

Kevin Kennedy

Exercises His Right to Have Fun

BY JO ANN LLOYD



Kevin Kennedy (Photo by Tony Hertz)

Kevin Kennedy (NRM '77), Cal Poly alumnus and health-club entrepreneur who puts the fun in fitness, claims he's really in the entertainment business.

This doesn't mean he's not serious about fun ... or about fitness. Just one look around his newest club – a lavish facility that includes racquetball and squash courts, a 50-meter swimming pool, specially built group-fitness rooms, steam rooms, and several thousand

variety of food and beverages, including wine and beer. Friday evenings from 4:30 to 7 p.m. it's happy hour. What better way to unwind after a tough workout?

The idea to open a gym dates back to when Kennedy, a former Mustang football offensive tackle (1974, '75 and '76), was working on his senior project, a feasibility study for a downtown San Luis Obispo fitness center. He and some partners did open the Health Fitness Center in the old Sears building on Higuera Street in 1977,

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square feet devoted to weights and other equipment – tells visitors that he's quite serious about fitness.

For passive fun, there's a giant TV in a lobby filled with comfortable chairs and couches and a snack bar that serves a

but Kennedy left that venture after a few years.

He did not, however, abandon his dream of owning a health club. In 1981 he opened Kennedy Nautilus® in Atascadero, focusing more on rehabilita-

tion and injury prevention than on pumping iron and building muscles.

"Nautilus just took off," Kennedy says. "Our claim that all people need is 30 minutes of strength training, three times a week, appealed to the average person."

Kennedy has since opened an Arroyo Grande club and two in San Luis Obispo, including the Kennedy Multiplex, sometimes referred to as the Taj Mahal of health clubs in the area. He learned the formula for success from his senior project.

"People look for two things in a health club: convenience and enjoyment. They want to have fun. It's even better when they realize, 'Oh, by the way, I'm getting fit, too.'"

At his four facilities, he employs about 220 people who work with some 13,000 members in more than 100,000 combined square feet of space. But wait; there's more. He plans to break ground this spring for a health club in Paso Robles. "It's the last club I am going to do," he says. "My goal, my focus, was to be the best and the biggest in the county."

Kennedy has seen great changes in the fitness industry, most notably in the group fitness area. And although it appears he's had a pretty smooth run, he admits his predictions weren't always right on. "Remember when spin classes started?" he asks, referring to the group-cycling class so popular today. "My first reaction was, 'Who's going to sit in a room full of people and spin?'" Lots of people, it turns out.

The lesson, he says, is to always be open to ideas and change. "Don't give up on your dreams. I really am not very smart, just persistent. I'm in the 24th year of my 10-year plan." ■