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# THE CrossFit JOURNAL

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## Taking It to the People

Can CrossFit meet on the country's obesity problem head on?  
Stacy McCann thinks so.

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By Stacy McCann

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All images courtesy of Stacy McCann

It's Sunday and a friend hails me amidst the exiting crowd of the church. My non-athletic husband quickly panics and adopts an Olympic sprint pace toward the parking lot with the kids. Coward. I turn to my girlfriend and smile patiently.

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***CrossFit can be used by people regardless of age and fitness level, making it accessible to everyone everywhere.***

"We want you to start up an exercise group here at church," she bubbles. "The elders approved it and we want you to lead it. You're in such great shape!"

My armpits start to sweat. Six minutes later, I untangle myself from the gaggle of church ladies and promise to think it over. I duplicate my husband's Carl Lewis impersonation toward the car, cussing under my breath like an ambushed soldier in a foxhole. Someday I'll meet that damn Glassman guy and will punch him square in the nose for getting me addicted to CrossFit. Now even the church ladies want in on the secret. How ridiculous!

I slam the car door and relay their insanity to my husband.

"You should do it! You love that stuff (CrossFit), but can they sue you if one of them drops dead of a heart attack

or something? That stuff you do will kill 'em." My husband: always the optimist.

But he's not far off. The women are—with the exception of one other youngin' under 40 like myself—significantly overweight, and most remember where they were the day JFK was shot. They, like my aging parents, believe in cutting calories to slim down and good old-fashioned genetics to save them. They also collectively have a three-page list of medical ailments and joint issues, as well as bathroom cabinets full of pills. There's no way I could help those sweet, old church ladies find their inner tigresses and get healthy.

Or could I?

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There's a verse in Matthew 9 (don't get nervous, this isn't about religion) when Jesus looks over the multitude of people and has compassion for them "because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." Spiritual discussions aside, I think the quote applies to the physical status of our country. America faces a national health-care crisis as millions grow in girth and disease, threatening the very future of our youth and our nation's destiny. There are thousands of CrossFit boxes cropping up around the world to help better the health of their respective communities. But I believe we, as a community, cannot only do a lot more to help address this national epidemic of obesity but can also offer a missing element in the government's plans for this hazardous situation. I believe CrossFit has a role in the grassroots movement to build a stronger, healthier populace. But how do we bridge the gap between elite fitness and Uncle Bud's couch, and why should we care?

Allow me to indulge in a quick anecdote for perspective on the latter. In 1996, my conservative upbringing compelled me to drive three hours back home with a girlfriend—a Democrat—to vote in the presidential election. Heading back to our beach-side college town, we talked politics and why she voted for Bill Clinton. After a couple of minutes I could sense she hadn't really voted because she understood the Democratic platform or found a particular issue burdensome. On the contrary, it was just something everybody should do and, "It doesn't really matter who you pick. After all, that's Washington. It has nothing to do with me." Ah, my young, dumb, sweet friend, it does. I preached for 20 minutes on how that box she just checked would hire a bunch of other people who, in turn, would hire a whole government full of people, including judges who will be sitting on the bench to hear her traffic violations and set tax rates that affect how much of our meager wages we keep each week. It affects all of us.

Journeying through my daily regimen, I observe volumes of people lumbering through life in extra-large jeans with diet sodas in hand. I recently volunteered at my

son's school for a party rewarding those students who spent four weeks reading a meager 15 minutes a day. As I served ice cream and soda punch with powdered-sugar doughnuts, I cringed watching child after butterball child roll up to the table sweating from a minute on the dance floor and looking for some refreshment. These kids were in third grade and not unlike many children across the country. It affects all of us.

Those third graders are the leaders of tomorrow. Their sedentary parents are our co-workers, neighbors, friends and even family. And their grandparents are part of the largest group of American people for whom President Barack Obama and our government are scrambling to figure out how to pay for health care. And guess who gets to pay for them all? It affects all of us.



***Most athletes aren't ready for a parallel handstand push-up, but the CrossFit program is scalable and accessible to everyone.***

## The Problem: Obesity

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention uses things like BMI, weight scales and risk to determine people's level of obesity, but we all know who they are. They include sedentary Baby Boomers like my parents who fad diet and scale their intake to 1,200 calories a day only to balloon up again when they can't resist the holiday cookies. America has grown slothful and sick. They are topping the charts in coronary heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, cancers and soda consumption. Even if they're only 15 lb. overweight, it is only a matter of time before most weigh themselves into the obese category.

