

PROFESSIONAL EDGE

LOOKING *for* CREDITS

IN ALL THE RIGHT PLACES

Keeping Up to Date—Live and Online

BY LAWRENCE BISCONTINI, MA



CAFAA certified professionals have a large number of responsibilities in addition to teaching and training clients and classes. Staying certified is not only an industry expectation. In light of the ever-changing disciplines of fitness and wellness research, it is a necessity. Knowing the available options for continuing education can help today's fitness professional make the most out of staying on top of any given field of expertise. To be sure, while recertification currently does not require discipline-specific specialization, enough opportunities exist to make continuing education in any specific discipline a reality.

According to Lauri Reimer, AFAA Master Certification Specialist, Trainer and AFAA Director of Consultant Services, staying AFAA certified "requires a minimum of 15 approved continuing education units (CEUs), which includes current CPR and one AFAA mandatory course. These can come from AFAA workshops, online courses or self-studies, or a combination of these courses together with AFAA approved programs. Approved programs include many continuing education providers, related college coursework and programs led by degreed or licensed allied health professionals." As always, afaa.com outlines specifics for each of those items in the last sentence. For AFAA certified individuals with addresses outside of the United States, recertification requirements vary.

Try AFAA online

Perhaps the single one-stop shop for continuing education opportunities is AFAA's own afaa.com. On the home page, one can quickly find out where continuing education units will be offered on an international level. Furthermore, one can also add an email to be notified when courses become offered in the future within a specified geographic area. Fitness professionals who oftentimes overlook the value of attending AFAA's one-day Primary Group Fitness Certification review may want to reconsider. Not only does this provide a review of valuable, updated fitness information and teaching techniques, but it offers five continuing education credits while simultaneously satisfying the mandatory AFAA course requirement, all in one day. Of course, any professional can attend any certification review just for credits, but sometimes courses take longer than a day, such as the Personal Trainer Certification. In addition, AFAA offers many one-day programs in various specialties (Mechanics of Injury Prevention, Perinatal Fitness, etc.) While such programs are not

certifications, the advantage is that participants receive credits and satisfy the AFAA mandatory course requirement; additionally these courses are sometimes less stressful than attending examination-based programs.

One of the newest, most exciting parts of the AFAA continuing education program is the Multitraining Live® (MTL) system. Currently, MTL is being used as a part of the AFAA distance education program to help participants study for quizzes and final exams. Multitraining Live is also being used in the Personal Fitness Trainer online cert and pre-APEX courses to help make sure participants are ready for testing, or to supplement the course material if participants desire. According to Kathy Stevens, AFAA Board Member and Education Director, AFAA soon will be offering specific continuing education MTL workshops that will last from one to eight hours with some follow-up study materials. Many of these courses will satisfy the mandatory AFAA course requirement, saving instructors and personal trainers from having to travel to locations that are sometimes far from home, and giving them more time to concentrate on acquiring new knowledge and skills.

Stevens says that MTL will have an online guide, kind of like a television guide, that can be accessed and will be updated on a weekly basis. Currently, Video Corners™ exist which are online continuing education programs offering four CEUs. These have been pretaped and are available to anyone at anytime in any time zone and also count toward the mandatory AFAA recertification course requirement. Current topics include injury prevention, group resistance training and dance modules such as hip-hop.

conferences

In addition to Internet education, professional fitness training conferences provide a plethora of opportunities for continuing education and certification renewal. Itself a sort of "AFAA convention," AFAA hosts the bi-yearly APEX at various cities around the globe, in which Certification Specialists host the most popular of AFAA's group fitness and personal training certifications and continuing education workshops at deeply discounted rates, unavailable anywhere except APEX locations.

