



STEPHANIE CHASE teaches dance class at Chase Firm Fitness studio Thursday afternoon.

Chasing fitness from the Big Apple

BY KELLY JOHNSON
Senior Editor

Tucked away in Lincoln's historic Haymarket district are two people dedicated to promoting health and fitness. Bob and Stephanie Chase, a fitness guru and former Rockette, respectively, are passionate about their lives' work.

In 1983, the Nebraskans took their Midwestern values and big-city dreams to New York City. When they returned to Lincoln in 1993, they brought the Big Apple — and a message about healthy living — back to Big Red country.

Today, as the owners of Chase Firm Fitness Program, 701 P St., they make a living by keeping fit. As instructors, Bob leads the fitness classes and Stephanie runs their studio's ballet, tap and jazz classes. But as teachers, they teach their students about respect, for life and for others. And respect for their bodies, for their health, for their well-being.

New York was good to them. There they found bagels worth an hour's wait, loyal comrades and success. And they learned lessons to share with students in Nebraska.

STRESS RELIEVER

In large cities, everyone works out to relieve stress, Bob Chase said. In fact, many large corporations have fitness mandates for employees, he said.

When he and Stephanie arrived in New York, fitness was just getting big, he said. He taught classes at American Express' corporate headquarters. The company provided workout clothes and an on-site wellness center, and all employees were required to attend fitness class.

He said the students he watched achieve success in life shared common attributes: They were hardworking, friendly and positive.

"In all fields, the thread (of success) was taking care of the body and health," he said. "People who are succeeding are doing that. It's not a frill. It's a mandatory part of their life."

Bob equates success with wellness. Indeed, many of his students have highly successful careers.

Bob's clientele in Lincoln and New York City has been illustrious.

Former Cornhusker football players Calvin Jones, Brenden Stai and Toby Wright all took Bob's fitness classes.

He trained Madonna at Broadway Fitness Center in New York.

"Madonna became an athlete," Bob Chase said. "She was a hard worker."

Jeanne Tripplehorn, who starred in "The Firm" opposite Tom Cruise, was among the students Chase taught at Juilliard School in New York City.

Bob and Stephanie share a philosophy about success: It starts with believing something is possible.

Bob says his mission here in Lincoln is to help people "take the wonderful things you grow up with (in the Midwest) and get you on the road to where you want to be."

Nebraska offers lots of opportunities that New York can't, he said. Children back East can't be involved in many activities because of the hassles of transportation and the limited space for fields, he said.

"You can get great training here," he said. "You can pursue whatever you want to, and you can succeed."

When they arrived in New York, the Chases didn't know anyone. "There was no reason we should have succeeded in New York," Bob said. But they pounded the pavement, and both found jobs dancing.

HARD WORK

"Being from Nebraska is a real plus," Stephanie said. "We knew how to work. We were honest and loyal."

The success of Husker football has helped people's mentality in the state, he said. "We now think we can compete nationally."

"I went through the Midwest attitude that 'I'm not as good as an East/West Coast person,'" Stephanie said. "You have to believe that you are good enough, she said."

"I believe in what I do," Stephanie said. "My first dance teacher instilled

in me — about dance — but more about being a human being."

Stephanie said she tries to teach her students more than dance technique, too.

"I want to teach kids to like themselves, to believe in themselves, to trust themselves, to respect themselves," she said. "It worked for me, and I want to pass it on."

While technique and respect are central to Stephanie's teaching style, fitness is also important, she said.

"I really believe in fitness as an answer," Stephanie said. "My peak dancing in New York was a combination of fitness and dancing."

And she spoke highly of Bob's fitness expertise.

Bob was considered a fitness guru in New York, she said.

"He always had 60 to 65 people in his classes."

Sheila Barker, a colleague of Bob's at Broadway Dance Studio in New York, agreed about his popularity.

"His classes were always packed," Barker said. "He is so full of life and love and respect."

CULT FOLLOWING

In Lincoln, Bob's fitness class has a cult following among many university students. The class, ranked as one of the 50 best workouts in the United States, was developed by Bob and an ultramarathoner, Stu Ullman. Ullman runs a sports physiology clinic in New York.

"He knows science, how to budget your body, nutrition, regiment to run 100 miles," Bob Chase said.

The class was designed to be the best fat-burning and lean-muscle development workout in one hour, without stressing the joints, he said. The class combines step aerobics, weight training and flexibility training.

"The workout is equivalent to walking, with the stress level involved," Chase said.

The music is preprogrammed to stay at a certain pace. "We raise the heart rate to the aerobic level, or the mid-range level, and keep it constant."

Chase said the seven- to 10-minute

warmup is important.

"The warmup pushes stored body fat into the blood stream to burn it up."

The fat-burning section of aerobic climbing on the bench and strength-training with weights is 40 minutes long.

"We're not building big muscle mass," he said. "We're going for lean muscle. It's healthier and stays with you longer."

Bob calls the routine a fat-burning aerobic workout with weights.

"It achieves all fitness goals. People become leaner, achieve definition and get flexibility training."

The cool-down is also very important, Chase said. It keeps the muscles long and keeps lactic acid moving, so people don't cramp, and it enables them to be prepared for their next workout.

HEALTHY LIVING

Bob uses the time in class to talk to students about being healthy. He often gives nutrition tips.

"You should be eating five to six small meals a day," he said, because the body needs calories for energy and to build muscle.

"You can't exist in my class without eating."

"Always gotta eat breakfast to get the metabolism going," he says.

"If you don't eat, your body won't be fired up."

He eats a variety of foods, and he never skips meals.

"The body needs calories every couple of hours," he said. "If you don't have energy, you hold onto fat. You've got to eat and work out to get ideal health and fitness."

And staying fit brings many benefits, Bob said.

"People who are in shape are more productive and more marketable," he said.

So much of physical fitness is mental, he said.

"Think about these things: Do you want to be marketable? Do you want to be a good spouse and be active with your kids?"

BOB CHASE leads a fitness class Tues



BOB, SIDNEY AND STEPHANIE chat on Thursday.