

**INSIDE!!!**

**How To Build  
A Fitness &  
Wellness Brand**  
P. 30

*From Social Media  
Star to **Sportswear Mogul*** P. 06

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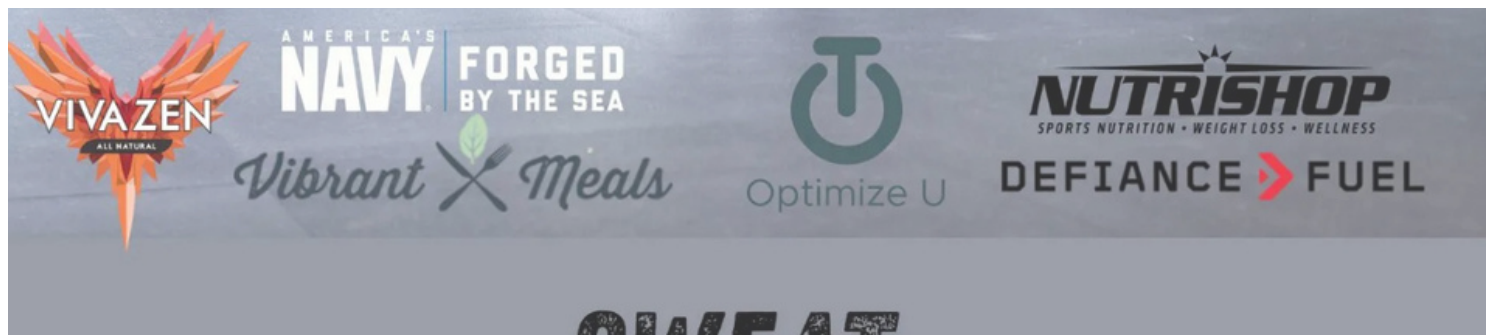
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# Letter From Editor: Tala Shatara

This magazine is one of my favorite's to have put together. Nashville is a magical city that truly can offer so many opportunities – and best of all – it's the perfect city to even **create your own!**

The entrepreneur issue is so special to us at NFM because we exist to help you and your fitness/wellness brand all year round. We selected a few amazing business owner's who all have a story to tell and inspire every time and we hope you find them just as motivating. I have always had a special place in my heart for those who start anything from the ground up. That is truly what makes Nashville so special. The movers, shakers, innovators, and all who have never heard the word 'no' are continuously bringing the top sites, tastes, and experiences that define the culture and character of this city.

Those who build a brand from the ground up especially in fitness and wellness is something I know all too well. My fiancé has recently launched his very own personal training brand and I have seen up close all the trails, blood, sweat and tears it takes. Anyone that chooses to enter this type of industry are truly one-of-a-kind go-getters and I cannot wait to introduce you to some of them!

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## SHOP NOW

# FROM SOCIAL MEDIA STAR TO SPORTSWEAR MOGUL

## Nashville Fitness Entrepreneur Natalie Kennedy Shares Journey as Influencer to Activewear Brand Founder

In a recent interview on the *Nashville Fit Podcast*, Natalie Kennedy and her husband, Patrick opened up about their overnight sensation athletic line and how it all began. Natalie's story started in the corporate world before she ultimately left to pursue social media influencing and content creation in Nashville. From sharing fashion tips, travel recommendations, and all the family-life chaos, she has amassed over 600,000, and people cannot get enough! "I worked from home and felt like I had extra time on my hands," Kennedy explained. "I don't do well with downtime, I like to stay busy and motivated." It seemed like the perfect life through her Instagram, with tips and tricks on how to stay sane through life's fun but unpredictable hustle, however, her own health was slipping through the cracks. Kennedy's passion for fitness has become central to her brand and personal life. After the birth of her first daughter, Natalie faced a health battle she never expected. From gaining over 40 pounds, to waking up each day with no energy, and even experiencing joint pain that plagued her body, she knew something was off. "I was a ball of inflammation," she recalls. Like many, Kennedy turned to popular diet and fitness strategies to get her health back on track including counting calories, following the Atkins diet, and pushing herself through excessive cardio sessions. Instead of helping, these methods only worsened her condition, adding stress to an already inflamed body. The turning point came when she connected with a health coach who introduced her to a new approach: focusing on real, whole foods instead of processed ones, and moving her body in ways that supported her system – strength training. Now, she's passionate about helping other women understand they don't have to accept fatigue, pain, and discomfort as inevitable parts of motherhood or aging. In September 2024, Natalie and Patrick launched Salt Project to bring women of all sizes comfort, confidence and style in her fitness journey.





