

SOUTH SOUND BUSINESS

**DONNIE
WHETSTONE**
OF OLYMPIA'S
WHETSTONE
FITNESS

THE SMALL BUSINESS ISSUE

UNCOVER THE SECRETS
TO SUCCESS AS LOCAL
ENTREPRENEURS SHARE
INSPIRING TALES OF
PERSEVERANCE
AND TRIUMPH.

PG. 26

IT'S ALL ABOUT RETENTION AND REPUTATION AT WHETSTONE FITNESS

From failure comes experience. And in the case of Whetstone Fitness, from failure came success. The gym was established in 2014, following the closure of founder Donnie Whetstone's previous business venture, which encompassed a different series of gyms.

Whetstone had been no stranger to hardship when his business went under. His passion for fitness was sparked by bullying as a child and a desire for self-improvement, and his

no-frills mentality can be credited to his time serving in the military.

Throughout challenging times, he said, he has found that the best way out is through, and through he most certainly went.

Whetstone will tell you that the story of his gym began in 1971, when he woke up one day and began his fitness journey. He believes that Whetstone Fitness was created that day, and that everything else was the path to the final product. From his personal lifestyle changes to the collapse of his previous business, the inception of Whetstone Fitness felt inevitable.

His 2014 attempt to build something out of nothing succeeded, and Olympia-based Whetstone Fitness now boasts a thriving athletic space with personal training, group classes, saunas, and a range of equipment.

But what sets the gym apart from others isn't the services it offers; it's the culture it creates.

"It's not just the business aspect of it; the business is actually almost secondary," Whetstone said. "It's the passion. I really care a lot about people and want them to reach their fitness goals. And not just their fitness goals; a lot of people say (this gym) is a happy place for them."

Whetstone himself considers the gym his home and spends as much time there as he can. He believes in the importance of leaders being present and bringing energy into the

"IT'S NOT JUST THE BUSINESS ASPECT OF IT; THE BUSINESS IS ACTUALLY ALMOST SECONDARY. IT'S THE PASSION. I REALLY CARE A LOT ABOUT PEOPLE AND WANT THEM TO REACH THEIR FITNESS GOALS. AND NOT JUST THEIR FITNESS GOALS; A LOT OF PEOPLE SAY (THIS GYM) IS A HAPPY PLACE FOR THEM."



space and uses his position to uplift his employees and clients.

The gym has continued to flourish since its founding, with business success coming from a focus on retention and reputation. Rather than constantly seeking new clients through marketing and advertising, Whetstone pours most of his energy into keeping his current members more than satisfied. Happy clients leave good reviews and spread the word, serving as an organic form of marketing.

Similarly, he ensures all his trainers and employees are treated fairly — a personal value that comes from he himself being a personal trainer at the gym. He understands how crucial the role is.

Whetstone hopes to continue growing the business's client base and maintaining his high operational standards. The gym offers a range of memberships based on the goals of the client and offers 24/7 access to all members.

Whetstone Fitness aims to support individuals of all fitness levels, looking to break away from typical corporate gyms and find a strong local community. — PD