We've all tuned out the statistics: 72.5 million U.S. adults were obese in 2007-08, according to the CDC. The agency considers obesity to be a national health threat. In 2008, medical costs associated with obesity were estimated at \$147 billion, according to an August 2010 [CDC report](#). Let me repeat that: \$147 billion. During that year, people who were obese had medical costs that were \$1,429 higher than people of normal weight, according to the report.

According to the CDC, obesity affects some populations more than others:

Non-Hispanic blacks: 36.8 percent.

Non-Hispanic black women: 41.9 percent.

Hispanics: 30.7 percent.

Non-high-school graduates: 32.9 percent.

And obesity prevalence also was higher in particular regions, according to the CDC:

The South: 28.4 percent.

Midwest: 28.2 percent.

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***Sadly, physical activity is a rarity for many, and obesity rates are increasingly concerning.***

Obesity has doubled in adults and tripled in children from 1980 to 2008. Click [here](#) and you can find the CDC's U.S. Physical Activity Statistics for your state. The numbers are alarming and growing.

There's something to be said for the old adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Solutions under the Obama administration to help the unhealthy and uninsured in this country will drive health-care costs upward of \$1 trillion and add \$230 billion to the federal deficit by 2019, according to a July 2009 letter Congressional Budget Office director Douglas W. Elmendorf wrote to U.S. Rep. Charles Rangel, chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means. Let that soak into your paycheck and stew.

Any CrossFit trainer will tell you to look up "hyperinsulinemia" on the Web and you'll never again look at that Oreo-cookie cheesecake as rapturously. Any CrossFitters will tell you how much better they feel, how much more efficiently they move, and how much less pain they're in because of their newfound passion for the CrossFit paradigm. So how do we bridge the gap between what we know works and take it to the communities around us, especially the low-income students in your hometown, perhaps in that neighborhood you avoid driving through where kids eat sugar cereal for dinner and know every level of Super Mario Galaxy by heart?



***Changing a nation's fitness won't be easy, but it is possible.***

Let's look at the government's approach. Fortunately, the medical community and our nation's leaders are aware of the problem and are building campaigns to battle obesity in our country.

"The Surgeon General's Vision for a Healthy and Fit Nation 2010" opens by saying this:

*Our nation stands at a crossroads. Today's epidemic of overweight and obesity threatens the historic progress we have made in increasing American's quality and years of healthy life. Two-third (sic) of adults and nearly one in three children are overweight or obese. In addition, many racial and ethnic groups and geographic regions of the United States are disproportionately affected. The sobering impact of these numbers is reflected in the nation's concurrent epidemics of diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic diseases. If we do not reverse these trends, researchers warn that many of our children—our most precious resource—will be seriously afflicted in early adulthood with medical conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. This future is unacceptable. I ask you to join me in combating this crisis.*

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The 21-page vision statement includes proposals to fix the epidemic. You can guess the logical ones: prevention, nutrition training, physical activity and more time restrictions for television and computer usage. Further, the surgeon general recommends taking these changes to all avenues of a child's world: day-care center, school, parents, doctor's office. Likewise, adults need to be reached at their work sites—from the construction workers to the CEOs.

The recommendations require much more space and time than can be simply highlighted here. The concluding appeal is for grassroots efforts to engage in the endeavor to snatch America from the road of sloth and disease and put it back on the highway of ingenuity and health. There are many areas in which one could help overhaul the Big Mac culture: the health-care community, government programs, grassroots sports, local schools and so on.

### **One Person at a Time**

Josh Wagner of [CrossFit Apex](#) is trying to make a difference. Wagner co-owns the affiliate with his wife, Tanya, 2009 CrossFit Games winner.

