When this assignment was first handed out, I had no idea whom I wanted to interview. I knew that I would have to do it over my spring break so that I could sit down and talk with someone. However, I was worried about whom to pick since I wasn't going home to where I grew up and didn't know anyone. I talked over the assignment with my parents to see if they had any ideas. My dad suggested Kristen Maglish. He said that she worked at his high school and was the fitness director at the school. Since I am into fitness, she sounded like a wonderful person to interview. I received her phone number, talked multiple times on the phone with her, and was finally on my way to see her for the interview.

As I went through the double doors that led into the cardio and weight rooms at Merrillville High School, I was definitely intimidated. The facilities at the high school were amazing. The new and much amassed machinery put Valparaiso's cardio room to shame, and from what I've heard, the weight room too. Instead of appearing like a typical high school facility, the rooms looked like something one would find at a high quality fitness club. Needless to say, I was impressed and in love with the place.

I spotted Kristen Maglish immediately. She was talking with two of her community clients. Not only are the students of
Merrillville High School allowed to use the facilities, the staff and their spouses are eligible, along with alumni (up to four years after graduating), and community residents over the age of 40. Kristen listened intently to what her clients were saying, and appeared very at ease with her work. She was dressed comfortably in athletic clothing, and her smile never left her face. She pointed her client in the correct direction, and then headed my way.

Kristen and I formally introduced ourselves, seeing as how we had only been communicating via phone until that moment. She led me into her office and explained that she would be running in and out during the interview so that she could help her new client (one of the women she had been talking to) and also just to do random checkups on the two rooms. I obviously had no problem with this. Actually, I was pleased to hear that she would be in and out of the office. This way, I was able to see Kristen in action, not just hear about her typical day.

As I made myself comfortable in her office, I took in the surroundings. Her office was directly in front of the double doors that led into the facilities. A large window allowed for Kristen to see who was coming and going into the different rooms. To the left of me, another window looked into the weight room, and to the right, a window looked into the cardio room. The set up of the office was perfect. Kristen had nearly
complete vision of the two rooms, which meant that even when
she had to be in the office, she could still keep an eye on the
rooms. After observing the room, I focused my sight on what
she was working on. Before talking to her new client, she stood
talking with a group of high school students. Once again, she
appeared to be in complete ease with them. She joked and
laughed with them. She then allowed a student to use her office
phone, but only after giving him a jokingly hard time about it.
From that group, she moved toward a stationary bike where her
new client was setting up. Kristen adjusted the seat for her, and
then explained how the bike would work. Only after seeing that
the client knew what she was doing, did she leave and come in to
talk with me.

"I never pictured my degree taking me here, to a fitness center.
Now, I can't see working anywhere else but here. Even when the time comes
for me to look for a more full-time position, I'll still keep some hours here!
(Laughs) I lucked out. I love my job."

Kristen, who is a resident of Merrillville, Indiana, did
luck out. She is in love with her job. She departs her house for
work with an upbeat spirit, and is able to leave work with the
same joy and enthusiasm that brought her there. So what career
maintains Kristen's heavenly bliss? Being the fitness director at
Merrillville High School keeps her happy and in shape. What I
surprisingly learned, however, was that this "dream job" had
never even crossed Kristen's mind when she first started out.
While studying to receive her degree in Health Education at Indiana University, Kristen had planned to use her degree to go into teaching. Things as we all know, however, don't always turn out as planned.

"When I first got out of college, I went into student teaching, here at Merrillville High School actually. Once I was done with that, I started my search for finding a permanent teaching position. However, nothing was available. I was able to get some substitute teaching jobs, but that was it. I suddenly had to start looking in a new direction, something I had not planned on. I worked at various health clubs and at physical therapy offices. I had a lot of jobs before I was asked to be the fitness director here. Now, it seems like I've been doing this forever. I don't even know how long! (Laughing and trying to count back on her fingers) I honestly can't tell you how long, except that I've definitely been here for over ten years."

