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What Do You

> BOOT CAMP ON THE BEACH

Chantal Eustace

Dose

Wednesday, August 17, 2005

A brick wall with platinum blond hair, clad in fatigues, marches through the sand as women jump up and down, arms flapping. Old, young, fit, fat, rich or poor — everyone is doing jumping jacks in the sweltering sun, united in collective exhaustion and periodic bouts of giggles.

- [SEE VIDEO OF CHANTAL POLE DANCING](#)
- [Read Chantal's Blog from the conference](#)
- Find out more about [Every Woman in the World](#)
- [Read Part II: What was it really like?](#)

"Keep going. Imagine those navy seals in the desert," coaxes our buff instructor, **CAT SMILEY**.

It's boot camp on the beach, which is one small part of the Every Woman in the World Conference, a movin' and shakin' all-girl event set against the mountains, lakes and forests of Whistler, B.C.

In a time when the tabloid media is pitting woman against woman (look at **JEN** versus **ANGELINA** or **PARIS** versus **NICOLE**), Every Woman is all about girl lovin' — in a sporty, positive and wickedly fun way.

The event flyer talked about letting women get in touch with "passionate energies and pursuits." And trust us, that happens, but it's neither corny nor schlocky.

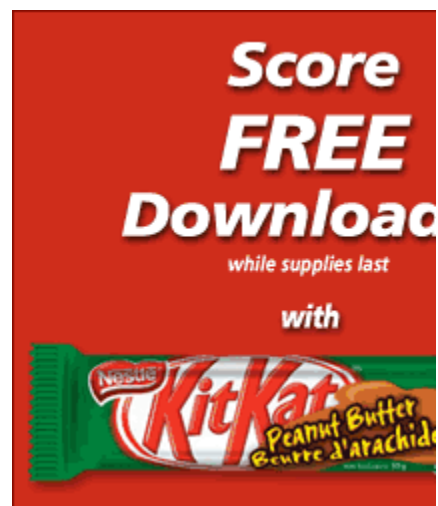
Remember going to camp as a kid and doing a cannonball into an icy lake? That's the vibe here. Participants choose from an abundance of workshops, including mountain biking, yoga, running, drumming, spontaneous art, goal-setting, pole-d: gymnastics. After setting course, you plow through back-to-back, 40-minute classes or samplers — nothing too hard . easy.

By learning and playing together, through sweating in the sand or casual banter about designer vaginas or Oprah, the blast is in a girly (but not girly) way.

And no one minds if you skip a session for some poolside lounging or a pedicure.



- Kerri Carlson co-organized the fitness conference with her sister, Lynn Kanuka, an Olympic bronze medalist in 1984. (Chantal Eustace)



"It's all about fun," says **KERRI CARLSON**, 33, who co-organized the event with her sister, **LYNN KANUKA**, an Olympian who won a bronze medal in the 1,500-metre run at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games. "It's not touchy feely, but it's about and enjoying yourself."

CARLSON says she planned the first conference last year as a way to get women inspired and let them try new things in judgmental fashion.

"I just like to have fun and this is my idea of an ideal weekend, so why wouldn't everyone want to attend?" she says.

Petite, blond, tanned and bubbly, **CARLSON** grew up competing as a world-class gymnast, contributing to Canada's success in the final at the World Gymnastics Championship in Germany in 1989. When she retired at 21, she says she missed all of the time spent with her team — a bunch of active girls hanging out together.

So you've missed this year's event in Whistler and you need a boost? Here are some ways to get moving:

- + **Surf Sisters** in Tofino, B.C., offers lessons and fun that won't bust your piggy bank.
- + Consider the **Amansala six-day adventure in Mexico**.

Uniting women to huff, puff and laugh through new activities, seemed like something she needed to do.

"I've always wanted to share my enthusiasm for fantastic living," she says. (When **CARLSON** says things like this, you nod, because she seems so earnest. And she looks so fit.) "I also wanted to give women the opportunity to test their

That's why schedules are so dense with activities, she says, and so far, the response has given her goosebumps.

"People come up and hug me, saying 'thank-you,'" says **CARLSON**, who credits the instructors, who all volunteer because they have a blast," with engaging the participants.

"This event lets you have a chance to try everything," says **CAROLINE MCGILLVRAY**, 34, a participant and session leader. "It's wonderful."

And no, gathering a bunch of women in a secluded area did not prompt any catfights or mud-wrestling matches. Ever at the camp.

JENNIFER JESSIE ALLAN, 27, smiles when she explains that she was a drug-addicted sex-trade worker for almost a decade living and working in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver.

ALLAN (near left) is here on a feel-good adventure at one of the most beautiful places on earth. She's just finished a group dance class and looks happy and serene standing in the mountains of Whistler in her exercise gear. "This weekend lets me relax and get away," she says, looking around and grinning.

ALLAN, who kicked a crack addiction 19 months ago, was sponsored to attend the conference by the organizers and the Society, a non-profit group that gives makeovers to marginalized people in Vancouver. She says she has been honoured for her experience.

"It's like living in a dream world. You get to bond with other women. We understand each other."

This year, **ALLAN** was nominated for a B.C. Courage to Comeback Award. She runs two non-profit organizations in Vancouver: Kitchen and Rekindling Your Spirit.

She says the weekend gave her a much-needed break.

"It's been really fun."

After a pole-dancing class, a group of twentysomething women walked back to the village, sharing sunscreen and joking about sexy, new moves they learned.

"She had such great hair," says 26-year-old **JAMIE SLOBODIAN** (near left) of Whistler, describing the instructor's long

While the stripping instruction was cool, **SLOBODIAN** says she was most impressed by a financial-planning class who about how to hire the right person to manage her money.

"I just have trouble saving money," she says. As an accountant, **SLOBODIAN** said she works on other people's finances her own.

"I'm good with other people's money and bad with mine."

The session inspired her to start getting things organized with her own money matters, she says. After exercising her mind, spirit and body to the maximum, **SLOBODIAN** decided to skip boot camp and opted for a while the gang did crunches and drills.

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