

Business

Meet the Owner: HOPEFitness

Helping people with disabilities get into shape, have fun and make friends.

By [Chris Boyle](#) [Email the author](#) October 8, 2012

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Many people who are possess intellectual, developmental, or physical disabilities are often denied many of the activities that most people often take for granted; among them are having a place to go and get in shape in a fun, judgment-free atmosphere.

One man took note of that imbalance and actively sought to change it.

[HOPEFitness](#), a gym specially geared towards people with disabilities, was incorporated back in 2004, when several factors prompted owner H.L. Greenberg to start his unique and important business.

"First and foremost, I have a son who is developmentally disabled," he said. "I wanted a place for him to be able to go and get healthy and make friends, and have the same opportunities that you and I have."

When you walk into HOPEFitness, the contrast to your typical exercise club is readily apparent; this is a gym that creates an atmosphere that helps the disabled thrive and succeed at fitness.

"The main difference is that someone comes to work out here, we have very caring, experienced, compassionate, friendly staff waiting to help them with a smile," he said. "Plus, all of our equipment is user-friendly and we don't have the big, clunky machines that you'll find in other health clubs where someone could get hurt."

Greenberg, originally a local entrepreneur, quickly found himself in the midst of a significant career change once HOPEFitness got off the ground.

"I was a small business owner here in Nassau County in the finance industry," he said. "HOPEFitness is something I started on the side as a part-time thing to give some people some opportunities and then it snowballed into a full-time thing."

Greenberg called upon his vast experience in helping train people with disabilities to get Hopefitness off the ground.

"I had been a Special Olympics coach for many, many years at least 15," he said. "Aside from Special Olympics training, these individuals have almost no place to go where they have an opportunity to get healthy and be a member of a gym like anybody else."

While HOPEFitness' corporate office is based in East Meadow, the gyms themselves are located in North Bellmore and Bohemia. In addition, HOPEFitness associates make "house calls" seven days a week.

"Basically, we go into day programs, group homes, schools, hospitals," he said. "We bring equipment, we bring music, and we offer safe, supervised fun in a one-hour workout. We offer cardio to help them lose fat and strength training to build muscle tone."

While Greenberg perceives a very real need to expand his business to reach more people who need it, the current trials and tribulations of a tough economy are very real hurdles against him doing so.

"It's a shame, because there's a great demand for what we do," he said. "People in places like the five boroughs, Westchester and New Jersey have been waiting for us to open up there. I have people from Eastern Long Island who travel over an hour to get to our facility. They'd love for us to come out there."

Hopefitness offers free trial workout and families of disabled members are allowed to use the facilities at no cost.

For Greenberg, the ability to help people enjoy their lives is the ultimate reward.

"It feels good and we're trying to give back," he said. "When you hear the success stories, when people come in and tell you that they're feeling better, sleeping better, we see people coming from all walks of life with disabilities, and they're making friends, forging relationships and they're getting healthy at the same time. It's a great feeling."