



Ridgefield trainer keeps stars fit:

To Savoia, with love [Connecticut Post, Bridgeport]

Nov. 11, 2009--Joe Savoia of Ridgefield is making sure today's stars never looked better.

In recent years, the former body builder-turned-celebrity trainer has helped notables such as British singer Lulu and actor Laurence Luckinbill stay in tip-top physical shape with tailored workout regimens.

"My clients are my current works of art," said Savoia, 55, a graduate of New York City's High School of Art and Design, who in the 1980s trained at Arnold Schwarzenegger's fitness seminars as a competitive body builder. "My experience with his seminars were very positive because we both saw body sculpting as an art form."

Savoia, a native New Yorker, worked for about 30 years as an advertising professional and a personal trainer before becoming a full-time trainer a few years ago by founding Personal Training Connection.

"I wanted to get off the grindstone and start helping people," said Savoia, who is certified by the American Council on Exercise and received his initial training in the late 1970s from Jack LaLanne and Bally's. He also pumped iron with Lou Ferrigno, TV's Incredible Hulk.

"I knew the Ferrigno family very well from Brooklyn and got some mentoring from Lou's father," Savoia said.

His workouts, which take place in the homes of his clients, including Pitney Bowes' Chief Executive Officer Murray Martin, are a combination of their goals and his insight on creating a balanced physique, Savoia said.

"I try to have them picture how they want to look," said Savoia, who brings medicine balls and other equipment. "I then motivate them by getting them to feel the muscles they're waking up."

His workout sessions cost \$85 or \$125, depending on driving distance, said Savoia, who also trains singing duo Brit and Alex and celebrity make-up artist Leslie Lopez.

"Some people can achieve what they want in three to six months, but most people just want to keep going to maintain their physiques," he said, adding that Lulu's workouts are designed with her physically demanding performances in mind. "I try to keep her legs strong and her core tight while helping her stay flexible."

Savoia is an artist who has helped her "sculpt" her body, said Lulu, whose real name is Marie McDonald McLaughlin Lawrie. She was married for many years to celebrity hairstylist and hair-care entrepreneur John Frieda, whose namesake company originally was in Wilton.

It isn't easy, but she'll try to stay in shape, Lulu said.

"I have issues with my knees and in the past trainers would overwork them, despite my pain -- or just ignore my legs completely," she said. "But Joe has given me exercises to keep my legs toned and fit, and go easy on the knees."

Using a personal trainer has many benefits for someone looking to get in shape, among them being the latest techniques and proper motivation, said Shayne Adair, a trainer with the National Exercise Trainers Association in Minneapolis.

"People usually won't push themselves as hard on their own," she said.

Ridgefield man once trained with Hulk

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