The name carries special meaning: "SALT" stands for sweat, while "project" represents the ongoing fitness journey everyone experiences. "We meet women wherever they are in their project," Kennedy explained. "It's really exciting to see the DMs she gets from people saying, 'I finally feel good in these clothes and I'm excited to go to the gym again.'" The brand has already released 13 drops featuring vibrant colors like cherry red, periwinkle, agave, and deep teal – and each drop is even more highly-anticipated and sells out every time. Inspired by other fashionable athletic-wear brands, Natalie aims to keep style and functionality in her line. However, there is still one man who has a hand in it all too.



Patrick Kennedy, Natalie's husband, has been supporting his wife from the start. Already coming from an entrepreneurial background, he brought a level of insight to the brand. Pat, often referred to as "the Instagram husband," supported her from the very beginning, helping with content as Natalie built her following, but as time went on, the couple knew they eventually wanted to pursue something bigger beyond social media influence.

# SALT PROJECT



"I don't know why, but I feel so strongly that I'm meant to start an activewear business that I will not turn away now," Natalie told Pat, who immediately supported the vision with an enthusiastic "Let's go." However, it was all a learning curve. The Kennedys have faced numerous challenges in building their business. Neither had experience in clothing manufacturing before launching SALT Project. "We didn't realize how much went into making clothes," Pat shared. "From everything down to the tags and the hang tags and logos, and then how Natalie's been making these pieces from scratch."



**Navy Captain, Commanding Officer, Competitive Bodybuilder.**

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Keeping inclusivity a priority, the couple had to learn the waves of sizing distribution and inventory management too. Even within the stress of owning a business, the stories that emerged made it all worth it. For Natalie, the most rewarding aspect has been seeing women wearing her designs. She recounted meeting a mother of two at an airport wearing Salt Project clothing: "I was like, I'm going to cry. You look so cute. And she was like, 'I feel good.' I can't even explain how cool that is. That is everything." Natalie knows all too well how important it is for mom's to feel and look their best. The Salt Project is a family affair for The Kennedy family.

The couple has been navigating the challenges of building their activewear business, while raising their young family. "Anytime anybody starts something new, you have to figure out a way to balance it," Natalie explained. "For the past year we've been kind of trying to find that happy medium between work life and family life." With two daughters under five, they are always on-the-go. The Kennedys describe being in "the coolest phase right now" with their daughters, noting that they're past the baby stage and are enjoying their children's developing personalities. "We're able to have a lot of fun and their personalities are awesome," Natalie shared. "I just look at Pat multiple times a day and I'm just like, 'they're so cool.'" If you haven't already, follow along with Natalie Kennedy on Instagram and you might just see some cute cameos from her mini influencers in training. The couple collaborates on content creation, with Pat often behind the camera or appearing in videos. Their teamwork approach has been essential to their success. "I don't think this could be my job if he wasn't on board," Natalie acknowledged. "Everybody has to be all in for it to work. It's not a one-person show."



Salt Project is gearing up for their next launch featuring a very special collaborator, Houston-based influencer and Natalie's BFF, Jessica Crum. The line will drop on September 7 and will feature a vibrant brown just in time for Fall.

*How do you shop?* Visit their website and sign up for text/email alerts as new drops are expected to sell out. Keep up with all things family life, fashion, fitness and more on Natalie's Instagram (@nataliepkennedy).

Now approaching its one-year anniversary since launching in September 2024, the brand represents more than just stylish workout clothes, it embodies Kennedy's passion for never giving up on yourself.

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# TEACHER TO TRAINER: ABBY MIRANDA LEADS A DIFFERENT TYPE OF CLASS



**When you see Abby Miranda** leading a workout, you'd think she had been doing it from the start. She has the kind of presence that draws people in. Steady but upbeat, encouraging without being pushy. But Abby's journey into the fitness world didn't start out the way you would expect it. It began in a first-grade classroom teaching kids the fundamentals of shapes, colors, numbers, and even forming full sentence. She taught at schools in Cheatham and Dickson County and made lasting relationships with students, parents, and other teachers.

Although she loved her job, she felt a bigger calling to take her skills and transfer them into another industry – one that promotes health and well-being. In college, unsure of what she wanted to do, she followed her mother's footsteps into teaching. What started as a practical choice became something she loved — the students, the team, the school community. But beneath the surface, there was always a pull toward something she could call her own. "I thought about opening a coffee shop once," she laughs. "Not because I was obsessed with coffee, but because I wanted to create something from the ground up." That entrepreneurial spirit would linger in the background until an unexpected opportunity arrived.

