

UPCOMING PILATES CERTIFICATION WILL HELP PROTECT CONSUMERS

MIAMI, FL- January 25, 2005 – The rising popularity of Pilates has led to more than 9 million Americans practicing the regimen, emphasizing the need for standardized certification of instructors to protect the public from injury and ensure that Pilates is properly taught. According to the **Pilates Method Alliance®**, a non-profit group seeking to regulate and guide the industry forward, national certification will become a reality in August 2005.

“Pilates is here to stay,” says Kevin Bowen, CEO and co-founder of the **PMA®**. “Over the past five years, Pilates has experienced phenomenal growth rates. This has led to fitness instructors rushing to keep pace with the demand. While many are properly qualified, others have opted for weekend certificate courses or video courses that simply do not provide adequate training. In turn, the consumer can be injured or not receive the full benefits of the exercises.”

In late October, the **PMA** announced the pending launch of the first national certification exam at its 4th International Educational Conference in New Orleans. According to Bowen, the **PMA** has hired Castle WorldWide, one of the largest certification and licensure testing companies in the United States, to develop an exam that measures whether or not a Pilates instructor can perform job-related duties with competence. Examinations by Castle Worldwide have been recognized by the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA) as being a standard for professional competency.

“With the changing face of the fitness industry, professional competency is definitely a hot button,” Bowen states. “Consumers should be made aware of this development. The move toward third-party accreditation is ultimately to protect individuals from receiving Pilates instruction from someone who took a weekend course to become certified and claims to be a competent teacher. Situations like that can lead to serious injury and reflect badly upon the Pilates exercise regimen.”

There are roughly 13,000 instructors in the United States teaching Pilates and the **PMA** estimates that only one fourth of those individuals are adequately trained.

Until the exam is rolled out in August, the **PMA** offers a list of guidelines and questions to help people interested in practicing Pilates find a qualified teacher:

1. *Are the instructors trained through a comprehensive training program?*
2. *Did that training program require a written and practical test, lecture, observation, practice and apprentice hours?*
3. *How many total hours were spent in the training program? (The Pilates method is a knowledge based method of exercise and training. Time spent in certification training produces qualified teachers.)*
4. *Does the instructor have any other movement related teaching experience?*
5. *How long have the instructors been teaching Pilates?*
6. *What is the instructor's/ studio's philosophy and specialty? Are they able to any handle special needs, such as pregnancy or post rehabilitation?*
7. *Does the instructor or studio teach the full repertoire of Pilates on all pieces of apparatus?*

Consumers can also visit the **PMA's** website www.pilatesmethodalliance.org and search its database of members who have completed sufficient training and education for an instructor near them. Once the exam is launched, this database will be expanded to include all individuals who have achieved certification.

“The **PMA** has long recognized the need for creating industry standards,” Bowen adds. “We began developing a certification exam three years ago. Our goal is to create a professional standard for the industry and give consumers greater protection from incompetence while preserving the quality of the Pilates method. We are encouraging health clubs and studios to only hire Pilates instructors that have received third-party accredited Pilates certification to protect both their clients and themselves.”

The **Pilates Method Alliance** is the international, not for profit, professional association dedicated to the teachings of Joseph H. and Clara Pilates. The **PMA's** mission is to protect the public by establishing certification and continuing education standards for Pilates professionals.

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Media Contact:

Nikay Richardson or Leean Bowman, PPR Communications

Phone: 305-445-4944 x205; Fax: 305-445-5377

nikay@pprcommunications.com