Wagner expands his sphere of influence over the high-school students he teaches daily. Supplied with little more than a district-approved curriculum to teach various sports in 90-minute classes, Wagner challenged himself to bridge the gap between his brimming passion for CrossFit and the unhealthy sizes and lifestyles of his students. With most of his students prepared to stand around in class when not interested in learning the dictated sport-du-jour, Wagner began implementing fitness for half of each class, CrossFit-style. Running, swimming, burpees, lunges, push-ups,



*Targeting young people might be a way to educate them and help them pursue lifelong fitness.*

mountain climbers, push presses, dumbbell work and squats became part of the mandatory curriculum. Daily instructional topics range from functional movements to nutrition, sugars, cheating and integrity.

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**—Josh Wagner**

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The result is that the entire school has bought into the program. All the teachers are CrossFitting, and all the fitness testing has been incorporated and standardized with CrossFit measurements. All push-ups at his school are chest-to-deck and performed in one of three variations according to ability. Heavier kids are pushing just as hard as the varsity athletes, and the community of support between them is astounding.

“Instead of running for distance, we run for time,” Wagner said. “So, in 10 minutes, the heavy kid may have only done three laps, and the jock may have done 10, but it doesn’t matter. Nobody cares how each of them did. They both pushed to their maximum and their greatest potential.”

Josh continued: “Most (physical education) teachers focus on the average numbers. There’s no accountability and they’re not pushing the kids.”

According to Wagner, students might hate it when they sign up for his gym classes, but most pine for it after the semester is up and they're off to another elective, craving and missing the accountability and growth.

"Kids will buy in based on your passion," he said.

And Wagner's kids are buying in bulk. He says his students are realizing muscles are byproducts of heavy effort and better functional movement across the board instead of just isolated jewelry to wear during the summer. Parents e-mail him, praising him for changing their children's lives, and he said one boastful mother wrote that her son used to eat nothing but cereal but now gets up at 5:30 a.m. to cook himself eggs every morning.

But some challenges still lie ahead.

The school's weight room, for instance, consists more of expensive machines than dumbbells, but Wagner remains undaunted. His heroic efforts are not unnoticed. He and Tanya have been invited a second time to a school-district meeting in April to present, promote, demonstrate and educate on the measurable health-forming habits promoted by CrossFit and how it can be implemented into other area schools.

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"I would like to have everyone fitness test the same across the country. Just like taking someone's blood pressure, it's the same all across the country," he said.

CrossFit is simple, affordable, scalable and measurable. Wagner said he believes schools, government and health-care programs can use it to benchmark children and follow their health career through life. In preparation for that yet-obtained dream, Wagner has all his students journal and blog workouts. Even his 54-year-old mother has bought into the program.



*Active kids are almost always healthy kids.*

"She couldn't understand how eating differently would change things like cholesterol and sugars. She thought we were whacked out, but the body works the way the body works," Josh explained.

Wagner now is considering an affiliate patterned after the [Blue Flame CrossFit](#) program that would be a non-profit box for the children at his school.

Wagner's results at his high school and at CrossFit Apex—whether with adults or in its growing CrossFit Kids program—are encouraging and prove the unimaginable realm of influence of just one passionate trainer.

Grassroots energy like that of the Wagners is what makes CrossFit such a valuable tool for the populace. Whether in the realm of children, adults or aging seniors, more can be done to educate and reverse the grip of obesity on the country. Working with kids affords the luxury of changing lives before they are entrenched in bad habits and offers a brighter promise for the future.

But what about the older population?

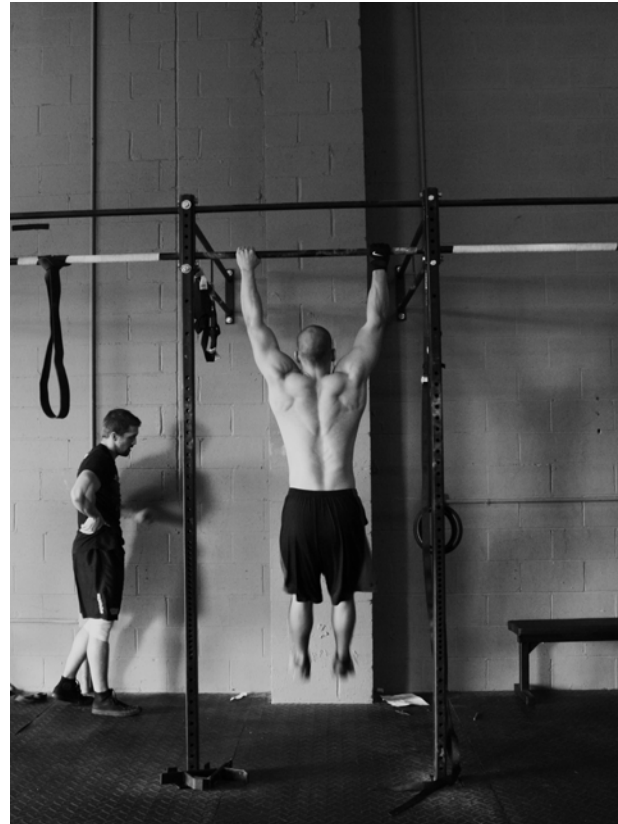
Certainly, as the surgeon general advocates, the same principles guide the mission with regard to nutrition and lifestyle coaching, as well as physical activity. Yet, the years of accumulated experiences and often bad habits can preclude the success of even the most motivated adults.

