

## A passion for creating healthy bodies and lives

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Personal trainer Chris Cosich with several of his clients at the East Hampton Gym.  
Photos by Cailin Riley

Chris Cosich, a personal trainer with the Hamptons Gym Corporation and the training director at East Hampton Gym, has always had a passion for keeping his body in tip-top shape. But it is his desire to help others do the same, he says, that truly defines who he is.

Cosich's clients include a wide range of individuals—young and old, male and female, parents and single professionals—but he sticks to the same basic standards and tenets that, he says, will help anyone improve not only the way they look but the way they feel. Cosich preaches the importance of strength training as part of a successful fitness routine and also stresses that good nutrition is just as crucial as regular exercise.

And he's his own best billboard.

One look at Cosich makes it obvious what he does for a living—his physique is a testament to many hours spent in the gym, as well as his dedication to a healthy diet. He recently found time to challenge himself—when he's not challenging his clients—by training for the Team Universe bodybuilding competition, which took place in New York City in September.

It marked the first time in 10 years that Cosich, 43, got back into competitive bodybuilding and he said he did it to challenge himself. He said he doesn't plan on devoting a significant amount of time to competitive bodybuilding and notes that he only enters competitions where the athletes are tested for drugs.

"I'm not interested in turning pro," Cosich said. "It's not who I am."

Cosich says that, these days, he's focusing more of his time and energy on getting other people to reach their fitness goals.

He entered the world of personal training before it was the burgeoning industry it is today. He started training people and giving them advice on fitness and nutrition in the early 1990s, when personal training didn't require a license but rather a physique that spoke for itself. In those days, personal training sessions were mostly cash transactions and trainers didn't need to be licensed, as they do today.

"When I first started, there were no corporate gyms," Cosich said. "Even Gold's Gym wasn't corporate. The owners were just gym people."

Cosich said his clients often found him, asking him for advice or information because they saw him at the gym so much. And they could tell, by the amount of time he spent there and the results he was reaping, that he knew what he was doing.

Cosich was always an active and athletic person. After growing up and going to high school in the Sachem School District, he went on to play football at St. Michael's College in Vermont. To satisfy his yearning for physical activity after his football playing days were over, Cosich started to hit the gym on a regular basis.

“I just loved the environment,” he said.

Cosich graduated college in 1990 with an English degree, but said jobs were tough to come by. He worked as a nightclub bouncer in New York City before he entered the field of personal training, thanks to a reputation he built up by being at the gym so much. He eventually earned certifications as a fitness trainer, sports conditioning specialist, youth fitness specialist and as a performance nutrition specialist, then started his own personal training business in 1993 and the rest is history.

Learning about nutrition and proper diet was just as crucial to Cosich’s success as was his knowledge about exercise and strength training. Cosich said he read whatever literature he could get his hands on concerning nutrition and absorbed information like a sponge. Throughout the 1990s, Cosich wrote for national fitness and exercise magazines and eventually was introduced to the world of competitive bodybuilding.

“I was in the gym and some guy said, ‘You have good genetics,’” Cosich explained. He said that bodybuilding represented an “athletic outlet” for him and so he became interested in it. He also said it appealed to him because he has always had an interest in the training aspect of athletics, more so, at times, than the actual competitions.

“I enjoyed the preparation as much as playing,” Cosich said, referring to football. He added that he sees bodybuilding as a fusion of “art and physicality,” which he said also appeals to another interest of his: drawing.

“It’s like you’re looking at a sculpture on stage,” he said.

Personal experience has taught Cosich that proper nutrition is crucial to maintaining any fitness plan, and that’s the same message he says he tries to drive home with his clients.

“Diet is 80 percent of it,” he said. “To get in shape, you need to lose body fat. You can’t just blindly exercise.”

Because of his emphasis on nutrition, Cosich refers to himself as a “plateau buster” and said he has been able to help people who have hit a wall when it comes to finishing off their fitness goals. He’s also proven that he can help people who are already in good shape as well as those who have barely ever set foot in a gym.

Eric Morris, who manages the IGA in Amagansett, said Cosich has helped him shed 60 pounds and take 3 inches off his waist in the 16 months he’s been working with him.

“I never lifted weights in my life, but he put me on a diet and started training me,” Morris said, explaining that Cosich shops at the IGA and he met him there and asked for his help.

“I feel tremendously younger and healthier,” Morris said. “He’s been really helpful to me and my body has been changing greatly.”

Hildy Maze, an East Hampton resident, was not a stranger to the gym or weight lifting when she started working with Cosich. Still, she has high praise for him and how he has helped her achieve her personal goals in her three years training with him.

“He’s the best trainer I’ve ever had,” Maze said. “He just knew exactly what to do. He’s a pro. He knew a lot about food and nutrition and how to put the combination together. He knows the science and makes it accessible to people. He’s patient and if you work with him, he will transform your body.”

Cosich says that people who think that all they have to do is show up and exercise during their scheduled appointments might be in for a rude awakening. But he says that if clients follow his advice, they’ll get the results that Morris and Maze speak of.

“This isn’t like bringing your car in to get detailed,” he said. “I’m going to lay out for you how you can succeed, but you have to stick to it. There are three absolutes—you have to strength train, you have to do regular aerobic exercise and, above all, you have to have sound nutrition.”

Cosich said that the satisfaction of watching people change their lives is the biggest perk of his job, adding that he gets more enjoyment out of that than any other job he can imagine.

“I get to change lives for a living,” he said. “I’ve helped people achieve what they never thought would be possible.”