

Interview by Colette Carr

# NEATH-AFAN GYMNASTICS

Gymnastics is one of the biggest gateway sports about, offering great skills and basis for other sports. At first glance, it doesn't seem that accessible, but think again...



**“GYMNASTICS IS THE BEST WAY TO PREPARE ANY CHILD FOR A LIFE IN SPORT – ANY SPORT!”**

Our coaches are all well trained to look for the important traits that our competitive coaches may be looking for. All our programs have a progressive rewards program. Gymnasts work through a set program, gain badges and certificates as they progress and are constantly monitored to ensure that the program they are in remains appropriate, suitable and challenging for them.

**AS WELL AS INCREASED LEVELS OF FITNESS AND HEALTH, HOW ELSE CAN MEMBERS BENEFIT FROM BEING INVOLVED?**

Gymnastics is the best way to prepare any child for a life in sport – any sport! We are very aware that only a few will go on to be high level gymnasts and so our programs are designed to create an all-around athlete, encouraging a love of physical activity, the ability to work individually as well as becoming a great team player, a good work ethic, the ability and understanding of why they need to juggle training, school work and a home and social life, how to manage and understand their bodies and of course make friends for life!

For teenagers it creates an exciting useful direction, focussing away from the less desirable temptations of young adult life.

Many of our older gymnasts move onto our very successful coach mentoring program. As a result, they can give back to the community a taste of the support and enjoyment they gained as a participant.

**WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE CLUB?**

Currently we are on two sites. The practicality of this is not great, but we manage. We would love to be able to find somewhere that we can bring the whole of our programs together under one roof. Hopefully in the process this would also cut our very high overheads.

As a volunteer run social enterprise we do access grant funding to help create new facilities and to kick start new projects, but we get no external assistance for day to day activities, priding ourselves on utilising a very effective self-sustaining business model.

[neath-afan-gymnastics.com](http://neath-afan-gymnastics.com)

## INTERVIEW NICOLA LEWIS

**WHEN WAS NEATH-AFAN GYMNASTICS FORMED AND BY WHOM?**

Neath-Afan Gymnastics Club began in 1996 as a one session a week leisure centre fun activity called Neath Flyers Gymnastics and Trampolining run on a voluntary basis by myself and Rachel Davies.

The gymnastics side grew rapidly and needed better, bigger facilities and more training time so in 2004, the two sections separated. It moved to a small sports centre in Briton Ferry which could provide the additional space and time needed. Rachel continued to run the trampolining club and I ran the gymnastics – though Rachel has continued to coach our gymnastics. The success of the gymnasts in

competitions meant I was also having to train at various other venues including Cardiff and so I sought full-time facilities. In 2010 we moved to our current facility and within three years numbers had grown from 260 to 800 every week and the competition success for gymnasts with disabilities was amazing!

In 2014 we opened a second bigger facility and purchased competitive equipment from the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. This became our competition centre and the first became our activities centre offering recreational gymnastic and trampolining based activities aiming to engage as many children and young people and encouraging a love of activity for life. We now regularly cater for over 1500 participants every week from babies

to young adults of all ages, genders, abilities and disabilities, from grass roots to high level competition.

We also go out to the community with our 'Gym in a Van', running sessions in schools, special schools, nurseries and playgroups offering classes in three satellite centres in outlying areas of the community.

**WHAT DISCIPLINES AND LEVELS ARE AVAILABLE?**

We specialise in women's artistic gymnastics, but also offer men's artistic and disabilities at competitive level, along with recreational gymnastics and trampolining, freestyle (parkour), early years for pre-schoolers, teenage specific sessions and of course our No Limits disability gymnastic and trampolining sessions which

incorporates Bouncability, a specialised therapy program using trampolines.

**WHAT CAN SOMEONE EXPECT WHEN THEY VISIT THE CLUB FOR THE FIRST TIME?**

A warm welcome, a personal evaluation of what sessions would most suit the participant, a lovely bright and warm facility, colourful wall murals, lots of lovely safe set ups for learning, friendly, enthusiastic knowledgeable staff and a wonderful learning environment.

**ARE ACTIVITIES JUST FOR FUN OR CAN THEY SPRINGBOARD TO GREATER THINGS FOR COMPETITIVE, AMBITIOUS ATHLETES?**

Neath-Afan has a very successful competitive program so is constantly looking to identify potential new talent.

## WHERE TO FIND THEM

Units 6&7, Milland Road Ind Estate, Neath, South Wales, SA11 1NJ