Roman philosopher, statesman, lawyer and political theorist Marcus Tullius Cicero said, "He who knows only his own generation remains forever a child."

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*"You can often change your circumstances by changing your attitude." —Eleanor Roosevelt*

### **The Psychology of Obesity**

There's a complex contributor conspicuously absent from the equation that needs to be mentioned: the psychology of obesity. As Eleanor Roosevelt put it, "I am today because of the choices I made yesterday." Years of patterned abuse cannot easily be overhauled by a couple of flyers or a New Year's resolution to join a gym.

Information and well-intentioned self-motivation will not necessarily transform the obese into Paleo-eating CrossFitters. Globo Gyms lose their new January clients by the end of February for a reason. Despite the logic you put in front of them, if it's not mirrored by an internal genuine paradigm shift and good coaching, the efforts will not come to fruition. It is critical for us to be knowledgeable on the internal issues commonly overlooked that are partly to blame for crippling the progress of millions.

"You can often change your circumstances by changing your attitude," Roosevelt also said.



Socioeconomics, culture, medical issues, stress and lack of exercise are significant contributing factors in obesity. There is also emotional eating, sleep deprivation, biochemical imbalances and cycles of dysfunctional psychological thinking.

A group of Australian scientists investigated the psychology of three groups of women and their weight in a study published in 2003 in the *International Journal of Obesity*. Unlike people of normal weight—and more importantly, unlike formerly obese women who had lost and kept off their weight—women who had regained their weight alone had certain psychological factors that weren't found in the other two groups, the scientists found. The most notable factors were a tendency to evaluate self-worth in terms of weight and shape, dichotomous thinking, and a tendency to use eating to regulate mood. The re-gainers also were found to have failed to achieve their desired weight goal and were dissatisfied with their progress.

In this situation, there are many who might argue the theory of which came first: the chicken or the egg? These women wouldn't feel depressed and have low self-esteem if they ate more vegetables and less pizza and did some intense interval weight training. But it's not just women and it's not just overeating that have led so many down this destructive path. Denial, projection, lack of motivation and biochemistry can play into the equation.

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**There is a social stereotype that overweight people are such because they're lazy, eat into the wee hours of the morning and have no self-discipline. The fact is, according to *Psychology Today*, that it is a complex interconnected entanglement of biology and psychology that entraps so many in super-sized jeans.**

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"At the center of obesity-depression link is biology, notably the hormonal pathway known as the HPA axis," according to *Psychology Today*. "It is the route of communication between the hypothalamus, the peanut-sized part of the brain that governs parts of the nervous system, and the pituitary and adrenal glands, which secrete a variety of hormones.

"These three points of the body work together to maintain chemical equilibrium when the body is under stress. The HPA axis is responsible for releasing cortisol, the so-called 'stress hormone.' It plays a critical role in energy metabolism as well as other functions. The problem is, cortisol prompts the body to deposit fat around the abdomen, a pattern that is especially hazardous to health. Chronic stress also begets depression."

So do we all check in with a local psychologist or psychiatrist for counseling? No. But there is a social stereotype that overweight people are such because they're lazy, eat into the wee hours of the morning and have no self-discipline. The fact is, according to *Psychology Today*, that it is a complex interconnected entanglement of biology and psychology that entraps so many in super-sized jeans. More research is needed, but for the sake of our efforts we have to understand it's not always a simple choice of changing to a Paleo diet. Some of these people really feel helpless, hopeless and trapped in an ongoing, never-ending circuit of pain and frustration, harassed by the media and social stereotypes that isolate them further in their struggle.