Abby was asked to lead a course in Africa, teaching other educators basic curriculum with limited resources. During that time, she leaned into her own health and wellness and started earning her personal training certification. Once she returned back to Tennessee, she hit the ground running...*literally*. She started as a part-time coaching at Body Fit Training in Brentwood and quickly climbed the ladder. Within four months, Abby became head coach and also stepped into a management role. She credits her rapid rise to skills learned in the classroom. "In teaching, if a student struggled, you had to find the barrier," she explains. "It's the same in fitness. If someone isn't hitting their goals, you don't blame them, you help them work through what's in the way." Her ability to adapt workouts for different needs, communicate clearly, and keep people motivated comes directly from years of leading a classroom full of diverse learners. And just like teaching, she approached fitness with grit. "I was ready to clean, show up early, and do whatever needed to be done. This isn't a side gig, you have to be all in."

Today, Abby offers private and virtual training, online programs, and is working toward a Nutrition certification. She also holds a Corrective Exercise Specialization and dreams of opening a second BFT Brentwood location. Her mission is clear: to give clients more than a workout. "I want to offer complete wellness, training, nutrition, mindset and more so people can create sustainable, lifelong habits." Abby's journey is proof that sometimes the most fulfilling career isn't the one you planned for — it's the one you find when you're willing to step out in faith, work hard, and follow the pull toward your true calling.



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## FIT FEATURE

# GARY SMITH

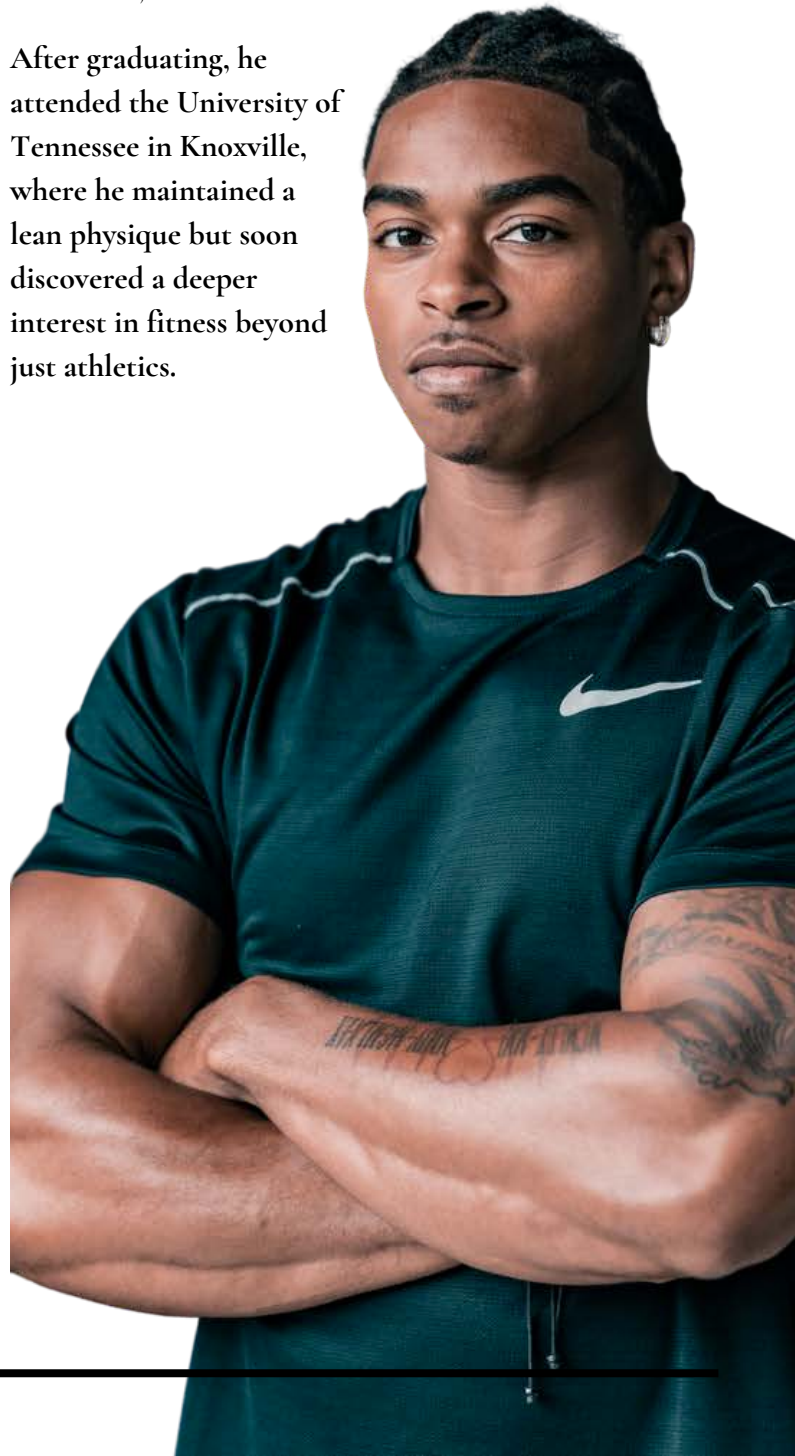


Growing up in Memphis, Gary was always active in school sports playing baseball, basketball, and football.

