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A Texas-Size Tribute

You're Not the Lone Ranger

WRITTEN BY TODD WHITTHORNE

I TELL PEOPLE ALL THE TIME that I work at Disneyland. Not technically, but if you're passionate about health and wellness then the Cooper Aerobics Center in Dallas is very much like the Magic Kingdom.

Within two minutes of my office, I have a world-class fitness center, two heated pools, four tennis courts and a mile-long padded running path. A restaurant down the hall serves delicious, healthy food. My closest colleagues include renowned doctors, exercise physiologists, personal trainers and registered dietitians. Most importantly, my boss, Dr. Kenneth Cooper, is an internationally recognized leader in preventive medicine. He invented aerobics, for cryin' out loud. Dr. Cooper doesn't just allow me to workout while at work, he actually encourages it.

It's easy for me to be healthy, which is a very important con-

cept. But for most Americans that's not the case. Embracing healthy habits can be incredibly challenging for many.

We live in a world that's often referred as "obesogenic." Many of our food options are unhealthy, and physical activity has seemingly become optional. We plant ourselves in one place, all day, staring at a screen, typing on a keyboard and talking on a phone. Then we sit in the car until we get home, where we can sit on the couch, watching hour after hour of television.

The truth is this: We're all made to eat wonderful, nutritious food. We're also born to move. To run, jump, fall, dance and play. Bill Bowerman, the late, legendary track and field coach at the University of Oregon, once famously remarked, "If you have a body, you are an athlete." He was right. However, you have to understand: You are not the Lone Ranger.

If you want to improve your health, it's not all about personal willpower. That's just a small part of a big picture. Your environments at home and work, along with those people closest to you, have an incredible impact on your personal health and quality of life. Don't believe me? The National Institutes of Health reports you are 37 percent more likely to become obese if your spouse is obese. And you are 171 percent more likely to become obese if your friends are obese.

Take a step back and ask yourself if your environment and your warm circle of family, friends and colleagues are supporting or hindering your quest for good health. If not, what strategies can you use to improve the situation? Another question might be what are you doing to have a positive impact on the lives of others? Remember, we're all in this together. Taking the time to reach out and let

someone know you support his or her efforts might make all the difference in the world — for both of you. We know from experience that it's never too late to get started. In fact, today might be the perfect time. May I suggest a nice, long walk with the dog?

DHM



Todd Whitthorne

Todd Whitthorne is a native Texan and a graduate of UCLA. During his career, he has worked as an award-winning journalist in Washington, D.C., Phoenix and Dallas, and as a nationally syndicated radio host. He is president and chief executive officer of Cooper Concepts, a division of Cooper Aerobics Center in Dallas. If you have a special Dallas experience or story to share, we would be pleased to read it and consider printing it in our magazine. Email your story to our publisher, Pete Northway, at pete@dallashotelmagazine.com.