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Brand New at Brand X

The home of CrossFit Kids offers a new gymnastics program to increase youth strength, agility and more. E.M. Burton reports.

By E.M. Burton

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All images: E.M. Burton

CrossFit Kids at Brand X is beginning a new gymnastics program to augment and support its regularly scheduled classes for kids and teens.

A recent open-house event held in the first week of October, Grand Opening Play Day, introduced both CrossFitting members and the larger population to the new program, which was set to start a few weeks later.

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Like CrossFit Kids, the gymnastics program at Brand X focuses on safety and fun.

"One of the things we see consistently in gymnasts is awesome strength," said Mikki Lee Martin, CrossFit Director of Youth Programs and co-founder of CrossFit Brand X. "When you consider that also comes with amazing coordination, balance, agility, power, etc.—all the areas of the 10 General Physical Skills—why wouldn't we augment our program in this way?"

Two new classes will be added to the schedule on Saturdays at the beginner and intermediate levels. Attendance will be capped at 10 members maximum, so each child will get more work in and receive more individualized attention.

"We have also added a Gymnastics for CrossFit class for our teen population, catering to the specialized aspects of gymnastics we use in CrossFit. This teen invitational gymnastics class is intended to push the boundaries of what our teen athletes can accomplish within CrossFit," Martin explained.

Camzin Morrell-Stinson is the instructor of the new program. A former high-level gymnast who has competed in South Africa, Morrell-Stinson has almost a decade of experience coaching, including coaching for Olympic medalist Guard Young's recreational gym and children

of all ages. Duncan Martin, son of Mikki and Jeff Martin, has been doing gymnastics for several years and will be assisting Coach Camzin and acting as a mentor for the younger kids.

"We think it's helpful as an addition to our programming," Mikki said

Although her daughter is already registered in the classes, Tiffany Pate, a CrossFit athlete at Brand X and parent of 7-year-old Michaela, came to the open house.

"I have met Camzin. She's very kid friendly, and her background is extremely impressive," Pate said. "Both the program and the coaching (are) very unique with a focus on technique."

Michaela, who brought friends along, is not currently CrossFitting but will likely start soon.

Pate believes the gymnastics training will be a good transition to CrossFit workouts for her child. She appreciates the emphasis on proper technique so Michaela will learn how to perform the movements safely, as well as the progression of movements so her daughter can improve over time.



***In traditional gymnastics classes, girls don't train on the rings.
Not so at CrossFit Brand X.***

"Back flips, front flips and beam—she wants to do it all," Tiffany said.

Classes will be co-ed for all ages, which is unique in the gymnastics world after a certain age. And all kids will be using all the equipment, breaking another rule of gymnastics where women and men focus on very different equipment for the most part.

"Traditional gymnastics is gender segregated, but both boys and girls need to have the same functional skills," Morrell-Stinson said.

"Girls will learn rings!" Martin pointed out with enthusiasm.

Dividing the classes up by age group and skill level will allow each child to progress.

"Everything we do starts in its most basic form and builds from there," Morrell-Stinson said. "Progression will be based on prerequisite skill sets that you need before you can progress. A student needs to be able to perform a skill well three times before moving on. If you have a back handspring, for example, and you want to do a double

back handspring, you have to demonstrate you can do the back handspring three times with good form, rather than having one demonstration be a fluke. We don't want the kids pushing themselves beyond a safe progression."

One thing Morrell-Stinson has seen with kids who are already CrossFitting is the pace of their adaptation.

"Watching these kids, it's amazing how quickly they got inverted and got a tripod That's something that normally takes four to six months for the average child who enrolls in gymnastics, yet it's something we've been able to achieve with all but two of the kids in this class. That goes to show what CrossFit can do for your child's physical awareness, midline stability, and so on."

One thing is certain: Morrell-Stinson had tremendous command of the room. Even with up to 20 little kids in movement, they all paid attention to her, which, as parents can tell you, is something in itself.

With the framework laid out, Morrell-Stinson can already see areas for growth in programming.

"This open house gives us an indication of who we'll have and is also a great way to get ideas for how we might support our current programming and what programs we might want to be able to offer in the future."



About the Author

*E.M. Burton is a **CrossFit Journal** staff writer.*