

Kyle Shewfelt Gymnastics
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For Olympian Kyle Shewfelt, gymnastics is the best start for kids to be active



By Lisa MacGregor Reporter
 Global News

WATCH ABOVE: Classes are filling up at Kyle Shewfelt's gymnastics centre, but for the first Canadian gymnast who won gold, the message isn't about competition. As Lisa MacGregor reports, his gym is aiming for something stronger than the podium.



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CALGARY – Calgary's Olympic golden boy continues to inspire the next generation of gymnasts. But Kyle Shewfelt doesn't care if they're shooting for medals; he just wants them to have fun.

Tuesday, to celebrate the gym's second birthday, Kyle Shewfelt Gymnastics opened its doors for \$2 a person. Classes were full in the morning and afternoon, with kids trying to find some balance... on the beam of course.



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For parents at the club, gymnastics is a win-win. "I have three very energetic kids. So it's just a place where they can burn off some energy," said Kendra Trim.

Parents said they'd prefer their kids burn all that energy on the trampoline rather than at home!"

Jumping on the couch and jumping on the bed and yeah, it at least gets her to get rid of some energy here for sure," said Joey Hands, of her daughter.

Gymnastics has been around for more than 2,000 years and few have been better at it than gold medal winner Shewfelt.

Even though competition is in his blood, his facility is strictly for fun.

"In order to get someone to the high performance level of sport, they have to fall in love with the sport at a young age. So for us, we thought... 'We're going to focus on that foundation.

We're going to get as many kids as we can involved in the sport of gymnastics," said Shewfelt.

Hands' daughter is a regular at Shewfelt's gymnastics facility, because she's always been very energetic.

"So she's been climbing and climbing since she was really small and gymnastics is just such a good all around sport for coordination and body awareness," said Hands.

"There's so many kids that are static," said Shewfelt, "that are just sitting on their Ipads, watching television and that's just the nature of our world today. But the reality is that kids and people need to move their bodies."

It's important to keep moving at any age. Besides, who doesn't love the foam pit or trampoline?

But if Shewfelt does see potential for a future Olympian, buried in all that foam, there's always options to progress to the competitive level.

"We'll gladly pass them along to someone else, where the coaching and facility are really catered to the high-performance side of the sport."

Whichever level or path kids take in gymnastics, in Shewfelt's eyes, it's all a swing in the right direction.

"I hear their laughter and their joy and the celebration when they learn something new and it really resonates with me. I can see a lot of myself in a lot of the kids that I see that walk through the doors."

After retiring from competition, Shewfelt's dream was to build Calgary's premier non-competitive gymnastics centre where everyone, from six-month-old babies in diapers to adults to Olympic athletes, could reap the benefits of physical activity and gymnastics in a fun, supportive environment.