Having said that, people can be motivated to change when you explain the profits to be gained. This is commonly known as "what's in it for me?" There are hundreds of motivators for people: money, pride, challenge, emotional investment, love and vengeance, to name a few.

I believe CrossFit and its unique blend of fitness excellence, quality training and unprecedented passion can satisfy a missing element in the battle against obesity like no other entity.

### **Is CrossFit the Answer?**

Superior CrossFit trainers around the world are zealously taking on the challenge one person at a time. I believe it's all about connection.

"(Abraham) Maslow's theory is that people are motivated by a hierarchy of needs: that hierarchy being physiological needs, safety needs, belonging needs, esteem needs and self actualisation needs," wrote Kevin Dwyer, founder of Change Factory. The Australian-based business consulting company specializes in change management.

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Motivating others is a myth, he said.

"People cannot be motivated by others. They are motivated from within. Leaders can however set up an environment in which people are able to motivate themselves," Dwyer wrote.

Can you see how the CrossFit box fits into that mold perfectly?

How many of us haven't used the strain of lifting a maximum weight over our heads to burn off the ire of a failed meeting at work or a squabble with a significant other?

There's something to be said about the fire of affliction and using it to burn off the dross. I believe CrossFit is that fire.

"It's the confidence and empowerment," said Sam Fariss, head trainer at [Southern Maryland CrossFit](#). "The first time you put a bar overhead ... that's serious. It bleeds into real life."



*Creating a culture of effort and excellence will create people who are better equipped to tackle the challenges of life.*

Southern Maryland CrossFit owner and co-founder Lonnie Zeimetz agreed.

She lamented CrossFit HQ's decision to frequently publish pictures of bikini-clad, or even less-clad, people on the main site. She said she believes it's counterproductive to the health movement and to CrossFit and only serves to intimidate the millions of average people out there who investigate CrossFit.

"We started removing those pics off our website and put up pics of average people. And no shit, since we've started that, we've gotten more people!" Zeimetz said.

The affiliate has tripled its membership numbers in four months and has Zeimetz surveying new location prospects for the summer. Tools like a great website, monthly videos and, most significantly, Facebook have helped attract inquisitors.

Social media is key, Zeimetz said: "When they watch a video or see pics on our website, they say, 'Hey, this lady does it and she's as big as me.'"

Southern Maryland CrossFit's athletes come in all colors, shapes and age groups, and they all have their own difficulties, Zeimetz and Fariss said.

Although they admitted to wanting more athletes for local competitions and even CrossFit Games contenders, their goal is to have a positive impact on more people, Zeimetz and Fariss said. Like many affiliates, Southern Maryland CrossFit brings in newbies with one-on-one coaching, free sessions, trial group sessions and lots of scaled workouts.

"We want everyone to be part of what we're doing," Zeimetz said.

That is exactly why CrossFit must join the national battle against obesity and stand as a significant contributor in the fight. Whether it's men who need a competitive challenge to get them in the door or the very real concern



***Repeatable, measurable results can help people really buy into a fitness program.***

of a supportive trainer to cheer on a struggling wrestler on the local JV team, CrossFit can meet the need. Nutrition, physical demand and supportive training are the very qualities CrossFit can market to the world.

Quantifiable results and progression can help compel some of these struggling people to find success. Redefining success for weight-losers and transforming their goals from losing inches to lifting more pounds or conquering double-unders combat some of the challenges people face when engaging in a weight-loss program. The consequent empowerment and success for the newcomer shifts the focus from calorie counting to topping last month's PRs.

And CrossFit is slowly redefining beauty for women in particular. CrossFit confronts the media's portrayal of impossibly skinny models as the template for health and desire. But of all the innumerable benefits we could list for taking CrossFit to a larger scale in helping the country to get healthy, its most precious selling point is the symbiotic client-trainer relationship and its consequent community of knowledge and support.

