



BARRY SLOAN/GAZETTE PHOTOGRAPHER

Members of the Schenectady Jewish Community Center in Niskayuna keep the elliptical trainers busy Friday.

# Gyms offer Black Friday 'door-buster' specials too

## Many want to work out after belt-buster holiday meal

BY JASON SUBIK  
*Gazette Reporter*

On a typical Friday afternoon in late November, when the days are short, the Schenectady Jewish Community Center in Niskayuna would usually be pretty empty due to the Jewish sabbath — observed from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday.

The day after Thanksgiving is a little different.

"All of my treadmills are full. All of my elliptical machines are full," said Susan Limeri, who manages the Schenectady JCC's fitness center. "I think people are making up for a little too much pie and so forth."

As important as Black Friday is to retailers, it can also be important to the trim-your-own-tail fitness industry. Many local gyms promoted special membership rates Friday to help draw in new members, some perhaps looking to burn off calories from a Thanksgiving feast.

Pat Barber, the assistant general manager for the Niskayuna Gold's Gym, said her gym offered a "door-buster" new membership deal from 5 a.m. until 11 a.m. Friday morning. New members who signed up during the door buster received a 12-month gym membership for \$15.99 per month with no enrollment charge. A membership normally costs \$19.99 per month with a \$149 sign-up fee. She said new members can still get the \$15.99 with a reduced \$69 sign-up fee until Monday.

"Everybody has a door-buster, we're just like any other store, but the day after Thanksgiving definitely brings people in. I get in here at between 4 a.m. and 5 a.m. everyday and usually there isn't anybody on the road but me. This morning everybody was on the road," she said. "You know people are out and about at a time they normally aren't. The gym was packed today, we had people lined up out the door waiting for the sale and there were plenty of people who had that sluggish, having over-eaten, I-have-to-get-moving look."

### AFTER-HOLIDAY TRADITION

Mike Barker, the owner of a gym called Fit Happens in Gloversville, said his gym also ran a sale to coincide with Black Friday: A year-long membership at Fit Happens cost \$250, or 18 months for \$300, which is about \$125 off the normal annual cost.

"We had a lot of people come in for the sale, but I also think people came in as kind of a social event. It's more about people talking about what a great time they had on Thanksgiving, to be honest with you," he said.

Barker said fitness on the holidays is important to people whether they overeat or not. His members demanded he keep the gym open from 7 a.m. until 11 a.m. on Thanksgiving Day, so they could work out on their day off.

"We had about 200 people come in during those four hours," he said.

At the Fulton County YMCA, there were no membership deals but there was a predictable spike in members coming in to use the facility Friday, said YMCA Director of Health and Wellness Peter Riley.

"It's a combination of people who want to make amends for what they did they day before, you hear people talking about how much pie they ate. You also have a group of regulars that are going to come in at certain times a day and there are more people here at those times today," he said. "There are also a lot of college people in here because they are home. But, I also hear a lot of people talking about how they overdid it. After any holiday it's like that, after New Years you've got people trying to make up for the damage they've done."

### BUSINESS COMPETITION

Competition between private for-profit gyms and not-for-profits like the YMCA and the JCC can be fierce. In Gloversville, Barker's gym has begun a partnership with the Gloversville Jewish Community Center, so his members can access the JCC pool, after-school daycare and basketball courts, amenities offered at the Fulton County YMCA. Barker said it used to be that not-for-profits like the YMCA could use their tax-exempt status to offer lower monthly membership costs and undercut private gyms. He said the reverse is true in Fulton County as the YMCA maintains high membership costs to pay for the huge facility's overhead, giving him a potential advantage. His prices are now more competitive and he can offer similar services.

"Our merger with the JCC puts me on the same plane as [the YMCA], but in reality it puts me better than them because they have so many programs going on, with the swim teams, that most people are lucky if they can use their pool for an hour, where at the JCC you can go swimming all morning," Barker said.

Riley said he couldn't comment on membership rates but he said the Fulton County YMCA expects to have a membership surge even without a special Black Friday deal.

"This is the time of year when you get a lot of people interested in gym memberships because of the change in the weather. They can't be outside and people are more concerned about being sedentary during the winter. This always leads to an upswing in our membership," he said. "You have a big surge right after the first of the year with people making resolutions to get in better shape or lose some weight."

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