it's not been approved."

Within the dojo, protocols that follow health guidelines have been put in place to ensure safety, it's a process that Fegan says has been difficult. Protocols within the dojo include smaller class sizes, blocking off mats for six feet distance, and limiting the number of parents allowed to watch. They've also had personalized face masks made.

"One of the things that we are offering to all of our students is that we will sell them masks that are actually branded for the club," said Fegan. "They can have pride of club membership."

While face masks have been made mandatory in the area by Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health, they aren't required to be worn when working out.

The World Health Organization (WHO) released a guideline that says masks should not be worn during exercise as they reduce the ability to breathe and that maintaining a safe distance from other users is the important prevention during exercise.