

# Drumming to a different beat at Peninsula YMCA

By Prue Salasky | 247-4784  
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"Double, and double," says instructor Amy Hoover in time to the syncopated beat, whacking a rubber stabilizer ball on both sides with traditional wooden drum sticks. She's leading a handful of first-time drummers in a noon workout class at the Hampton YMCA.

[Paul Anderson](#), program membership development director for the [Peninsula Metropolitan YMCA](#), discovered the Drums Alive! program at the IDEA World Fitness Convention in Las Vegas last summer. "I knew instantly it was a home run for the Y," says Anderson. "It includes all the fitness elements, it's exciting and motivating for adults, teens and families, and it's low cost." The program was developed in Germany by Cary Evans, an aerobics instructor injured in a fall, and it has been used in Europe for physical and emotional therapy since 2004. The YMCA's only expense for the new-to-the-area program was the purchase of the drum sticks and the music and the cost of training 37 staff members, already certified in group exercise instruction, at the region's 10 branches.

The 26-inch red, white and blue balls, which are used in any number of fitness classes to improve strength and flexibility, are arranged in neat rows on stands to prevent them from rolling. They're separated by equal distances to allow drummers to move easily between and among them.

"Don't be afraid to hit them hard," says Hoover. "They can take 1,000 pounds of pressure. If you're hitting them hard enough, they'll gradually rotate. When the plug comes to the top, then just pick up the ball and turn it around. The only other caution Hoover offers is to avoid hitting the tips of the drumsticks against each other as they could break off.

For the next 45 minutes she leads the class in a fast-paced, nonstop choreographed aerobic drill, the drumsticks an essential element in the exercise. Participants variously hit both sides of the ball, drop to a single drumstick rhythm, involve the ball next to them, behind them, turn around the ball, stretch their arms to the ceiling, hit the sticks together rhythmically, squat, lunge and beat some more. The final 15 minutes are spent in a cool-down followed by mat work to strengthen the abdominal muscles.

"I loved it. It's exhilarating," says Marmalela Volk, a mother of five, taking her first class in a couple of years. "I'm very uncoordinated and tend to be unstable on my feet. I didn't think I'd be able to hang with it." To her surprise she not only was able to keep up but she really enjoyed it — and worked up a sweat. "It gives you something to do with your hands," she says. She plans to return for more classes with her children. "I was just trying it out first. It's something they — a 14-year-old daughter and sons, aged 9, 10, 12 and 13 — could do. I think they'd find it hard at first but very interesting with the sticks. It's very, very fun."

The Family Beats class on Friday evenings is Hoover's favorite. "Kids and families come. They love it. They get to beat on something with a stick, it's tons of fun. We do some more funky things at that class with people who've been coming for a while."

Lee Grandison, health and wellness director of the Hampton YMCA, sees its use of both sides of the brain simultaneously as one of the program's benefits. "You have to do it to feel it in your heart and soul. Using both hands you have to really think about it. That's when you get the synergy going."

The fun aspect appealed to participants Cynthia Jones and Jaminta Scott, who've been taking classes and working out daily for the past couple of months. "I love the drumsticks. I had a real

workout," says Jones. Both likened it to their favorite Zumba class, a Latin dance aerobics class that the YMCA has offered for almost two years. "We'll be back," says Scott.

## **News to Use**

**What:** Drums Alive! An aerobic workout using drumsticks; four levels, Power Beats for adults, Kid Beats (ages 6 to 12), Family Beats and Golden Beats (age 55 and older)

**Where:** All locations Peninsula YMCA

**When:** Check your local YMCA for class times