

## A Lifelong Journey

Karen Jashinsky's personal path has led her to provide a healthy atmosphere for teens.

**Subject:** Karen Jashinsky, MBA  
**Company:** O2 MAX<sup>SM</sup>, Los Angeles.

**In the Beginning.** Despite being diagnosed with asthma and allergies at age 6, Karen Jashinsky has always been physically active. "I grew up swimming, as it was good for lung development, and playing tennis, basketball and other sports," she recalls. This natural athlete was shocked when she was unable to complete a mile in less than 12 minutes—a physical education requirement. This defeat eventually led to a revelation that would serve to shape her adult life. "I started running on the track at the local YMCA every Sunday, and that was when I also discovered the weight and cardio room," she says. "I couldn't wait to turn 14 so I could start using everything there!"

**Karen of All Trades.** After graduating from high school, Jashinsky set her sights on magazine publishing, marketing, business and fitness. Throughout college, she held internships at various magazines, including an internship at a business and marketing publishing company in London. "I grew up thinking that I would one day want to have my own business," Jashinsky says. While in college, however, she had difficulty maintaining an exercise program, which prompted her to seek the insights of a personal trainer. "That was when I really started getting into strength training," she said.

**From Trainee to Trainer.** I started working as a personal trainer right before I went back to graduate school," Jashinsky recalls. "Working out, being active and helping others was always something I loved doing; I thought it would be a fun way to make some money while I was in business school." Jashinsky found success and reward while training; but owing to her interest in business, she hes-

itated to follow a career in fitness. Little did she know, the industry had other plans. "Some of the adults I was training started asking me to work with their teenage children," she says. She trained each teen individually at first, but then decided to bring her young clients together. "I observed that [exercise] now became something fun and social. I started talking to the teens I was working with and asking them what motivated them to exercise, and if they could create their own place [to exercise], what would they want there?" Deep inside Jashinsky, a plan was brewing.

**Making Lemonade.** "On August 30, 2005, I was hit by a car while training for my first Century bike ride," recalls Jashinsky. "I broke my collarbone, fractured my back and broke my hand and finger." A flood of support from family, friends and clients helped her remain strong along the road to recovery. Refusing to be overcome by this turn of events, she moved forward with her burgeoning business plan and sought the help of area experts. "It made me take a step back, really look at the business plan and ask myself: If I am unable to work or visit schools to do the marketing, workouts and lectures, what kind of people do I need onboard to make this happen?" She gathered a group of like-minded staff and began to lay the foundation for O2 MAX.

**The Takeaway.** This spring, O2 MAX will open its doors and provide a safe and healthy afterschool center for teens. Though this particular path may not have been clear from the start, Jashinsky believes her life's events definitely shaped the outcome. "It all kind of makes sense now when I reflect back to my interests while growing up," she says. An active childhood, moving to Los Angeles to pursue a business degree and even the acci-

dent seem part of the master plan. "It was as a teen that fitness really became such a huge part of my life, and I am determined to make fitness training a positive experience for teens, as well as giving them a place where they can hang out, meet kids from other schools, listen to music and get academic help."

*Ryan Halvorson is the editorial assistant for IDEA and a certified personal trainer.*

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