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Let's fly! Poles, hoops provide unique workouts at Fly Fitness

By BRIAN BREHM The Winchester Star
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1 of 3



Milissa Marshall of Berryville is the owner of Fly Fitness at 234 Hope Drive in Winchester, where pole, stretch, chair aerial, and soon-to-come bungee fitness classes are offered. An open house will be held on Saturday, July 25, from 4 p.m.

Jeff Taylor/The Winchest

Tired of the treadmill? Lousy with ellipticals? Fly Fitness may be just the thing you need to get in shape.

Fly Fitness melds exercise with the grace of dance and gymnastics by teaching its clients pole dancing and aerial acrobatics. When you walk through the door of the workout center at 234 Hope Drive in Winchester, you'll find two rooms: one with a dozen floor-to-ceiling silver poles and the other with a pair of lyra hoops hanging from the ceiling.

"It is an incredible workout," owner Milissa Marshall of Berryville said on Wednesday morning.

Marshall, a former art teacher with Frederick County Public Schools, got into the workout business in October 2019 when she bought the pole and aerial exercise studio where she was a client: Dazzling Diva Fitness in the Pineville Plaza at 121 Weems Lane in Winchester.

After signing the contract and becoming an independent business owner, Marshall said, "I started kind of prowling for a new space because I knew I wanted to find something that maybe was a little larger, maybe where I'd have an opportunity to do a little more. It was kind of limited there."

Her search ended at 234 Hope Drive, a vacant space inside a recently built retail and office complex. On Jan. 25, 2025, Dazzling Diva Fitness left its longtime home in the Pineville Plaza, moved to Hope Drive and rebranded itself as Fly Fitness.

The pole dancing portion of Fly Fitness is located in a room with a mirrored wall and 12 metal poles. Using those steady, firmly secured poles, Marshall said she can offer a range of workouts that tone muscles throughout the body. Beginners learn basic spins and floor moves while hanging onto the poles. As their strength improves, Marshall and her team of eight instructors will show them more advanced techniques, some of which involve wrapping their legs around a pole and hanging upside down.

"The deceiving thing is, it looks so fun that people don't necessarily realize that it's a hard workout," Marshall said. "The core strength is incredible."

In the lyra room, clients use a pair of suspended metal hoops to execute poses and perform sequences designed to increase strength, flexibility and poise.

"Pole and lyra are really our bread and butter, but we're constantly trying out other dance formats," Marshall said. "But the big thing that's getting ready to happen is, we are going to be rolling out a bungee fitness program."

Marshall explained that bungee cords will be attached to the ceiling at the same places as the dance poles. Customers wearing a harness will be hooked to one of a dozen bungees and perform floor exercises like running and squatting while the elastic ropes provide resistance and build strength.

While the exercises at Fly Fitness are fun and beneficial, there may be some people who are reluctant to give it a try.

"When Dazzling Diva first opened back in 2008 ... it was definitely a lot less known at that time. But what I've seen since then is that it's really grown as a type of workout," Marshall said. "The upper body strength that you will develop as a result of doing pole fitness and lyra is incredible."

Another potential barrier stopping new clients from going to Fly Fitness is their concern that they don't have enough upper body strength for pole dancing or lyra acrobatics.

"My first response is always, 'That's OK, you will get it,'" Marshall said. "And if you keep coming regularly, you will be surprised at how quickly that [upper body strength] increases."

"You're going to increase strength. going to increase endurance, and there's a cardio component to the workout" she continued. "But I think one of the biggest benefits that people may not necessarily realize and maybe isn't visible immediately is the awakening within yourself. The confidence that it gives people is amazing."

If you want to feel that sense of accomplishment for yourself, a great opportunity to do so will be during Fly Fitness' open house from 2 to 4 p.m. Saturday, July 25, at 234 Hope Drive.

"Folks can come in, get a tour of the studio, meet the team," Marshall said. "We're offering some mini 30-minute classes for \$10, and anybody who signs up for their first regular class that day is going to get that \$10 back as a credit on their account."

The abbreviated pole sessions will be offered at 2:15 and 3 p.m. Saturday, and the introductory lyra courses will occur at 2:30 and 3:15 p.m. Walk-ins are welcome but you can also sign up in advance at flyfitnessva.com/our-classes.

If you find that Fly Fitness is a good match for you, you can sign up for its standard one-hour exercise sessions that cost \$32 each. You can also purchase a membership to the studio that allows you to attend four to 12 classes per month at a discounted rate.

"We already have somewhere between 40 and 50 members," Marshall said. "I think that's pretty telling right there that we have that many people who love this enough that they are willing to say, 'Yeah, I'm gonna put money behind this every month and I'm committed to coming.'"

If you're still a little sheepish, Marshall offers the following advice: "Don't be intimidated. We are here for you, we're going to take the journey with you and you're gonna end up loving it."

To learn more about Fly Fitness and the classes being offered at Saturday's open house, visit flyfitnessva.com.

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