

Osoyoos Times- Wednesday, October 1, 2008

Benefits of ski-like strolling shown at pole walking clinic

People interested in learning a fresh approach to fitness turned out to a pole walking clinic at the Sonora Centre gymnasium on Saturday, Sept. 27 at 1 pm. Jana MacFarlane, a certified instructor from Keen Fit, sponsored the free event in hopes of inspiring people to a healthier lifestyle.

For those people who want to find more energy and burn more calories without a high-impact style of exercise, this is an activity they should try, urges MacFarlane, who professed to once being a couch-potato herself. By adding ski-like poles to a simple walking routine, people can enhance their cardio workout by 20%. She goes on with the list of benefits; build upper body strength, tone the triceps, increase metabolism and thereby help with weight loss, assist in correcting posture and decrease stress to knees and backs during workouts. "In fact," she adds, "by using poles during a walk, 30 minutes can equal a full 50 minutes of a regular walk."

Given the advantages of the sport -also called Nordic walking by the Europeans- the four people in attendance were more than willing to shed their reluctance to try something new, and enthusiastically practiced the techniques. While those included simply using a "punch and pull" technique or a longer stride with a "pendulum arm motion", the participants decided it would take a few lessons to master the gait effectively.

Pole walking is relatively new to North America, but the Finnish skiers perfected the Nordic style of walking about 30 years ago. What some people viewed as a crazy form of fitness, now boasts an International Nordic Walking Association of seven million participants in the sport. Because of the simplicity of the exercise, pole walking tends to appeal to people with various health issues, or to a mature generation who is interested in keeping fit without an intensive work-out. For that reason, Osoyoos may soon see more and more people walking, not with canes, but with two poles!

by Diane Zorn