After having discussed her various jobs, we started to discuss her present work in greater detail. At this point, she explained to me who was allowed to use the school's facilities and how they went about doing so. For the students, they are allowed to come and go as they please, as long as they have had a physical done by either the school nurse or their physician. The community residents, faculty, and their spouses, have to also present a medical note saying that they are physically able to work out. Kristen, however, has to meet with them as well.

According to Linda Ewies, District Health Education Officer for Bristol and Weston Health Authority, and Ina
Simmett, Training Consultant with the National Health Training Authority, “All health professionals who work with the public will, as part of their everyday work, teach, inform, advise and counsel their clients, individually or in groups. In this way, all health professionals are health educators, although they may not separate this element from the rest of their work” (Ewles pg. xi). Kristen will sit down with the new client(s) and go over their medical history and their family’s medical history. After that, she takes the client through every machine in the facility. John Griffin, professor and coordinator of the Fitness and Lifestyle Management Program at George Brown College, wrote, “Matching equipment with the needs and priorities of your client depends largely on your asking the right questions and establishing clear objectives. The processes of evaluation and selection are both objective and subjective” (Griffin pg. 82). Kristen explains verbally how it works and what it will do for a person. She will then demonstrate for the client if they need her to. At this point, there are two different paths that her clients can take. If the client knows what they are doing, and have enough knowledge of their surroundings, they are allowed to go off on their own and begin their workout. However, if the client so desires it, Kristen will continue to work with them and set up a workout program specifically designed for what they want to work most on.

“Some people that come in have never worked out in their life.
They are either starting now due to a medical problem, or they are serious about losing weight. The latter of the two need me to help set up a basic program that will optimize the weight loss in specific areas. This usually includes a cardio workout to help blast all around calories and fat. Then, we will talk about specific areas that they want to tone up. I take it from there; each person is different and has different wants. As for the clients that come here due to a medical problem, their programs vary greatly due to their conditions. Just the other day, I had a stroke patient come here for the first time. I had to call his doctor and therapist to make sure that the program I was setting up would go over well with his condition. My job is a lot of fun, but in cases like this, I have to get very serious. The programs I set up for these people could be life or death."

I found Kristen’s last statement very powerful. I’m sure a lot of people, when they hear that someone is a fitness director, don’t automatically see it as a very prestigious occupation. Yet, it is. Fitness is directly connected to health and one’s well being. She has to be well versed and knowledgeable in several areas. She needs to have a good grasp on the human body, including its functions and the kinesthesia of it. Also, she needs to be up to date on the latest health issues, including the most up-to-date news and information on various treatments, injuries, and prescription drugs.

I could easily see that Kristen took her job very seriously. She was adding on years to people’s lives by overseeing their exercise programs. According to Professor and
Fitness Director John Griffin, "Our job as exercise 'counselors' is to help clients begin to take charge of their own exercise regimen. We help them pursue their own objectives, whether they be active lifestyles, recovery from injuries, or better athletic performance" (Griffin pg. 3). She also helped the students too. She briefly described how on typical days, she will work with student athletes that are recovering from an injury. Student rehab, as she put it, was just another part of her career. Once she was done describing all of the above, I shifted the direction somewhat in our discussion.

At this point in the interview, I asked about how she balanced her work life and her home life. She explained that she didn't have any children, and that her husband had passed away two years earlier. She jokingly tossed out that it was just her and her dog, which did receive more than enough attention. With that, she had a lot of free time on her hands since she only worked four days a week for a total of 20 hours. However, she went on to explain that the part-time position is becoming more helpful since she recently became the primary caregiver to her elderly mother. Kristen also went on to explain that in some ways she wished that she did work days instead of evenings.

"In some ways, I wish I worked during the days. With my schedule, my days are almost limited because I know that I can't go off on a shopping spree with no time limit. In the back of my mind is the nagging voice telling me that I still have to go to work and that I can't ignore the
time. Socially, it hurts me somewhat too. When I go off to work, many of my friends are getting off from work. I know that I still have the weekends, but sometimes it would be nice to go out on a weeknight.”