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**"We want everyone to be part  
of what we're doing."**

**—Lonnie Zeimetz**

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*Melissa Garner decided to get fit so she could raise a healthy child.*

Case in Point: Garrett Smith, owner of Crofton CrossFit, and Melissa Garner

### **The Client-Trainer Relationship**

"I'm not a half-asser," said Garner, January Athlete of the Month at Crofton CrossFit. Like many, she struggled with her weight for years. Long hours in the weight room with the high-school football coach had her muscled and ready for college volleyball. College came, and so did a tumultuous storm of health issues in her sophomore year. Unknown to many around her, Garner not only struggled with her weight but was diagnosed in college with bipolar disorder. Years of combating different medications and strategies to try to

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**"What started my change back to a healthy lifestyle was the fact that I wanted to have a child and I knew I had to do everything I could to set up a healthy lifestyle for that child."**

**—Melissa Garner**

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get the chemical imbalance under control sidelined her athletic career and threatened her physical health. The proverbial negative cycle began and left her on the couch, despondent and unhelpful.

Despite her growing health issues, Garner said she had an inspiring husband and extended family that supported and loved her through the tough cycles.

Then, she said, "I had my fuck-it moment."

Garner said she knew she wanted kids, and the risks of the medications she was on, as well as the health risks of her obesity, were restricting her.

"What started my change back to a healthy lifestyle was the fact that I wanted to have a child and I knew I had to do everything I could to set up a healthy lifestyle for that child," she said.

With the support of her husband, Nick, on her weight-loss challenge—they have collectively lost 115 lb.—Melissa embarked her new start at a Globo Gym and found some initial success.

Six months and 25 lb. later, however, a new chemical knocked Garner out of her routine and landed her on the couch, virtually halting all progress. But her husband wouldn't let her quit, she said. Appealing to her competitive nature, he begged her to join him at his CrossFit box. Once there she said she spied a girl lifting and thought, "That's all that girl's doing? I can definitely do more than that!"

Enter Smith.

"When I started I could not do the six-inch box jump when I got there. Now my last max is 32 inches. He would always be there to encourage me. He doesn't judge a single person he sees. He will do everything he can to help you. Every single person was open ... I fell in love with it," Garner said.

One year and three months later, Garner has lost another 40 lb. and 10 percent body fat and dropped to a size 12 from a 26W, she said. She continues to PR, has gained control of her medical issues and, because of CrossFit's health effects, has been able to considerably decrease her medications, she said. And on the days Garner struggles during that last set of pull-ups, Smith casually walks over and says three words to her: "Remember those goals." For her, it stokes the fire and she pumps out the blood and sweat for another max effort, she said.

A self-proclaimed perfectionist, Garner admitted to trouble with goal setting. It's difficult for many people, according to Smith.

"It's a lifestyle change, not a 90-day fad," he said.

Coming from a successful career at a Globo Gym, Smith said he got tired of coaching the same clients through cycles of dieting and temporary fixes. Himself a possible contender for the upcoming Games—in addition to a handful of others from Crofton CrossFit—Smith lives and breathes CrossFit. He spends one-on-one time with every person who walks through the doors and befriends them.

"You have got to get a feel for them ... and be part of their life," said co-trainer Paige Kline, Smith's girlfriend.

Set small goals at first, they said.

"The first month, get here three times a week. Then work up to four to six times ... Then we start setting goals that are scaled, spend lots of time practicing and being realistic. There's always someone here getting a goal. Even if," he said with a chuckle, "it's the inner unspoken goal of the guy who finally has the confidence to take (his) shirt off."

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**"It's a lifestyle change,  
not a 90-day fad."**

**—Garrett Smith**

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Crofton CrossFit recently moved to a larger space to meet client demand.

"People grow family here," Smith said with a smile.

"It's figuring out those little things for each person's personality," Garner said about Smith. "He knows how to judge a person's personality and how to work with them. If you're willing to put in the effort, he's right there saying, 'We're going to get this. Let's work on this.'"

That encouragement has prompted Garner to take the CrossFit Level 1 Seminar in March and the CrossFit Kids course in April.

"I would love to do whatever I can to help (people) with the experience I've had," she said.

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Garner's advice to those out there who might be trapped inside their own brand of medical issues and overweight bodies: "It's not going to be easy. You're gonna cry. You're gonna want to quit ... the fact that you want to make the effort, that's what matters. You're gonna love to hate it!"

Plus, the CrossFit family helps you get through it, Garner said.

