

Faces Of New Bedford #113: Jeff Costa

Meet Jeff Costa, 47-year-old fitness and yoga instructor.



Jeff grew up in the area and after graduating from high school, he moved to Boston where he attended Boston University and majored in English/French Literature. While living in Boston, Jeff began personal training and dancing, as his lifelong love for music evolved into his interest in human movement.

After almost a decade in Boston, he moved to LA, where he took his personal training career to the next level, working with celebrities such as Jennifer Love Hewitt, Christina Applegate, Jennifer Aniston, and members of the Girls Next Door cast. While in California, Jeff also trademarked his own workout routine and videos, which sold on infomercials worldwide.

Jeff returned home to the South Coast in 2008 and was recruited by Reebok to be their master trainer for a fitness program called Jukari. Based on the techniques used by performers in Cirque du Soleil, Jeff taught the method to trainers from 14 countries, who would respectively teach classes back at home.

Jeff now teaches yoga and fitness classes throughout the Greater New Bedford area, as well as leading yoga retreats internationally, in locations like Bali and Costa Rica.

“A healthy lifestyle, including yoga and meditation, puts the breaks on the aging process and fuels life’s journey with joy and adventure.”

Faces of New Bedford is a project by Colton Simmons. If you are interested in booking a shoot or getting prints from the series email all inquiries to colton@coltonsimmons.com.

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Faces Of New Bedford #112: Amy Moreira

Meet Amy Moreira, 29-year-old Licensed Mental Health Counselor.



Amy was raised in a Portuguese family, that immigrated to New Bedford in search for a better quality of life. She witnessed many of the issues in the community, which shaped who she became as a person. During high school, she started volunteering in New Bedford in areas of juvenile probation and domestic violence.

She continued her studies until she was first generation in receiving a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. Since graduating, she has had success working in educational settings, hospitals, correctional facilities, as well as the New Bedford Crisis Center.

Amy own's a private practice, More MH Counseling, LLC. She hopes that her own platform will allow her to educate and reduce stigma in facing the various mental health issues that exist including suicide, substance abuse, and youth violence. She specializes in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and is fluent in both Portuguese and Spanish. She wants to give back to the community and often reserves a number of sessions pro bono. She hopes to see New Bedford use it's resiliency to grow as a community.

"Focus on personal growth by challenging yourself daily."

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Faces Of New Bedford #111: Jennifer Potter

Meet Jennifer Potter, 34-year-old business analyst, mobile app project manager and founder of SouthCoast Mamas & Babies.



After giving birth to her and her husband's daughter, Jennifer had a desire to get to know other mothers. She wanted to have like-minded families around her and thought it would be beneficial to start a Facebook group to accomplish this. With the help from her best friend Stephanie Chace, she started the group. What started out as a small group to bring different groups of people together to host outings has turned into a group filled with nearly 3400 families, all helping each other grow and building lasting friendships.

Jennifer worked on building this group all while she has been working at her full-time job with the Turino Group, where she is a business analyst. Recently though, her role has been transitioning into their mobile app development department of the company. This has helped play a major role in her SCMB group, as Turino Group recently launched a mobile app for their group, and will be released by the end of July.

With the Facebook site, website and now mobile app, Jen is hoping to broaden the reach the group has had and bring even more families and businesses together. She has been able to secure working partnerships with local businesses, so that most of the group events are free and the hope is to continue this in the future, allowing parents a fun and affordable way to socialize not only their children but themselves with other parents.

“Bringing together the surrounding communities is important and that gets me excited.”

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Faces Of New Bedford #110: Nick Correia

Meet Nick Correia, 36-year-old construction worker and conditioning trainer.



Growing up, Nick's uncle was the head coach for the basketball team at New Bedford High School, so he spent plenty of time at the games. At the first game he attended, he saw Mike Herren play against his uncle's team with 5,000 people in attendance at Durfee High School.