After graduating, he attended the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, where he maintained a lean physique but soon discovered a deeper interest in fitness beyond just athletics.

Despite initially pursuing a business and sport management degree, Gary found himself drawn less to a traditional classroom path and more to what fitness taught him about discipline, motivation, and goal-setting. “The gym became my classroom,” he says. “It helped me push through tough times in school and shaped how I approach life.” After graduation, Gary gained real-world coaching experience at a physical therapy and performance center in Memphis.

This opportunity sparked his ambition to launch his own online coaching business, a move that allowed him to expand his reach and impact beyond in-person training. Now based in Nashville, Gary works as a fitness coach at Orangetheory Midtown and personal trainer at Outlaw Training Club. Keep reading to find out what he has learned along the way.



### **College Discovery: Finding Fitness at UT Knoxville**

Enrolling at the University of Tennessee, Gary initially identified as a regular student, weighing a lean 140 pounds, but after time spent at the gym on campus, he noticed his body starting to change. Gary gained 20 pounds of muscle, a turning point that revealed to him the power of disciplined training and nutrition. He admits that his fitness journey wasn't always linear, he lost and regained weight multiple times, but these experiences taught him valuable lessons about consistency, patience, and long-term commitment.

Fitness also became an unexpected source of motivation during difficult academic periods. "College wasn't easy for me," Gary shares. "I struggled to find the right career path and switched majors a couple of times. The discipline I learned in the gym helped me push through school challenges and kept me focused."

### **Early Coaching Experience: From Internships to Performance Training**

Upon graduation, armed with degrees in sport management and business, Gary did not immediately land a traditional job. Instead, he returned home to Memphis and took an internship at a physical therapy and performance center owned by a family friend. This was Gary's first formal coaching role, where he worked alongside therapists to provide performance coaching for athletes. Though he lacked certification at the time, Gary relied on practical knowledge and mentorship to guide his clients. "This role was a huge learning experience," he recalls. "I was still figuring things out, but it gave me the confidence and foundation I needed to take the next step."





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## Launching an Online Coaching

Motivated by the desire to help more people, Gary launched an online coaching business while still in Memphis. He recognized the potential of digital platforms to reach clients beyond his immediate location. "It was a struggle at first," he admits. "Building clientele from home wasn't easy, but I stayed consistent and kept improving." In mid-2022, Gary moved to Nashville to grow his business further. He secured a position at Street Fitness gym, gaining experience in personal training and group fitness, which helped him refine his coaching style and deepen his knowledge beyond bodybuilding to overall health and wellness.

## The Power of Nutrition and Habit Formation

One of the biggest shifts in Gary's journey was his growing fascination with nutrition. Early on, he focused primarily on lifting and gaining muscle, but over time he realized that what you eat plays a crucial role in achieving fitness goals. "Helping clients understand calories, macros, and sustainable eating habits became a key part of my coaching," Gary shares. "You can't out-train a poor diet, so education is critical." Beyond diet, he emphasizes the importance of habits and lifestyle change. "It's not about quick fixes," he says. "It's about building routines that stick, so fitness and health become a natural part of your daily life." He encourages clients to view fitness as a holistic journey, incorporating exercise, nutrition, recovery, and mental well-being.



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The sanctuary itself is designed to feel like a retreat. Expect state-of-the-art fitness spaces, infrared saunas, a Grab-n-Go café, collaborative work areas, and aesthetic services like Botox and fillers. With five core pillars: Mind, Body, Beauty, Nutrition, and Community, LEVEL aims to be a trusted guide in an era where self-care is trending but misinformation is everywhere. Memberships are now open, with early access perks available before the Franklin location’s official launch.