"They (are) so supportive. I see how much this has helped me," she said. "Here, you're still an individual, but you're pushing each other. It's a community. You all have your goals. We're all going to make sure we're all going to get to all of those goals."

Garner's story is just one of the many successes within the Crofton CrossFit family and not unlike the many that could be spotlighted. CrossFit's goal-changing, athlete-conditioning, success-finding, family-inspiring style of fitness offers a unique and powerful tool that can help change the crisis of obesity and put us on a path toward strength and achievement.

### **Bust Out the Kool-Aid Stands**

Certainly there are innumerable other sports and activities that are health-forming and satisfying. CrossFit is not the end-all, be-all to fitness. But at the very least CrossFit can be a significant tool used by many more in our country to reverse the path of unhealthy living.

"CrossFit is about taking everyday movements and putting it into an exercise program," Alamo CrossFit owner Rick Martinez said Feb. 9 on CrossFit Radio.

It's not just for MMA fighters, special ops and SWAT teams. It's for grandma, and her five-year-old granddaughter, too.

If Alex Scott can have **lemonade stands** all across the nation collecting money to fight childhood cancer, why can't the nation of CrossFitters start Kool-Aid stands around the country collecting to fight obesity?

Grab that Brian MacKenzie guy, swap some tattoo stories and get his recipe for that coconut milk post-WOD drink. Build some stands and put them in the parks, the spring festivals, the grocery stores, the schools, the nursing homes, the seniors' centers, the doctors' offices and outside every McDonald's in the land and collect for the fight against obesity. Staff them with your gray-haired Kool-Aid drinkers from your box and some of your friendliest coaches. Sell the CrossFit Kool-Aid—and MacKenzie's coconut juice—and preach the gospel of how CrossFit is the answer.



*CrossFit is about creating a community of healthy people, not just a "gym."*

While most of us are focusing on the upcoming Games and championing our box's contenders, it's hard to stop and ponder the rest of the world. A wise friend at the *CrossFit Journal* told me, though, that the bullet-eating commandos of the SEALFIT movies and the superhuman athletes competing at the Games account for only a small percentage of the CrossFit population. If CrossFit can partner with Reebok, one of the most well-known athletic brands in the world, we also can build a partner somewhere, somehow to bring the passionate ideals and life-saving benefits of CrossFit to the people who need it most.

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**As a country and as a global human community, we are only as great as our weakest members.**

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Thankfully, we have hundreds of excellent affiliates like Southern Maryland CrossFit, CrossFit Apex and Crofton CrossFit with passionate trainers who invest in the life of every member who walks through the door. Many affiliates out there have some grand ideas on marketing and finding niches in the community, be it young, old or in between. How do we consolidate these ideas and use that knowledge for all affiliates so they can reach out to the growing number of aging Baby Boomers—another 4 million will turn 50 this year—and their sedentary progeny? What can we as the CrossFit community do to address the strain of their failing health on the economy, our health-care system and our own lives? And what of their children and children's children?

What can we do collectively to help reach more people and implement CrossFit on a grander level? The SEALFIT movies should remind us all that those teams of men and women who are unsurpassed in stamina and performance are only as great as their weakest link. As a country and as a global human community, we are only as great as our weakest members. You can do anything you want in this life, but no one does it alone. Even Mike Tyson had a coach.

Whatever your motivation for helping, I implore you to take a few minutes to ponder how we, as a community, can compile a plan to take it to the people. As for the gaggle of church ladies I love and adore, they have no idea what's coming.

They certainly have no idea that my role as an exercise leader would consist more of push-ups and air squats than dancing to the oldies.

Will they revolt? Probably.

Will I have to scale down and adjust considerably for their age, ability and tastes? You bet.

Am I qualified? Not really, but I've now got a Level 1 certificate, and I've been picking the brains of the great trainers around me.

Will I try to do something to help these ladies? Yes.

Why? Because it affects all of us.



### About the Author

*Stacy McCann found CrossFit after fighting (and winning) a five-year battle of advanced Lyme disease. Despite permanent damage, she continues to find ways to prove to friends and family that the elite fitness CrossFit creates is attainable by even the weakest, sickest and smallest. She lives in*



*Annapolis, Md., with her husband and two boys and looks forward to the Masters Games competition in a few years.*