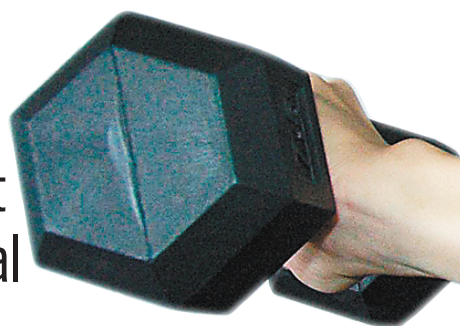


# jobb@m.com

ADVERTISING REP: Jerome Pon PHONE: (780) 468-0109 EDITOR: Jason Hills PHONE: (780) 468-0159

# Confidence builder

Jessica Laforest is kicking butt as a personal trainer



We've all been there. Thinking we have our career path all mapped out for us.

It happens far too often. You put every ounce of energy into starting a career, thinking that's what you were born to do.

Then reality sets in, and it may not be what you were looking for.

Some, despite their unhappiness stick with it, while others search for something new.

Jessica Laforest found herself in that predicament.

Now, she's living an unsuspected dream.

For the past two years, she's helped change people's lives as a personal trainer at Marked Improvement.

"If you would have asked me 10 years ago if I were to become a personal trainer, I would have said... 'Are you crazy?'" said Laforest, who started fitness training in high school with her two older brothers in the basement of their childhood home.

"I wasn't an athlete growing up, I had no real interest in sports or fitness. But this job as a personal trainer, I wouldn't trade it for any other job in the world."

Laforest worked in a pharmaceutical lab after earning her lab and research studies degree at NAIT.

That was all part of her original plan to earn her science degree from MacEwan University.



Careers Editor

Then she transferred into nursing before eventually earning her personal training certificate through Can-Fit Pro.

## Perfect job

Some people spend their entire working career trying to find that perfect job.

Laforest finally found hers. "I'm 100% content in this field. In five years I want to be doing the same thing. In 10 years I want to be doing the same thing," said Laforest.

"When I was in school, I sat in class and I would say to myself, 'Could I see myself doing this in 10 years? Could I see myself being a nurse and having a family? I couldn't.'"

"This job has changed my life, and I'm helping others change theirs."

**"I was afraid of failure when I first became a trainer, but it made me realize this is what I want to do."**

Jessica Laforest

Sadly in today's society, there's still that view of what the perfect body image is. People struggle trying to achieve that so-called perfect body image.

Laforest is doing her best to try and change that perception.

"It's one of the reasons why I got into this industry," said Laforest, who's built up a strong clientele of both men

and women who are striving to meet their fitness goals.

"Seeing a client not be able to look at themselves in the mirror, because they don't believe in themselves is disheartening.

"I do everything I can to try and change that perception and I point out the good things about their body."

"The worst thing I don't like hearing from my clients is 'You're slim, you don't know what it's like to lose weight... Actually I do.'"

At one time in her life, Laforest was a size 10 — she's now a size 2.

"People will always find something wrong with themselves. But when you work out and you have a goal, it could be the smallest goal but when you achieve it, that's going to build up your confidence," said Laforest.

"Make your goals small because those little goals in the end will achieve a bigger goal."

Laforest has a kickboxing background and her training regiment focuses a lot on body weight and interval training.

She would like to earn her kickboxing certificate and eventually train MMA fighters, police officers and firefighters.

"They need their strength, their endurance and their athletic ability, and if you can help them, it's a great feeling," said Laforest.

"To hear what they (police officers and firefighters) go through on a daily basis is inspiring. When you see them, they look like a regular person, but it shocks me

JASON HILLS/EDMONTON SUN

Jessica Laforest has spent the last two years helping many people achieve their personal fitness goals at Marked Improvement, 7112 101st Ave.



to hear what they go through. You gain a totally different respect for them.

"It's neat to get to know how everybody's life is so different. That's what we provide (at Marked Improvement). We don't just train people, we get to know them on a personal level. We become their friend."

## Learning experience

It's been a learning experience in her first two years as a personal trainer.

There have been some challenges, but that is one of the parts of the job she loves the most.

"I was afraid of failure when I first became a trainer, but it made me realize this is what I want to do," said Laforest.

"If you have that fear of failure, you know you care a lot about what you do."

"If you don't have some challenges with your work, it doesn't make it fun."

At just 5'2", Laforest may be small in stature, but she has a

big heart.

Her infectious attitude rubs off on her clients and she's found success.

"You have to care for people," said Laforest.

"If you don't care about your client... how are you going to help them. If you're just here to make money or telling people listen to me because I look the part. You're not going to be successful."

jason.hills@sunmedia.ca