

# ENTREPRENEURS STRIVE TO KEEP COMMUNITY HEALTHY

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have an outlet from daily stresses. Doing that (exercise) is going to help you push forward, especially with mental health."

The facility on Milton's Main Street — which teaches the martial art that's the national sport of Thailand, along with boxing and kick-boxing — has been hosting online classes since being forced to close its doors to the public in March.

Recently Oliveros opened his classes up to everyone in the community for free — something he says has received a lot of great feedback so far.

"Even though we're struggling to pay our rent and keep our gym afloat, we wanted to do something for the community as well," he said. "We're a community-based gym,

"This is a time when people need to be mentally stimulated and have an outlet from daily stresses."

- Rommel Oliveros

and we want to make sure people's health is intact."

Meanwhile, meditation instructor Chantal Garneau is taking a similar approach to helping local residents with their overall health and well-being. She began hosting free online meditation sessions over six weeks ago, where she guides participants through breathing, mindfulness and relaxation.

The Georgetown woman said she's averaging 30 to 40 participants per class, with people from as far away as Vancouver and even France tuning in for the Zoom session.

"What we're doing is a practising how to de-escalate," she said. "When we're stressed out, we tend to hold our breath and tighten our bodies, and it freezes us in our thoughts. We're practising the opposite of that. We're opening our bodies back up, breathing again nice and slow, and when we do that, our thoughts tend to settle automatically."

Garneau said these techniques are very important right now as many people are feeling anxiety about their loss of stability and routine during the pandemic.



Graham Paine/TorStar

Rommel Oliveros of Milton Muay Thai has pivoted to offer free online classes as his facility is closed due to the pandemic.

And while some may focus on exercise and healthy eating, she said the way we breathe is an often-overlooked, but very essential aspect of overall

health. "When we start to choose how we're breathing, we realize it affects the way we think and feel, and it makes everything else easier," she said.

Here's how to find out more about the classes discussed above:

- Kathryn Smith: Follow her Instagram page at @sweatwithkathryn for class details.
- Milton Muay Thai: info@miltonmuaythai.ca for a class schedule and Zoom meeting codes.
- Chantal Garneau: Visit chantalgarneau.com to register for sessions.

*STORY BEHIND THE STORY: With local residents facing the continuous stress of isolation amid the coronavirus pandemic, people and businesses throughout Halton are coming up with creative ideas to achieve overall health and wellness.*

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