



Julie A. Cornell, MPA

2025 Phyllis Bernstein Kuchner Scholarship Award Recipient

I am so grateful to the JCC of Central New Jersey for awarding me the Phyllis Bernstein Kuchner scholarship to support my certification as a women's fitness specialist. I've been a group fitness instructor at the JCC for the past two and a half years where I teach the Power HIIT group exercise class and group personal training. Many of my clients each week are women in their 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, and beyond, and they've inspired me to design classes tailored to increasing lean muscle mass and bone density and strengthening the core – all critical components for women's health and longevity.

I'll add a quick note here to say that all are welcome and regardless of gender you will get in a spicy, sweaty workout!

With a specialization in women's fitness, supported by this scholarship, I'm now equipped with more specific knowledge on improving women's health, wellness, and fitness throughout the lifespan. Most women aren't aware that they start losing lean muscle mass and their bone density peaks in their 30s! It's so important for women to strength train at least twice a week for 30 minutes (with weights or using body weight) in addition to starting or maintaining a cardio routine. It's never too early, or too late, to start picking up some dumbbells or kettlebells. Women can safely strength train well into their 80s and 90s!

In addition to my work as a fitness instructor, I have a background in nonprofit strategy and management, philanthropy, program development, and stakeholder engagement. The Phyllis Bernstein Kuchner scholarship helped ignite an exciting project at the JCC last year to explore how to increase member value and utilization of the fitness center. Over 6 months, I interviewed and surveyed over 120 JCC staff and Board members, fitness instructors and trainers, and female members to uncover what they love about the fitness center and where they'd like to see improvements. I'm grateful for their honest, productive feedback. Some recommendations include expanding the group exercise schedule, increasing member promotion and awareness of fitness center offerings, and building connection between fitness staff and the broader JCC membership.

Be sure to pay attention to updates from the fitness center in 2026!