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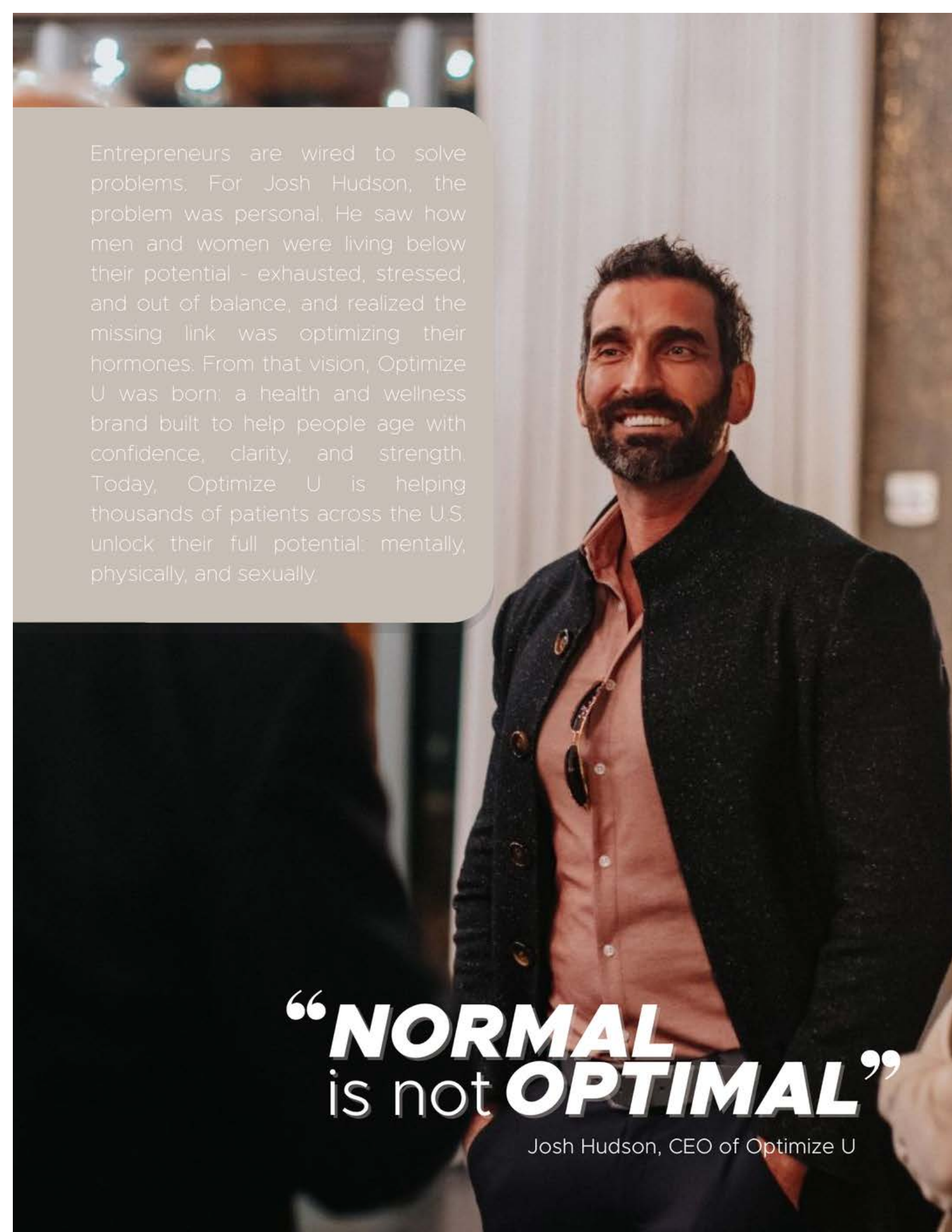
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Josh Hudson, CEO of Optimize U

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# NIL TAKES CENTER STAGE

Born and raised in San Diego, Sabrina Oostburg's life changed in 2020 when her mother saw a YouTube video titled "Top 10 Reasons Why I Moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee." Within a week, the family sold their home, packed up, and drove across the country. *We might be biased, but Tennessee is truly the best!* Oostburg eventually landed in Nashville, where she's now entering her senior year at Belmont University, majoring in sports administration with a minor in legal studies. But her road to collegiate athletics was just as unconventional as her move across the country.

In high school, looking to make friends after relocating, Oostburg joined the track team only to have her coach suggest she try throwing instead of running. "I didn't even know what throwing was," she laughs. Within two months, she ranked top six in Tennessee for Shot Put and soon received her first collegiate offer. Her athletic career took her from Austin Peay State University to Belmont, where she now competes in Shot Put and Hammer Throw and went on to win several National titles. However, the passing of the NCAA's Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) policy that propelled Oostburg into a different kind of spotlight on and off the field.

In 2022, the world of collegiate sports changed as referring to a student-athlete's legal right to control and profit from their own personal brand, such as their name, photos, or likeness. After discovering there were no online resources explaining how athletes could land NIL deals, Oostburg leaned on her past experience—she had secured her first brand partnership in high school to help fund Olympic weightlifting competitions. That deal with a local supplement store sparked what would become a thriving personal brand.



