

## Mike D'Angelo : *a body evolved*

By Colleen Walsh

Mike D'Angelo has a perfect marketing strategy for his five-year-old gym Body Evolver on Boylston Street: his own picture.

A champion body builder for more than ten years, the Bay Village resident's flawlessly sculpted physique graces the poster that greets visitors at the club's front door.

The only thing missing is his face.

"It just didn't feel right," said D'Angelo, about the decision to crop the image from the neck up. "The concept of the gym isn't about me; it's about the programs we have here. I didn't want to distract from that."

The chiseled torso belongs with the boyish face of the 35-year-old Plymouth native, who has the energy and drive of a teen.



On a recent afternoon, D'Angelo took me through a workout session. Within an hour and a half I'd learned more than I'd ever know about my body's weight, fat, muscle, metabolic rate and density and the way to approach fitness with help from a computerized system that tracks your progress.

D'Angelo's Body Evolver software, developed with the help of a former client and MIT graduate-turned-business partner, Joe McMahon, turns a series of body fat measurements into a comprehensive

computer program that charts out an individual's fitness statistics, like weight, fat percentage and metabolic rate, and then charts their changes over time. Using the results of the program, D'Angelo helps his clients develop a customized fitness regime that includes weights, nutrition and cardio training.

"It maps out the reality of where things are," said D'Angelo of the program. This is non-emotional feedback; these are the numbers. When you take the emotion out of it, it allows you to deal with the reality."

In the gym during our session, he bounced from one room to the other, balancing, squatting, dipping and lifting, effortlessly demonstrating four targeted hamstring exercises and his love for the work he does.

The son of a music teacher, the fitness fanatic's first love growing up on the South Shore was the violin.

"I played the violin for 11 years," said D'Angelo, who was part of a family string quartet with his brother on the violin, his sister on the viola and his father on the cello. But as his interests shifted, he said he "gave it all up for fitness. "

A wrestler in high school, D'Angelo used weights to help him train. At Bridgewater State College, coaches wanted him to join the wrestling team, but he had to work to pay for his education. Instead he hit the gym at night to keep in shape. When a friend suggested he enter a bodybuilding competition, he did, and he won.

"I thought, yeah, I can do this," said D'Angelo, who acknowledged his music education played a part in his weight-training career. "I think the discipline from playing a musical instrument clearly translated into what it takes to be a championship body builder."

D' Angelo worked as a trainer while in college and continued competing in bodybuilding events. After graduation he worked as a physical therapist with patients dealing with heart troubles. But he soon realized he wanted a change. "I thought, 'Why don't I work on the preventative side of medicine and help people before they end up in that condition,'" he said.

As he transitioned to training full time, his triumphs on the bodybuilding circuit brought publicity and interest from those wanting to know the key to his success.

"I was on the cover of magazines, and I started getting a lot of calls and emails from people who wanted advice," he said.

He enlisted the help of friends who created a website that could help him track a workout routine remotely for clients. Later he realized he needed a way to better assess the client's fitness level before developing a plan of action. The idea became the basis for his current Body Evolver system.

As a trainer at a gym in the Back Bay, two of his clients, McMahan and Michael Orlando, were so impressed with his technique and philosophy they became his partners in business. Together the group opened the gym Body Evolver in 2002.

Word of mouth has developed a committed following and added to the friendly neighborhood atmosphere at the club. D'Angelo jokes with clients and welcomes all visitors by their first names.

"Somebody referred to it as the Cheers bar; it's a neighborhood gym," said Susan Able of Commonwealth Avenue, who was referred to D'Angelo by a friend. "It's not an intimidating gym -a lot of good things happen there."

Able, a fan of the Body Evolver system, lost several dress sizes and reshaped her figure with the help of D'Angelo. She said his infectious, upbeat personality, combined with his vast knowledge, make him the ideal trainer. "He is just a tremendously upbeat person. If

you are there, he is just right there with you. He just loves his job so much, it shines through," she said.

For D'Angelo, seeing the results of the work he does with his clients is the perfect reward.

"When you are helping facilitate life change, who could ask for anything more," he added.