

Parkinson's Boxing Program In CT Returns For Another Round



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About a dozen athletes with Parkinson's disease throw thrusts and uppercuts, each trying to get the upper hand on their symptoms.

EAST HARTFORD, Conn. – The gloves are on again and the heavy pockets are hit again.

After over a year and a half, the program known as Beat Parkinson's Today has returned to the ring, or in this case the gym.

At their training facility in East Hartford, about a dozen athletes with Parkinson's disease threw thrusts and uppercuts to help overcome their symptoms. The focus of the course is on calisthenics and punching bags – never meeting.

“Two weeks after COVID closed, we started virtual classes and we had virtual classes during Covies, and we only reopened in-person classes a month ago,” said Michelle Hespeler, founder and chairman of Beat Parkinson's Today FOX61.

Now that lessons are back, attendees like 74-year-old Zane Ray of Farmington are excited to mix things up in person. Ray was diagnosed with Parkinson's four years ago.

“The energy we get from each other is most important,” said Ray. “My movements are faster,” he added.

Mary Smeallie, who has battled Parkinson's disease since 2013, said boxing training made her more flexible.

“I'm not that shivering (sic), and it gets my mood up,” she said.

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Hespeler, who has been fighting Parkinson's disease for more than a decade, said her Beat Parkinson's Today program is expanding with courses in East Hartford, Cheshire, Farmington, Guilford and Vernon and will soon open in New Britain, Mystic and Southbury.

“It’s our medicine, it’s something we have to do every day,” she said. “If we hit these bags and punch those bags, we’ll hit Parkinson’s disease together.”

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To learn more about Beat Parkinson today, visit www.beatpdtoday.com

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