

THE GROUND AND THE FURY

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Peter Egyed and CrossFit Fury encourage members to grow their own in pursuit of improved health.

Brandon Brooks
leases the land that's
home to Fury Farms.

If you know Peter Egyed, you know he tends to go big.

“I will bite off more than I can chew and just figure it out along the way,” he said.

So when the 28-year-old announced his Arizona CrossFit affiliate would begin farming, few people were fazed.

Aimee Berencsi has known Egyed for eight years. Or, as she said, “from the beginning.”

“I didn’t think he could make Fury happen,” she joked while sitting on a stack of wooden plyo boxes in the corner of the 15,000-square-foot facility that is CrossFit Fury.

The affiliate, which Egyed opened in 2008 with 2,600 square feet, has grown to about 500 members. In those six years, the four-time CrossFit Games competitor has introduced various offerings to the Goodyear, Arizona, affiliate, including yoga and ballet classes, to name a couple. And today, the affiliate runs a farm on about an acre of land, which coaches seeded with cabbage, romaine lettuce, golden beets, red beets, onions, two varieties of carrots, as well as parsnips and spinach.

The long-term goal for the farm is to produce those nine types of produce on seven acres of land. Such small farming can make a difference, Egyed said.

People need to know from where their food comes, he added.

“We’re so disconnected from our food and food supply.”

From Gardener to Farmer

When Egyed started writing his October CrossFit Fury newsletter, he wanted to promote home gardening and encourage members to grow their own fruits and vegetables. Likewise, he was seeking a newsletter sponsor—maybe a local organic farmer. So he asked member Brandon Brooks—a farmer who manages 5,000 acres for MK Farms, a US\$12-million-a-year operation—if he knew anyone.

“His eyes lit up,” Egyed remembered.

Brooks had always wanted to get into small-time farming; he just didn’t know how he was going to do it. He already leased seven acres of land from Snyder’s of Hanover, a Pennsylvania-based pretzel and snack-food maker with operations less than half a mile from CrossFit Fury. The two men hatched an idea to grow produce on an acre of Brooks’ land and offer it to the gym’s members via a venture called Fury Farms.

“I brought mainly the market and the labor,” Egyed said.

He added: “Members will actually be farming.”

To get their feet wet, the two men first began offering members produce from Rousseau Farming Co. in November 2014. Brooks’ friend Charlie Montgomery is the chief operating officer there. Montgomery’s wife, Christine, is the liaison between farm and gym. She carefully packs produce boxes and methodically attaches care instructions so folks can get the most out of their kale and leeks.

Egyed sees Fury Farms
as a way to practice what he
preaches about nutrition.

In the first four weeks, Fury Farms sold almost 200 boxes. Introductory pricing for the produce boxes ranged from \$22 for a small box with 10 items to \$30 for a large box with 15 items. Additional items were \$2 each, and local honey went for \$8, \$10 or \$12.

“Our ideal is 100 boxes a week,” Egyed said in early December. “We’ll probably have to have four gyms on board.”

As of mid-December, Fury Farms had two: CrossFit Incendia in Peoria, Arizona, and Free Range CrossFit in Tempe. The first of those was started by two of CrossFit Fury’s former longtime members: Brian Vayda and Lisa Powers-Vayda. Brian was Fury’s very first member. All told, 30 people from the affiliate purchased produce boxes from Fury Farms.

“We see it growing ... as we get the word out there and as people talk about it,” Powers-Vayda said.

She added: “I’d rather support a small business ... than a grocery chain.”

At Free Range CrossFit, only a handful of people bought produce boxes, but owner Matt Lucas said he expected that number to grow.

“I wouldn’t be surprised if we get 15 or 20 on board,” he said.



Coaches and members of CrossFit Fury currently work an acre of land and have plans to expand the farm in the future.



According to Peter Egyed, members of CrossFit Fury are “getting connected to where their food is coming from.”

Andréa Maria Cecil/CrossFit Journal

“It’s nice to know ... the face of who’s actually taking care of and producing the food that you’re going to eat.”

Egyed—formerly an amphetamines user and pack-a-day smoker who spent time in jail before **finding CrossFit in 2007**—sees Fury Farms as a way to practice what he preaches about nutrition.

Families in the gym are “getting connected to where their food is coming from.”

“The Four-Year Plan”

But Egyed’s vision doesn’t end at seven acres of farmed land. He wants bigger.

His coaches call it “the four-year plan,” and it entails building a

20,000-square-foot community center on eight to 12 acres of land. That center would not only house CrossFit Fury but also an Olympic-size swimming pool, a 400-m track and rental spaces for “health-minded professionals” such as physical therapists and medical doctors, Egyed said.

“And I was impressed by the farm,” joked Fury coach Kelly McGuire with a laugh.

The community center would include a “show-and-tell garden with operations elsewhere,” Brooks explained. Consumers could shop locally grown beef, produce, cheese, honey and milk, he said.

“We utilize Arizona-made or grown products. Everything in the whole entire store is Arizona,” Brooks continued, speaking as if it already exists.

“If you’re gonna preach it,
you should have an avenue
to give people access.”
—Ryann Roberts

Fury member Ryann Roberts, owner of Arizona Orthopedic Physical Therapy, said the community center would give members “the ability to do everything in one place.”

Roberts started CrossFit in March 2011 and since then has traveled with Egyed as his physical therapist to the Games and other competitions. He also works with most of Fury’s competitive athletes.

“His ideas are great,” Roberts said of Egyed. “If you’re gonna preach it, you should have an avenue to give people access.”

Berencsi echoed those sentiments.

“Especially given that CrossFit is all about community, I love the idea that they can do it all in one place, and it’s the community idea we preach and love so much,” she said.

And if anyone can make it happen, it’s Egyed, McGuire said.

“He is not dumb,” she explained.

Egyed has so much enthusiasm that “it’s easy to embrace his grand ventures,” added McGuire, who has known him since he was 21.

“I don’t know that everybody could pull it off.”

For the Community

Egyed described the community-center plan as “the logical next step.”

“I don’t want to do multiple locations. I’d rather have one freakin’ diamond than a couple of mediocre locations,” he said. “I’m a firm believer that if you’re not growing, you’re dying. If this is something I can do, there’s no reason why people can’t do this all over the country.”

Longtime Fury coach Alfred Rohde conceded the plan is a lofty one but said that’s no reason not to forge ahead.

“I don’t see why we can’t do it. Give me one good reason why we can’t.”

CrossFit, Rohde noted, is more than exercise.

“I think we want better human beings—not just in the fitness world but in life.”

Such a community center wouldn’t just benefit Fury members but also the greater Goodyear community, Rohde continued.

“If we really believe in CrossFit, if CrossFit affiliates believe in what they’re teaching, why wouldn’t you want to expand that? To really be a community leader or have an impact on the community, you have to do that.”

He added: “Health is for everyone.” ■

About the Author

Andréa Maria Cecil is a CrossFit Journal staff writer and editor.



If you’re starting a farm,
it’s a wise labor decision
to use hardworking
CrossFit athletes who love
functional movement.