Other North American conferences that bestow AFAA continuing education credits include IDEA World and its other events (ideafit.com), SCW events (scwfitness.com), East Coast Alliance

(ecaworldfitness.com), FitFest Tour events (fitflixpro.com), Can Fit Pro conference (canfitpro.com) and Empower Fitness Events (empowerfitnesssevents.com). Additionally, some of these conventions host CPR certifications and certification renewals for those professionals who need to meet that mandatory requirement for AFAA recertification.

While these conferences usually last three days or longer and allow delegates to satisfy their 15 hours of continuing education necessary for AFAA certification renewal, they do not count toward the mandatory AFAA course for certification renewal. Those are available worldwide, listed by geographic location at afaa.com, as well as via the AFAA Multitraining Live program.

conventions

Attending a professional fitness convention is a learned task. One's first impression may be feeling overwhelmed, daunted and even challenged. AFAA certification renewal is not content-specific, but rather credit-specific. This means that, as long as all programs offered at a convention are approved for AFAA credits, one can choose topics from any fitness area. For example, a personal trainer attending a conference can take all nutritional lectures, aquatic fitness classes or cycle programs, and still receive continuing education credits toward the renewal of his or her personal training certification. Likewise, a group fitness instructor can attend personal training or motivation lectures and workshops using equipment he or she may never use at home.

That said, to make the most of both the continuing education and recertification experience, the prudent fitness professional should choose sessions that complement what his or her fitness contribution to the industry will be on the Monday after the event. Teresa Estill, a group fitness and mind-body instructor at Range of Motion Dance & Fitness Studio in Campbell, Calif., agrees. "At conventions, I try to take a blend of sessions among those that do three things: 1. offer me new ways to teach what I'm already teaching at home; 2. offer me new formats I've never thought about teaching; and 3. offer me an experience that's just for myself to experience, not necessarily to take back home."

"I remember my first convention ever," says Yury Miankovich, an AFAA-certified group fitness instructor and personal trainer of "RockItFitness," based in Asia. "I didn't know how to choose my classes, how to separate those that used equipment from those that did not, and how to treat my body well so that I could still function and teach on Monday. I wish someone would have told me how to choose sessions."

Navigating conventions

To that point, veteran fitness presenters offer tips to those attending conventions for the first time looking for credits to satisfy certification renewal:

Tip 1: Leslee Bender, of the Bender Ball™ Method of Education, says "when choosing convention sessions, be sure to look for the logos next to session descriptions so you know if a session is sponsored by a product company. That session will most likely be incorporating some new piece of fitness equipment that may or may not be appropriate for you back home."

Tip 2: Nancy Gillette, AFAA Education Advisory Board and AFAA Director of Continuing Education, says, "Try to choose sessions that alternate between sitting and doing, what I call 'mental intervals.' For example, start the day with activity, add a lecture during lunchtime to digest your food, and then move back into activity in the afternoon or early evening. This keeps you from getting too sore from moving, but keeps you alert during the sitting sessions."

Tip 3: Cammy Dennis, Fitness Director, On Top of the World Communities and The Ranch Fitness Center & Spa in Florida, says "if you enjoy a particular session, always introduce yourself to the presenter and request a business card. They will always be able to point you in the direction of their own continuing education workshops offering opportunities to earn additional continuing education credits and more detailed training beyond the 90 minutes offered at that convention. Ask them if they are 'AFAA approved,' and, if so, the next time you need some continuing education credits, you can specialize in their area of expertise."

Tip 4: Lori Templeman, a fitness presenter from Sacramento, Calif., says "select a blend between getting new moves versus actual education. Understanding the methodology behind the movements empowers you to go home and think for yourself, beyond a presenter's specific class. The best workshops are the ones that introduce a formula you can take back to your classes and continue to develop in your own way. Lectures also provide wonderful resources for class development."

choose your certification method

Keeping AFAA certifications up to date is an easier task than ever. With so many continuing education opportunities like conventions, AFAA's APEX events, and Multitraining Live at afaa.com, resources now are available 24 hours a day to professionals all over the world, in many cases without anyone having to leave home. **AF**

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