

# Franchising USA

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PIONEERING THE WAY FOR

## Fitness after 50



Suzy Boerboom

Suzy Boerboom has spent her entire life in the healthcare industry. Her first position out of nursing school was as a charge nurse in a state hospital where her placement was on a unit full of mentally ill men from the penitentiary.

"I started off with a bang right from the start. At the age of 23, I founded the mental health technology program at Southeast Community College in Lincoln, Nebraska. I've always been someone who starts new things," said Suzy. From there Suzy served in long-term care as an instructor, director of nursing and nurse consultant.

Boerboom's specialty has always been taking a concept and turning it into a reality. She went on to serve as the Director of Customer Service and Education for 112 long-term care facilities. Suzy spent four years operating six Curves clubs. It was then that Suzy experienced the deep successes people gain in all aspects of their lives through exercise and fitness. This realization Suzy and her husband both shared was one that would take their lives on an entirely new adventure.



"I've really been sincere about wanting to find an opportunity wherever I was to help people and develop a servant leadership attitude. So everyone I deal with is my customer, especially my employees and my team."



"I've seen a lot of people age, get weaker and develop health problems. I saw firsthand what research has been telling our nation recently: fitness and exercise was the answer for strength in our later years. Exercise was the key for eliminating loss of independence and health concerns in order to live a happy vibrant life," explained Suzy. In 2009, Suzy and her husband started with that knowledge and watched the seed of their dream grow into Welcyon fitness: a welcoming fitness center where people over 50 improve their strength and enhance their overall health. "It's a very big paradigm shift from a loud, big box gym. There comes a time in our lives when we're not as comfortable working out around people who are in their twenties and thirties in spandex, and that's where Welcyon carves a distinct niche in the marketplace," said Suzy.

Suzy grew up having a father who was in business. She watched the satisfaction he gained from building his business, "I used to help him with all kinds of tasks. He gave me my first job in the movie theatre and variety store he owned. My dad showed me that building a business is really hard work: it can be really scary at times but the payoff is huge. You

get the satisfaction of knowing, 'I built something that was helpful to people; I made a difference.'" So when Suzy and her husband started entertaining the idea of starting a business: a fitness club designed specifically for people 50 and over, she knew the road ahead would be filled with work. Regardless, Suzy's drive and compassionate nature propelled her forward.

### Fitness With the Mature Crowd in Mind

The business they created, Welcyon, is dedicated to providing a welcoming and personalized fitness environment where people 50 and over can achieve their best health. "My husband and I are in the 50 and older demographic. We have three daughters and grandchildren and they, along with everything we do on a daily basis, are huge motivators to stay strong. We don't want to give up racing around the block with our grandchildren," shares Suzy. Welcyon provides customized workouts to the largest growing demographic in a non-intimidating environment with fitness coaches who promote safe workouts. The routines emphasize flexibility, aerobic and stretching movements. There is a social

component because relationships and a sense of belonging is key to overall health.

The Welcyon franchise has been built on the values of honesty, integrity, teamwork, and servant leadership. Welcyon is inspired from the words 'wellness' and 'halcyon'. Halcyon is a fable bird who brought peace and calm to the wild winds and waves of winter. "We were debating on many names but this one stuck out. We thought, 'That's what Welcyon will do: get people fit in a joyful, tranquil environment and they leave with energy and improved health,'" said Suzy.

### A Big Heart Behind the Big Company

Suzy attributes her determined, heart-centered attitude towards the way she was raised, "My parents were two wonderful, caring people with strong value systems where being kind to others mattered." This moral code that is so engrained in Suzy motivates her to pay attention to the small things such as buying staff bright flowers on a cloudy day or writing a letter to a staff's mother informing her of her child's noble efforts within her company. "I've really been sincere about wanting to



find an opportunity wherever I was to help people and develop a servant leadership attitude. So everyone I deal with is my customer, especially my employees and my team. When people are authentically valued, when you ask their opinion, when you focus on the collective goal and when you do the right thing, really miraculous things can happen. I've always wanted to have a purpose to my profit."

The majority of Suzy's career was spent serving as a nurse. There were many paths she could have walked down from there: nutrition, counseling or a variety of other careers centered on helping people transform their lives. Why fitness? "I wanted to be on the preventative side of illness," explained Suzy. On average aging adults lose 70 percent of their muscle mass throughout life. No matter your age, with regular resistance exercise, one can increase muscle strength, preserve bone density and improve balance. More muscle also burns more calories resulting in a healthier body with lower fat content. "How connected you are to your community is important; diet is important. But physical inactivity has a bigger hit in terms of peoples' mortality than many other concerns," noted Suzy.

As a young woman Boerboom had a near death experience: an emergency surgery. As a nurse she was also often with people as they had their final breaths of life. These experiences gave Suzy the great advantage of knowing how fleeting life is. It was always clear to Suzy that relationships are the single most important thing in life. "This is a very limited window that we've got here. Most of the time I try to say yes to my family and fun things," said Suzy. This attitude and inner knowing has blessed Suzy with a job where she has the opportunity to form influential relationships, "Our country is filled with retired people who are so bright and experienced who make great franchisees and customers. Our members literally thank us for being here. Every

day that I'm in our club I hear success stories and the joy people have from taking a front seat with their health: they don't want to be resigned to aging in a debilitating manner; they want to live!"

Welcyon has five pillars of fitness designed to impact your overall health: strengthen, to build muscle mass; aerobic, to improve cardiovascular performance; balance, to stand strong and prevent falls; flexibility, to improve posture and joint motions; and, social, to increase happiness by connecting with others. While the Welcyon team is looking to expand and welcome in new franchisees, Suzy is quick to communicate, the passion is where it must start with her franchisees, "Do something

that you have a passion for and something that you believe in. For someone to excel as a Welcyon franchisee, they have to care about people and be able to walk the talk of caring. We have designed such a strong system and structure that if a person comes to us smart, wanting to help people, interested in fitness, and wanting to work hard they can succeed with us. We can teach the business side of things; it's almost impossible to teach someone a great attitude."

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