

HAPPEN, a networking support group for unemployed professionals, will have a meeting tomorrow at 8 a.m. in Mississauga and Wednesday in Burlington. Members \$10, non-members \$15. 905-339-0268. Torstar News Service



EXECUTIVE BUSINESS CLUB is having a noon lunch meeting on Wednesday. For more information call 416-590-7675. Torstar News Service

REFERRAL QUEST having a noon ne Wednesday. For 3163.

Breaking in the ring

You can duke it out with shoppers on a sweaty mall-crazed Boxing Day, or you can burn off those Christmas calories at a kickboxing gym.

Warren Lee, the owner of Toronto Kickboxing Muay Thai Academy (TKMT), is pumped about the latter. Offering a variety of kickboxing and martial arts classes at his newly renovated gym brings him one step closer to, dare I say, Canada's answer to America's Billy Blanks — the fitness guru that sparked the Tae Bo rage a few years ago in Hollywood.

"Most kickboxing gyms have lots of attitude and testosterone, which intimidates people and attracts a niche crowd, but I've managed to create a gym that has a relaxed atmosphere," says Lee, referring to a clientele which comprises of a healthy mix of guys and gals.

"I love the rush of kicking in the ring," says Colleen Smith, 28, a social worker, who also teaches classes part time at the gym.

Smith is part of a diverse mix of TKMT patrons, which run the gamut from bartenders and bouncers to Bay Street professionals like stock broker Tristan Mackay, 24.

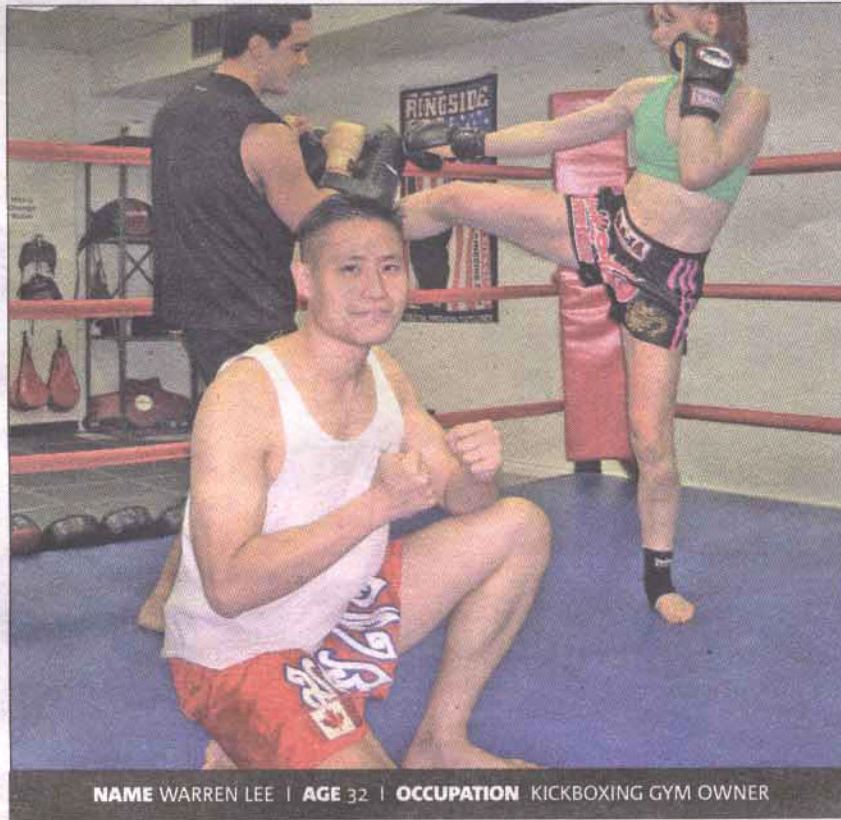
"Stress relief," notes Mackay, who

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WARREN LEE, OWNER OF TORONTO KICKBOXING MUAY THAI ACADEMY

who's HOT

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NAME WARREN LEE | AGE 32 | OCCUPATION KICKBOXING GYM OWNER

like the dozens of other kickboxers, files into the space after work with a down packed routine: Shoes and socks off, gloves and body pads on. A regimented warm-up of skip roping and running ensues, all without an almighty martial arts sifu (master) screaming at them.

Equal doses of stress relief, cardio bust, muscle toning, self-defense training and socializing are what seem to attract the gym's 100 plus members, most of whom engage in Muay Thai kickboxing, an aggressive sport with roots in Thailand that involves kicking and punching with gloves in a ring similar to those used in western boxing.

Mixed martial arts and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu classes are among the other classes offered. Kids classes are also available.

Adult monthly memberships run from \$85 up and drop-ins cost \$15.

Members train in a spacious 6,000 sq. ft. padded space comprising a bare basics layout of change rooms, showers, a boxing ring, a punching bag zone, and an open work out area.

"My family and friends think I'm insane for doing this," says Lee, who gave his high school teaching job a highflying kick after a fateful encounter in 2004.

"The idea to start my business occurred after a person requested a private Muay Thai kickboxing lesson. I got paid \$40. I thought, 'If one person is willing to pay for this, there must be others.' I've never looked back since," says Lee.

TKMT is located at 610 Queen Street West, 3/F. More info can be found at www.tkmt.ca.

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Shani Scherenzel describes herself as the of all trades." Current she is putting her best forward as a certified reflexologist (www.gos.com). Her interest in helping people's soles comes from family members are a podiatrist and a marketer. Her days are filled with part-time studies of the University of Toronto majoring in English and French Literature and writing an e-book. Scherenzel rests her feet by hitting the karate clubs, travelling and writing.

NAME SHANI SCHERENZEL
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