For the conclusion of my interview, I directly asked Kristen what she liked about her career and what she didn’t. I also invited her to share anything else about her career with me that she saw as important, but we hadn’t talked about yet. Based on what I saw, and from what she had already told me, I wasn’t surprised when she smiled and told me that she whole-heartedly loved her job. She spoke about how she was a very sociable person which made this a perfect career for her. She loved talking with not only the community clients, but with the high school students as well. With the community clients, they talk about their personal lives involving their family and friends. They also talk about upcoming events going on in the community and what they did on a particular weekend. With the high school students, she finds herself talking to them about their different classes and also what they did over the weekend. She also stated that she enjoyed how she was able to be active all the time while working, which was important to her. She laughed while explaining that when the evenings are slow, she too will work out on the machines, but is constantly jumping off of them to go help a client. Overall, Kristen told me that she enjoyed working as a fitness director. As with most jobs, she said that some days are better than others, and it is the slow,
frustrating days that make her think about getting a full-time job. However, she smiled and laughed while telling me that that time may be thought about frequently, but in actuality, she won’t be looking to change careers anytime soon.

At this point, I was preparing to leave when she changed the interview around and questioned me. Kristen was curious as to why I had chosen her for the interview when I could have picked anyone. I was glad to share my rationale with her for multiple reasons. To begin, I explained that my major is exercise science. With this as a major, I have many different options as to where I can take my career. I explained that presently, I was hoping to work in a cardiovascular unit in a hospital and also work as a trainer on the side. However, if I changed my mind, I had many other options as to what I could do. As it turns out, working as a fitness director is one of the options. I told Kristen that using her as the subject of my paper not only worked perfectly for my class assignment, but that it also worked perfectly because it would help me see other options that I had not yet explored for myself.

My other reason I gave to Kristen for choosing her was that I am obsessed with being active and physically fit. I explained that my mother is a registered dietician and with that, I was raised on healthy living as a child, including not only food choices, but exercise as well. I told her how vital I think exercise is, not only for myself, but others as well. I shared how my
brother told me that he often hears not our mother's voice in his head, but mine, saying, "Luke! Eat your vegetables and then go run!" Being fit is so important to me because I know how good it is for one's overall health. In 1996, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reported that "An estimated 60% of all American adults do not get the recommended amount of physical activity; 25% report no physical activity whatsoever; and nearly 50% of adolescents and young adults between the ages of 12 and 21 years are not physically active on a regular basis" (Heyward pg. 1). I wanted to interview someone in the health field that I'm going into, and hope to find them as enthusiastic as I am about helping people be physically fit. With that, I looked at Kristen and saw her listening with a smiling face. Her response to my rambling was genuine and sincere.

"Well I hope I gave you a good insight into my career and the fitness career in general! (Laughs) You remind me of myself when I was your age. I wanted to help people and be involved in getting them to be fit. I'm glad in a sense that I didn't get a teaching job, because with my job now, I can show people what to do rather than lecture them on it...although either one is a noble job."

With that, we finally declared the interview officially over. I thanked Kristen for her time and started for my car. As I was driving back to my house, I went through the interview in my mind. I had a great time talking with Kristen. She helped to give me more insight into my own thoughts and plans for the
future. It was also nice to meet with someone who was enthusiastic about her career. She loved what she did, and she took pride in it. Being a fitness director may not be looked upon on the same playing field as a doctor or lawyer, but it deserves the same amount of respect. She helps people. Being fit prolongs life, and she teaches it to people. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "The importance of regular physical activity in preventing disease and premature death and in maintaining a high quality of life has recently received recognition as a national health objective in the first U.S. Surgeon General's report on Physical Activity and Health" (Heyward pg. 2). She helps them live and she deserves a great deal of credit for her line of work. Interviewing Kristen made me look forward to the many years that I will hopefully have with my career in a health related field.

Works Cited


Questions for discussion: What are some comparisons between Leah's subject in this paper and in Drew's? Leah uses the
interview as the "frame" for her research? What does she gain by doing that? Leah says that Kristen succeeds because she enjoys the social aspects of her work. Is work something we do for ourselves or for others? Or is it something that we do with others, and what is this difference?