PHYSICAL ENHANCEMENT SERVICES provides in-home clinical exercises for clients who can't get to fitness centers. Gloria Snopek worked on exercises from a wheelchair in her Grafton apartment under the watchful eye of clinical personal trainer Anne Frazier. *Photos by Mark Jaegar*

Port firm works to bring out the best in athletes, those with health challenges

Port Washington resident Richard Spenner has had a long and varied professional career with a singular focus — getting peak performance out of an individual's physical abilities.

That life mission has led to the launching of Spenner's latest venture, Physical Enhancement Services.

A certified kinesiotherapist, Spenner has been a specialist in the field of clinical exercise for nearly 20 years.

"We specialize in exercise for the healthy and the clinically impaired," he said.

Spenner has worked with clients with diverse goals, including Olympians and professional athletes, as well as competitors at the high school and college level.

He has worked as a strength and conditioning coach for the Milwaukee Brewers and Arizona Diamondback baseball clubs at both the major league and minor league levels.

On the other end of the spectrum, Spenner has worked extensively with clients struggling with such physical challenges as multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, arthritis, autism, Down's syndrome and neuro and muscular disorders.

A number of his clients are also working to retain strength and flexibility following major surgery or cancer treatments.

"We complement work being done by physical therapists and occupational therapists," Spenner said.

As a kinesiotherapist, he applies knowledge of the such fields as biomechanics and ergonomics to maximize function.

Spenner said working with a diverse client base is rewarding at different levels.

"I can relate to the competitive nature of the athlete who is looking to improve their performance, but it is also very rewarding to work with the aged population," he said.

"When you work with people through clinical exercises, improving their core strength to the point they are able to push themselves in their wheelchair to play bridge with friends at the end of the hall means a lot."

Spenner remains on the staff at the Feith Family Ozaukee YMCA in Saukville, but PES allows to him to make house calls — a service that is not available through the Y.

"In a lot of cases, we deal with people who are intimidated by going into a fitness center like the Y because of mobility issues," he said. "They respond a lot better when they are in the comfort of their own apartment or residential facility."

Agency owner Rick Spenner joined Snopek and Frazier on a therapeutic walk to the mailbox at The Berkshire senior apartments. Surprisingly, some of the apparatus used to train high-level athletes also comes in handy when working with clients who are working to regain independence from physical challenges.

“We’ll use agility ladders for football players, as well as for clients who are recovering from surgery and want to gain strength and balance. The goals are just different,” he said.

When Spenner and assistant kinesiotherapist Nancy Crook hit the road, they bring whatever equipment is needed.

The team is assisted by Anne Frazier, a clinical personal trainer.

Typically, the cost of clinical services comes out of pocket, but Spenner said in many cases he is able to work with providers of Medicare supplemental insurance to recoup some of the expense.

About 75% of the group’s clients receive clinical services, almost exclusively on a one-on-one basis.

While some of the conditioning work done with athletes is individual, much of it is done with small groups, typically in the off-season.

Personal training sessions are available for $50 an hour, and at discounted rates if more than one person is participating.

Group training sessions are also offered around the state, such as the four-day training course starting this week for those planning to take the personal trainer exam.

Spenner said he finds great satisfaction is dealing with the divergent client bases.

“When I was growing up and trying to decide what to do with my life, the advice I was given was to follow my passion and then the amount of money you make won’t matter,” he said.

“That is what I have done, and I find both areas of service rewarding.”