

Healthy HABITS

• ATLANTA, Ga.

When exercise dynamo and best-selling fitness expert Denise Austin was introduced as a guest speaker, sponsored by Nature Made/Pharmavite, during the American Logistics Association (ALA)/Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) Worldwide Partnership Summit, held here in June, she came running out onto the ballroom stage in her typically vivacious style.

Austin is an upbeat person with enough energy to power a metropolis and her enthusiastic spirit lights up a room, with an energy that is contagious. During her lively presentation, she invited several DeCA leaders to join her onstage and help lead attendees in some quick stretches.

E and C News had the opportunity for an exclusive interview with Austin before her speech and found her to be the same type of positive, sincere person behind the scenes as well.

STAYING ACTIVE

“Exercise is the best preventative medicine there is,” proclaimed Austin, a 5-foot, 4-inch perpetual motion machine. “If you rest, you’ll rust,” she warned. “The key thing is to stay active, and there’s always a way back if you haven’t been exercising. It’s all about habit, and it only takes 21 days to form a habit.”

Born and raised in the Los Angeles area, Austin is a quintessential southern California girl. She started gymnastics at the age of 12 and earned an athletic scholarship to the University of Arizona.

“To me, it all starts in the family,” said Austin, who strongly believes in establishing healthy eating and exercise habits at a young age. Her own father was a professional baseball player in the late 1940s and her mother was a championship jump roper in New York State in 1940.

FITNESS PIONEER

As a child, Austin remembered seeing her mother exercise while watching TV fitness

pioneer Jack LaLanne, so she was thrilled to meet him after graduating from college with a degree in physical education. As an aerobics instructor, she was invited on LaLanne’s show for a one-time appearance and ended up being asked to co-host for several years.

That led to Austin’s own programs on ESPN and the Lifetime Television Network. She has also created about 85 different exercise DVDs, authored more than 10 books on fitness, and sold over 20 million copies of her videos and DVDs.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

In the early 1980s, Austin and her husband, a sports attorney from a prominent family of tennis players, moved to northern Virginia, where she has also flexed her muscles in the government arena. Living near Washington, D.C., Austin has testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions; helped launch the U.S. Department of Agriculture (mypyramid.gov) food guidance system and served as a two-term member of the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports.

As a busy working mother, Austin is a fan of multi-tasking and incorporating simple toning exercises and stretches wherever she goes, even in the supermarket checkout line.

She explained that the key to optimizing her own two daughters’ activity levels when they were very young was to get them involved in organized activities like sports and dance, and make sure they wanted to do that by coordinating their friends’ schedules so all the kids would be doing the same things. Her older daughter is now in college on a lacrosse scholarship.

Austin believes it’s vital for families to become more active together. In fact, she and her husband begin most mornings by working out in their home gym, though Austin pointed out that exercise can be done anywhere, anytime, and she stays active throughout the day. “Your muscles don’t know if you are in the kitchen or a fancy gym.”

“FOR INSURANCE”

She acknowledged that with even the most well-balanced diets, there are still vitamins that people typically don’t get enough of. For that reason, “for insurance,” she supplements her nutrition with “first and foremost a multivitamin, a daily dose of vitamin D, vitamin C, fish oil capsules, and calcium” since, as she freely admits, she’s over 50 (but doesn’t look or act like it). She also makes sure her daughters take a multivitamin with iron every day.

Starting the day off right with breakfast is important to Austin. “I’m a big believer in having breakfast, such as eggs with tomatoes and avocado, oatmeal with skim milk and fruit, or even a fruit smoothie,” she said. “Studies show that students who eat breakfast tend to do better in school.”

“Eating well 80 percent of the time” is her goal, Austin said, leaving room for “treats.” Her favorite indulgences, she confided, are chips and guacamole, pepperoni pizza, and (not all at once) coffee ice cream.



Both before and after her ALA/DeCA Summit presentation, Denise Austin generously spent time signing free exercise DVDs for attendees, who formed long lines.

During her recent appearance at the ALA/DeCA Worldwide Partnership Summit, fitness expert Denise Austin demonstrated several particularly useful moves and stretches.

—E and C NEWS



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