**It's not just about free products. It's about building something that can serve you long after your athletic career.**

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# MAKING MOVES BEFORE GRADUATION

Today, she has worked on over 100 NIL partnerships, with brands ranging from Sports Illustrated to CVS. One of her most notable achievements was being selected out of 1,000 athletes for Meta's female student-athlete cohort, which led to a fully paid trip to Las Vegas to network with some of the top women in sports. "I never imagined NIL would open doors like this. It showed me just how powerful these opportunities can be when you know how to leverage them." Since then, Oostburg's work extends beyond her own brand. She recently launched NIL Roadmap, a two-part initiative that includes online courses and live events to educate athletes, particularly high school students on how to navigate NIL opportunities. She says her mission is to not only help athletes make money through NIL, but also equip them with lifelong skills in negotiation, networking, content creation, and business strategy. "It's not just about free products," Oostburg explains. "It's about building something that can serve you long after your athletic career." With dream partnerships like Whole Foods on her radar and a growing reputation as both a creator and educator in the NIL space, Sabrina Oostburg is proof that the modern athlete can thrive both on and off the field.

## IMPORTANCE OF NIL

The NCAA's Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) policy has transformed the landscape for college athletes, and Sabrina Oostburg is living proof of its significance. More than just a chance to earn extra income, Sabrina explains that NIL offers critical opportunities that extend far beyond the playing field. For collegiate athletes juggling intense training, competition, and academics, finding time for traditional jobs can be nearly impossible. Sabrina emphasizes how NIL deals provide flexible income streams that fit around hectic schedules. "Social media deals allow me to make good money without sacrificing my athletic and academic commitments," she says. NIL earnings help ease financial pressures for student-athletes. But NIL's value isn't just financial. Sabrina highlights how it teaches real-world skills including negotiating contracts, networking, content creation and more that prepare athletes for careers beyond sports. This evolution also opens doors beyond the *playing field*. Sabrina shares how some athletes transition into jobs with brands they once promoted, turning NIL into a long-term career springboard. For Sabrina Oostburg, NIL is more than a rule change, it's a game-changer that empowers athletes to thrive financially, professionally, and personally as they build their futures beyond the classroom.





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ONE-ON-ONE WITH  
NFM PUBLISHER &  
OWNER



# TERRY BARGA



**When it became time to purchase/invest in NFM, what was the deciding factor?**

Honestly? It was a gut-check moment. I looked at where fitness media was going and asked myself, "Do I want to be a passenger or do I want to drive the bus?" NFM wasn't just a business opportunity—it was a platform. A way to elevate voices, build bridges in our community, and create something that helps people live better lives. The deciding factor wasn't money; it was mission. I believed this brand could do more—and I was either going to watch someone else do it or roll up my sleeves and lead it.



**Tell me about your own fitness and wellness background and journey?**

Let's say I've been on both sides of the gym floor. I've been the guy who needed help and the guy who gave it. My journey started with pain, like most real stories do—physical, mental, emotional. I didn't just find fitness; I fought for it. I've trained, competed, recovered, and rebuilt more times than I can count. But through it all, I learned that movement is medicine, and consistency is the real flex. Fitness didn't just change my body—it changed how I show up for life, for my family, for my business.

## What does a day in the life for Terry Barga, owner and publisher of NFM, look like?

Organized chaos with a shot of espresso. Mornings start early—usually before the sun. I like to get my mind and body right before the world gets loud. From there, it's a mix of strategy calls, content reviews, podcast interviews, gym visits, and checking in with the team. I'm a publisher, sure, but I'm also the janitor, the hype man, and sometimes the therapist. I make time for movement daily, even if it's a walk between meetings. And I always end the day asking: "Did I push something forward today?" If the answer's no, I go back and find a way to do it.

## What is the best piece of advice to someone hoping to launch their own brand/business?

Stop waiting for perfect. Start with real. Build from there. Most people get stuck in the idea phase because they're afraid of failing. I say—fail fast, learn faster, and surround yourself with people who'll tell you the truth, not just what you want to hear. Your brand isn't your logo, your color palette, or your tagline—it's your integrity in action. Stay consistent, stay curious, and stay in the room when it gets hard. That's where the real stuff happens.



## What does the future look like for NFM?

Big. Bold. Community-driven. We're expanding beyond the magazine into other cities/states, a radio show, TV with ads, and fractional marketing services. I want NFM to be the connective tissue for Middle Tennessee's health and wellness scene—where ideas grow, partnerships are built, and the people doing good work finally get the spotlight they deserve. And we're not stopping here. Chattanooga, Memphis, Atlanta—we've got our eyes on you. The future of NFM is impact at scale, and we're just getting warmed up.

