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# Shewfelt celebrates first year of gymnastics facility



**JEFF MACKINNON, FOR THE CALGARY HERALD**

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Stuart Gradon/Calgary Herald CALGARY, AB: April 25, 2014 - Former Olympic gymnast Kyle Shewfelt at his gym in Calgary, Alberta Friday, April 25, 2014. (Stuart Gradon/Calgary Herald) (For Business story by Mario Toneguzzi) 00054825A

Stuart Gradon Stuart Gradon / Calgary Herald

When Kyle Shewfelt arrived back in Calgary in 2004 with his Olympic gold medal, he immediately began thinking about how he was going use his new-found status to make a difference.

Nevermind that he had just become an inspiration to thousands of young athletes by becoming the first Canadian artistic gymnast to win an Olympic medal.

He got to thinking about opening his own gymnastics centre and a year-and-a-half ago he walked into a building in the southwest just off

Deerfoot and pictured a facility that would become Kyle Shewfelt Gymnastics.

It celebrated its first anniversary with a party on Thursday.

“We wanted it to be a community place; a place where Calgarians could come and have a great recreational gymnastics experience,” he said.

“It’s for everyone, from six-month-old babies who are drooling on all the equipment to adults. I really think gymnastics is for everyone, not just the tiny, 90 pound 16-year-old girls.”

Shewfelt was joined for the day by some of his Calgary Olympic friends, including fellow gold medallists Duff Gibson, who won the skeleton gold in Turin, Italy in 2006; and swimming great Mark Tewksbury, who captured the 100m backstroke in 1992 in Barcelona, Spain.

Also on hand was three-time Olympic luger Regan Lauscher, who often brings her two small children to take part in Shewfelt’s drop-in program.

“I was involved in rhythmic gymnastics for a couple of years when I was growing up in Red Deer,” she said.

“Luge and gymnastics couldn’t be farther apart in terms of sports, but I do know that gymnastics is a great sport if you want to be active and healthy.”

Shewfelt of course would agree. He was active in many sports as a children — hockey being one of them — and then was introduced to gymnastics at the age of six. He said Wednesday that he immediately felt like he was in the right place when he first tried the sport.

“When I was a kid I was at home doing cartwheels and somersaults and bouncing off the walls and I had all this energy,” he recalled.

“When I came to gymnastics I felt like it was my place and I felt free. I call gymnastic centres the place to come to feel free.”

As part of the birthday celebration, Kyle Shewfelt Gymnastics ([kyleshewfeltgymnastics.com](http://kyleshewfeltgymnastics.com)) is hosting special drop-in classes this week: Thursday from 9:30 a.m. to noon for preschoolers age six-and-under, with all-ages from 1:30 -3:30 p.m. and 5-8 p.m.; and Friday from 9:30 a.m. to noon for preschoolers age six-and-under, with all-ages from 1:30-3:30 p.m. Cost is \$5 for members and \$10 for non-members.

Shewfelt’s story is that his parents first took him to the Altadore Gymnastics Club at the age of six and Kyle trained there until the 2004 Olympics. He captured the men’s floor event in Athens, Greece and in doing so became the first Canadian to win an Olympic medal in artistic gymnastics.

Shewfelt’s goal now is not to build another Kyle Shewfelt, but to give Calgarians a place to come and have fun and bounce around.


As Shewfelt speaks he excuses himself to offer advice to fish out of water Tewksbury on how to extricate himself from the foam pit after Tewksbury took a dive off the trampoline.

“We are committed for many, many years to come to making this Calgary’s most-recognized gymnastics facility,” Shewfelt told gathered media.

“We want people to come here and try gymnastics and feel comfortable

doing it.”

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