



by abigail spindel

Two times a week, a small group of women gather in Lincoln Park at 6:15 AM to run, jump, sweat and chat. Sounds like fun?

"It's torture," says Alicia Robinson-Morgan, the founder of AHA, or A Holistic Approach, and boot camp driver. "But it's all about my business."

Alicia is an ACE Certified Personal Trainer and six-time marathoner and is also a certified Nutritional Consultant. The idea for a boot camp to get in shape came from one of Alicia's fitness and nutrition clients, and whose running commentary maintains a level of joviality.

The boot camp does make these ladies sweat, and Alicia's poise does, somehow resemble that of a lieutenant. On the homepage there is a small thumbnail of Joe Rosenthal's photograph of men lifting the American flag at Iwojima.

"I guess it's like a real boot camp, only more friendly," says Alicia.

All of Alicia's boot camp clients

live on Capitol Hill, and meet at Lincoln Park rain or shine. Alicia hasn't cancelled a single class since boot camp started in March. The classes are sometimes more focused on cardiovascular exercise and sometimes more on circuits.

"I try to vary the workouts a little bit, because I don't want people to get bored," said Alicia.

When the women arrive, they are instructed to run around the park for the 25-30 minute portion of cardio. On this day, they will spend half of their time running around the park, and then gather to jump rope, pass around a heavy ball, do squats, and other standing exercises.

"I used to love doing these things when I was a hundred pounds lighter," reflects Dierdra, one of the clients, while the women jump rope in a circle, which from far away might resemble a manic kindergarten class.

"All this weight on one foot just isn't right," moans Eme.

"They'll groan about things sometimes, but they tell me they appreciate it – at least after the fact," adds

Alicia.

The women pay \$100 dollars to be bossed around at daybreak, but, says Alicia,

"I know a couple of people who said that they lost a couple of pounds. I know a girl who says that boot camp motivates her to get out other days of the week, because if she doesn't, boot camp is torture."

The class has been popular so far, and thus far has attracted only women, although men are invited, and some of the women have asked Alicia to set up a boot camp for their husbands.

"It's a good market to target – the early morning exercisers," Alicia says. "It shows people that you can get a really good workout without tons of equipment. You can stay in shape when you're not in a gym, and on days like today, who wouldn't want to be outside?"

More information about AHA and the boot camp can be found at www.aholisticapproach.com.

TOUR
on Capitol Hill