Naturally, he played sports throughout his youth and when he started at NBHS, began playing on the different sports teams at the school. His way of fitting in though, was through alcohol and partying, as he would throw parties at his house on the weekends for his friends. This continued with him to college, where he was kicked out of Western New England College for his failing grades, due to his excessive drinking.

Nick returned to New Bedford and his problems only got worse, as he lost a few friends to unexpected deaths. On the outside, it seemed things were going good, as he worked a full-time job in construction and began coaching at New Bedford High and UMass Dartmouth, but on the inside, he was in turmoil. A knee injury is finally what pushed Nick over the deep-end, tossing him into a long battle with opioid addiction, costing him his coaching positions and almost his life.

Through the help of Chris and Mike Herren, Nick was able to get into a program, where he found sobriety and a new outlook

on life. He began getting back into fitness and after a few years under his belt, the opportunity for him to work with Athletes First, where athletes from all over train in strength, conditioning and agility, all while learning the proper nutrition to perform at their peak potential. Nick was also able to work with the NBHS freshman football team this past summer, getting them conditioned for the season and be an example of how you can overcome the struggles in your life to continue doing what you love.

"I don't care how rough the waters are, just bring the ship home."

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Faces Of New Bedford #109: Kibira NJoroge

Meet Kibira NJoroge, 29-year-old Personal Trainer and aspiring professional bodybuilder.



Kibira has always been involved in some sort of activity, whether it was going outside as a kid or playing basketball in high school. After graduating from Voc-Tech in 2006, he went to BCC, where he majored in Graphic Design. It was there where he began lifting weights in order to stay athletic.

He realized that graphic design wasn't a career path that he wanted to continue on and started working for his father's construction company. It was around this time that his friend brought him to go to a bodybuilding competition and it was the first time that the sport really intrigued him. He began researching bodybuilding and workout techniques and that is when the ball started rolling for him.

His journey with fitness has really allowed him to gain the ability of self awareness, knowing who he was and he wanted to share that with others. This lead to him working for GNC, so that he could really understand supplementation. It was during his time with GNC where his friend, the general manager of Anytime Fitness offered him a position as a personal trainer at his location.

Since then, Kibira has been able to use his career and passion for fitness to prepare himself to become a professional bodybuilder. He has performed in quite a few shows since

starting in 2012 and is preparing for a qualifying show, which will open him up to the professional route. He loves what bodybuilding has done for his life, allowing him to learn extreme discipline and showing himself his limits and how to increase them.

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Faces Of New Bedford #108: Jesenia Navedo

Meet Jesenia Navedo, 29-year-old Hospice nurse.



Growing up, Jesenia had always pictured herself becoming a doctor. This idea became a reality when she saw her mother

give birth to her youngest sister. She began a pre-med Biology program at UMass Amherst and shortly realized that she didn't want to be in school for the next 10 years of her life. Her roommate at the time was a nursing major and she decided that would be the best route for her to still pursue a career where she could help others.

She graduated with her BSN and immediately started working in a nursing home, where she cared for patients in sub-acute rehab. Jesenia had heard from a friend that there was a new grad program starting up at the ER in St. Lukes Hospital and immediately took the leap to join the team. Although the ER can be a fast pace and almost scary environment, she took on the challenge and learned a lot.

While in her field, she began noticing medicine being pushed too far for patients in their late 80's and 90's, even seeing ribs broken just to resuscitate them. This sparked an interest in hospice nursing, where she could assist her patients in their last days, helping them retain dignity and maintain a quality of life.

"There is such a dark stigma on death in our culture and there isn't any reason that life shouldn't be celebrated and just as beautiful at death, as it is with birth."

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Faces Of New Bedford #107: Kenn Bongiorno



Meet Dr. Reverend Kenn Bongiorno, 51-year-old Pastor and Professor.