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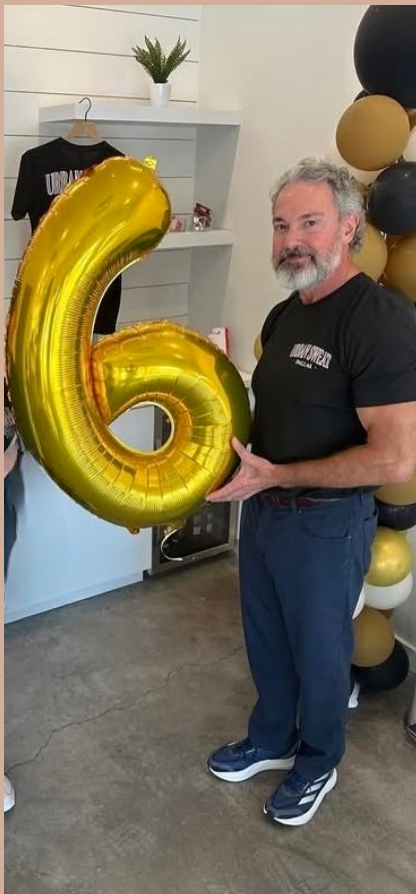
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# How To Build a Fitness & Wellness Brand with Dan O'Hearn

“Don’t be afraid to fail. Failure is your best teacher. What seems crazy today could be the norm tomorrow.”



Dan O'Hearn's entrepreneurial journey is anything but ordinary. A Green Bay native, O'Hearn's path has taken him from the financial sector to NFL sidelines, commercial kitchens, and now the forefront of wellness innovation. As a multi-franchise owner for Urban Sweat locations and part-owner of Defiance Fuel Water, his career blends business savvy with a passion for health, performance, and community impact. O'Hearn's business career began 25 years ago when he purchased a financial planning company—a venture that remains a cornerstone of his portfolio. He later co-founded Sustainable Kitchens, a company dedicated to transforming school and hospital cafeterias into hubs for scratch-made, organic cooking. “We teach the staff, rewrite menus, and sometimes redesign the kitchens from the ground up,” O'Hearn says. “It's about giving people better food and better systems.” He also ventured into e-commerce, running an online prescription drug business before selling it six years ago. Along the way, his companies have touched unexpected industries—most notably manufacturing NFL player uniforms in partnership with Nike.



O'Hearn's move to Tennessee was as unconventional as his business resume. "I literally put names of cities in a hat," he laughs. Nashville won, and after a visit to an Ole Miss vs. Vanderbilt football game, he signed a condo lease the very next day. "The rest is history." Once settled, his interest in biohacking and recovery led him to Defiance Fuel Water, where a 30-day performance challenge caught his attention. After connecting with co-founder Brian Bergdorf, O'Hearn became an investor and active advocate.



Brian Bergdorf (Left), Dan O'Hearn (Right)

Dan first discovered Defiance Fuel while visiting a Nashville gym and was struck by its clean taste and unique science. Intrigued, he committed to a 30-day challenge, drinking it exclusively while keeping his workouts the same, and saw measurable improvements in performance and recovery. After connecting with co-founder Brian Bergdorf, O'Hearn invested in the brand, drawn to its mission and innovative approach. Unlike typical bottled waters, Defiance Fuel is structured for cellular-level hydration, contains balanced pH to match the body's natural levels, and includes electrolytes and minerals—making it a performance-focused water designed for athletes and everyday wellness alike. O'Hearn also oversees Urban Sweat franchises in Dallas and Cherry Creek, Colorado, with plans to expand into Louisville, Boulder, and additional Dallas locations. The infrared sauna studios reflect his vision for holistic wellness and recovery.

For Dan O'Hearn, success in business has less to do with having the perfect idea and more to do with how you handle the imperfect moments. His advice to aspiring entrepreneurs and investors is straightforward: don't be afraid to fail. "Failure is your best teacher," he says. "What might seem crazy today could be the norm tomorrow. If you believe in it enough, you can make it happen."

O'Hearn points out that many groundbreaking ideas—from ride-sharing to home rentals—were considered laughable at first. "People thought Airbnb was insane, but the founders kept going. That's how innovation happens," he says. Equally important to him is building a network before you need it. He stresses the value of genuine, consistent connections—whether that's grabbing coffee, sharing a workout, or attending industry events. "Don't wait until you need something to meet people," he says. "Relationships are currency. You never know when someone you met a year ago could open the next door for you."

For O'Hearn, it all comes down to preparation, resilience, and a willingness to keep pushing forward, even when the outcome isn't certain. "You're either part of the problem or part of the solution," he says. "Choose to be part of the solution." "Dan O'Hearn doesn't just think outside the box—he turned the box into a business plan and sold it before breakfast."

