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As the founder and president of **Vision Plus Fitness**, **Charles Knowles** finds his calling in uplifting others and building a community devoted to strength, wellness, and perseverance.

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VISION Quest

by LEIGH STUART
photography by
JODY ROBINSON



CHARLES KNOWLES (CENTER) LEADS VISION PLUS FITNESS' TEAM OF TRAINERS, WHICH INCLUDES (FROM LEFT) JAMIE FRANTZ, BART "BANG" PIERRE, AND FRANK JANTES.

As the founder and president of **Vision Plus Fitness**, **Charles Knowles** finds his calling in uplifting others and building a community devoted to strength, wellness, and perseverance.

The strongest blades are forged by heat and hammering. Charles Knowles, the founder and president of Vision Plus Fitness in Conshohocken, can relate. The pressure of life experience solidified Knowles' resolve, and led him in his quest to help others achieve apex health and wellness.

At the age of seven, Knowles lost his 38-year-old father to a heart attack in their family home. Despite his young age, the terror and discord of the events surrounding such a tragic loss influenced Knowles' career trajectory.

"After my father passed, my whole life changed," he says. "My mother became very depressed, and we lost our house. When I was 16, my mother tried to take her own life. My father made good money, but he neglected his health. He never got to see the life he envisioned for his family."

Whereas others might have sought comfort in unhealthy vices, Knowles turned to fitness.

"Working out stopped me from getting depressed," he says. "I found out it wasn't just about me and the kids I may have some day; it's about helping other people. Even though I couldn't help my dad, I can help other parents. I think of him when I do it."

Some gyms seem more interested in vanity and image than about true fitness. When Knowles founded Vision Plus Fitness, he wanted clients to realize the full benefits—physical, emotional, and psychological—that result from exercise, self-care, and overall wellness.

"It's not always about looks," Knowles says. "It's about wanting to be healthy, wanting to see your kids graduate. I think now more than ever people are appreciating the value

of good health. I know it sounds cliché, but here, all the coaches really care. They're not just there to tire you out. Anybody can do that. We want our members to know each other. We want to build a community."

For those who might have foregone fitness pursuits over the last year because of stress, hardship, or other pressures, Knowles assures these individuals can find a home at Vision Plus Fitness. He suggests his facility offers an array of options to suit clients' fitness preferences.

Signature classes include "The Gauntlet," "The Last Round," "Torch," "ReShape," and more. Those looking for a solo fitness experience can enjoy daily open gym time, while visitors are invited to utilize equipment such as weights and treadmills without the structure of an instructor-led class.

"We have a little bit for everybody," Knowles says. "We have boxing, cardio, and sports performance classes such as The Gauntlet designed to improve functional and athletic strength. Our classes are designed to make everyday tasks easier and strengthen independence and self-reliance."

"You don't have to work out two hours a day, but you have to take care of yourself,"



VISION PLUS FITNESS OFFERS MEMBERSHIP, CLASS, AND TRAINING PACKAGES, AS WELL AS TEAM TRAINING.

“If you keep faith, and keep working, something beautiful can always come out of it.”

—CHARLES KNOWLES, VISION PLUS FITNESS



he continues. “You have to live a good, healthy life for yourself and your kids.”

Offering membership, class, and training packages, as well as team training, Vision Plus Fitness has options to suit any fitness level or budget, from those just beginning their wellness journeys to those who are in peak shape but looking to make continued progress. Vision Plus Fitness offers a particularly enticing offer for those looking to try out the facilities before committing. The “14 Days for 14 Dollars” package affords the purchaser unlimited class attendance and gym usage for two weeks at a budget-friendly price.

Knowles, a Bethlehem native, has years of experience training clients of all skill levels. He has even trained many celebrity clients, including artists, entertainers, and prominent executives, among others.

‘Keep Working’

As one might expect, Knowles and his team have taken extra measures to ensure guest safety during this challenging time. From sanitizing stations and outdoor sessions to social distancing and reduced class sizes, Knowles and his team have employed many measures designed to put guests’ minds at ease.

He built his business on the three pillars of accountability, experience, and community, but safety comes first and foremost. He



Vision Plus Fitness
 701 E. Elm Street
 Conshohocken, PA 19428
 (484) 522-0555
VisionPlusFitness.com

believes the highly capable team he has assembled further bolsters the sense of guest security. Trainer Bart “Bang” Pierre, for example, is a seasoned mixed martial arts fighter with specialties including Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, Muay Thai, and American-style boxing, while trainer David Yontef is a certified strength and conditioning specialist who shares his exhaustive knowledge of weightlifting and cycling. Steel Russell (a former baseball player drafted by MLB’s Baltimore Orioles), Jamie Frantz, and Frank Jantes round out the training team.

Each trainer brings a unique perspective and life experience to each session. Furthermore, Knowles says he encourages each trainer to utilize their utmost creativity in leading classes.

“Everyone here has a strength, and it’s important for everyone to use those strengths,” he says. “We don’t want to force people to fit a certain style.”

Given the circumstances he faced early in his life, Knowles could have chosen to conform, crumble, or otherwise compromise. Now, as a business and community leader, he likes to share the lessons he has learned with others, both in and out of the gym. When he’s not working out or dealing with the many demands that come from running a business, Knowles takes time to speak to local youth about the rewards of persistence and positivity during challenging times.

“Tough situations can lead to positive things,” he says. “If you keep faith, and keep working, something beautiful can always come out of it.” ■