

Paula's Y Story

When Paula walked into the YMCA's small group personal training program, she had one goal: finally start the fitness journey she'd been putting off for years.

"I knew I needed to do this," she says. "This wasn't a New Year's resolution. This was something I'd wanted to do for a long time."

Then one morning, an email arrived announcing one last opening in the program. "I thought, 'I better grab it before someone else does.' I needed to be here."

From day one, the program met Paula exactly where she was. Every workout included options for every ability level, allowing each participant to build confidence while progressing at their own pace.

"I really appreciated that every exercise had different levels," she says. "Even if you were brand new, there was always a way to participate."

The results have reached far beyond the weight room. Today, Paula carries groceries from the car in one trip and is able to carry heavy boxes. She has more energy, better balance, and can do things she once assumed were out of reach.

"I can lift more. I can do more," she says. "Those everyday things have become so much easier."

The improvements have also shown up where she can't see them. Her muscle mass continues to increase, and her bone density is improving.

"I don't have to focus on a number on the scale," she says. "The numbers that matter are changing in the right direction."

Then came a milestone she never imagined. During her very first deadlift, Paula looked at the 30-pound bar and said, "There's no way I can lift that."

Six months later, she deadlifted 100 pounds. "I never would have predicted that."

While the physical transformation has been remarkable, Paula says the greatest surprise has been the community.

She chose group personal training because she knew she needed accountability. What she found was a room full of women encouraging one another through every milestone, every challenge, and every victory.

"It's nice to come in and recognize people," Paula says. "We're all at different places in our journeys. Someone has a shoulder injury, someone else has a bad knee, and you realize that's normal. We support each other."

Today, Paula has become one of the group's leaders, helping new participants learn exercises, demonstrating proper form, and offering encouragement to the next woman just beginning her own journey.

"Taking this goal seriously makes me wonder, what other goals could I achieve if I committed to them?"