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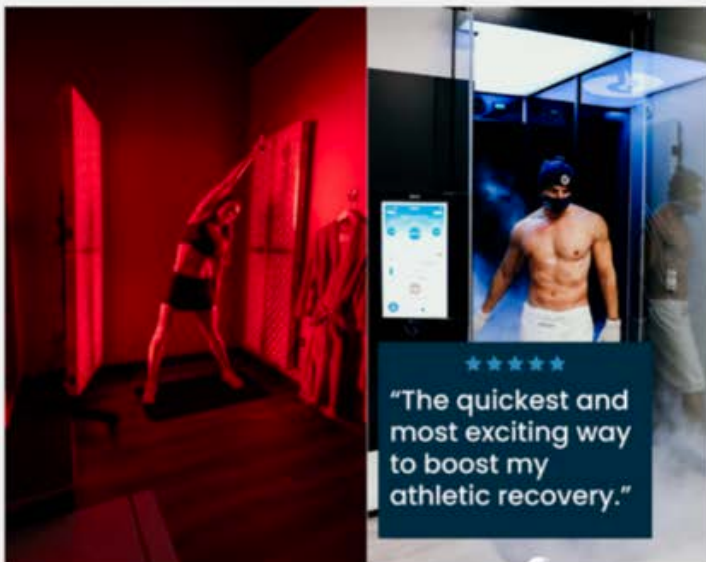
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# NEXT HEALTH ARRIVES IN NASHVILLE



## Living In The Future

Scott and Kim Crosbie thought they were retired. After years of building businesses in Charlotte, the couple planned to slow down. But when Scott's mother was diagnosed with dementia, his deep dive into biohacking and longevity revealed a new mission, to share cutting-edge health solutions with others. That calling led them to open Next Health, a sleek wellness sanctuary offering advanced biomarker testing, peptides, IV therapy, hormone optimization, cryotherapy, red light, and even Therapeutic Plasma Exchange (TPE)—a rare procedure drawing clients from across the Southeast.

While traditional medicine often reacts to disease, the couple's approach emphasizes proactive care. "It's not sick care—it's health care," Scott said. Located in the Gulch, Next Health offers modalities that will make anyone feel they are living in the future. Step into their Hyperbaric Chamber which has been proven to accelerate wound healing, fighting infections, and reduce swelling. While you are visiting, hop into their cryotherapy or red light therapy machines and find relaxation in healthcare.

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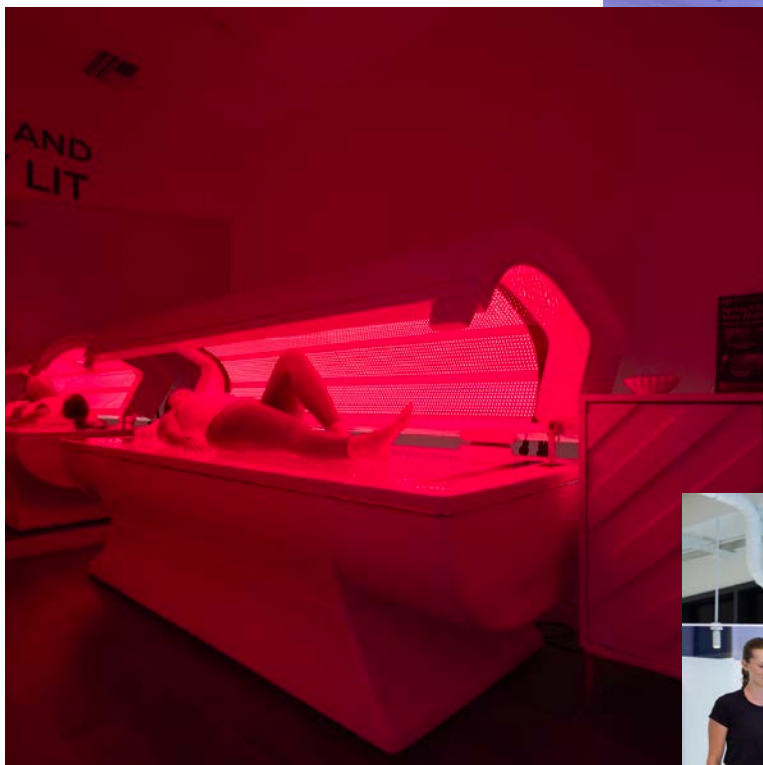
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Alongside the clinic, Kim started the Nashville Wellness Club to connect people with gyms, studios, and community events. “It’s about bringing people together,” Kim shared. “I wanted a space where people could try different things and really discover what wellness means for them.” From group workouts to wellness expos, the club gives *Nashvillians* opportunities to explore new ways of moving, eating, and caring for themselves—all while connecting with others on the same journey.



For both Scott and Kim, opening Next Health Nashville is more than entrepreneurship. It’s personal. “When you go through something with your family, like I did with my mom, it changes you,” Scott said. “It makes you think about how precious health really is and how much control we actually have, when we make the right choices.” Kim agreed, noting that they see the clinic and the wellness club as part of a larger movement. “I think people are ready for something different,” she said. “They want to feel empowered. They want to feel like they’re not just waiting for something to go wrong with their health.”

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