Kenn didn't grow up in a spiritual home or one that attended church. At 19-years old he spent three weeks with his grandfather in the hospital during his grandfather's last days alive. With a lot of emotions running through him, he spoke out and told God that he needed to know if he was real, and if he was to show himself to him. One late night, Kenn saw all the pain his grandfather was going through and thought that if he could, he would take his place for him. Kenn said that at that moment, "God told me that he took my grandfather's place at the cross and my place and that my grandfather would live beyond this life."

That night transformed Kenn and he would spend the next decade of his life trying to learn about who this God was, traveling to Southeastern University in Florida to attend college and

then up to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, MA. During his time at Southeastern, he felt a strong call to New England, although he knew little about it or had ever even visited it, to bring the hope he found in Jesus. After a four-year pastorate in Pennsylvania and a sabbatical in Switzerland, his call was answered, as an opening at the multicultural city by the sea that he had envisioned many years before became available

Since moving here, Kenn has worked to strengthen the core members of his congregation to be able to impact their church and community of New Bedford. They've held services at the Zeiterion Theatre and have done a lot to impact our community. They've partnered with local non-profit United New Bedford, sponsoring their I Love My City Annual Event and more recently, went to Satellite Village to provide food and activities for all ages.

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Faces Of New Bedford #106: Erin Poyant



Meet Erin Poyant, 32-year-old Yoga Instructor and Intensive Care Coordinator. Her entire life, Erin has been drawn to working with kids and being involved in physical activities. Her first job was lifeguarding at Cathedral Camp, teaching swimming lessons, which is where she fell in love with teaching.

These different facets of her life pushed her to pursue a degree in elementary education, with a focus in art, at St. Michaels College in Vermont. After finishing school, she moved back to New Bedford, where she began teaching in an after school program – where they did apprenticeships, taught leadership skills and supported their in school education.

She then traveled the United States and went overseas where she taught English in South Korea, but after a life-changing event she moved back to New Bedford where she worked with families through Child and Family Services. It was also around this time when she was asked to teach yoga, which she had been practicing for some time at her cousin's gym.

Erin has a major connection with yoga – becoming a lifestyle for her, allowing her to be one with herself and slow down. It also helps her become connected with the community, as she teaches at several places, including Paradis-McFee Studio, Our Sister's School, Divine Power Yoga, Union Running, Barley Wellness, and Anjali Yoga. She loves that it allows her to become a part of something that is so much larger than herself.

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Faces Of New Bedford #105: A.J. Tavares

Meet A.J. Tavares, a 30-year-old teacher, basketball coach, and owner of A1 Skills, Development and Training.



A.J. started playing basketball at a very young age, falling in love with sports at the Boys and Girls Club. He played sports throughout school, playing varsity football, basketball, and baseball his senior year.

After his time at New Bedford High School, A.J. went on to UMass Dartmouth, where he majored in Business and continued to

play all three sports. He initially didn't want to attend the school but his professors and coaches made him feel at home and contributed to his growth as a young and athlete. His senior year became a pivotal one as he helped lead the team to a 20-0 start reaching #2 in the country, ultimately finishing 25-4 and ranked 10th in the country, losing in the 2nd Round of the NCAA Tournament.

After switching into the Criminal Justice program, he graduated from UMass Dartmouth. He turned down a position working for campus police and pursued a sales position in Boston. After 8 month of working there he realized that isn't what he wanted to do for the rest of his life and began working as a youth life coach between Boston and New Bedford. He saw the impact that he was having on the kids and wanted to focus that on the community.

A.J. recently became a 4th grade teacher at Devalles school, where he is able to help kids at such a vital age, where they start forming habits that will stick with them throughout the rest of their lives. Not only does he teach elementary students, but coaches boys junior varsity basketball for New Bedford High School and runs a company called A1 Skills, Development and Training.

A1 Skills, which stands for Adversity First, is focused on training youth with the fundamentals of basketball, like footwork, handling, and shooting, as well as physical fitness and sport specific training. He picked the name Adversity first because he's a firm believer that it's only through the adversity in life that you become the person you are.

"I try to believe in everybody like I would want people to believe in me."

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Faces Of New Bedford #104: Andrew Thornhill