



Fox Jiu Jitsu.”

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Amber: “When I started at Swamp Fox, Laykyn was the only female there. My first class was her first day back from a small injury she had, so I was like, ‘Okay, there’s another female here. I’m not alone.’

Eventually, more women started trying it, and then it grew and grew and grew. From there, we started the first women’s jiu jitsu program in the area, based off the self-defense principles that Tim was teaching at the time. We just took that foundation, and over eight or nine years, more and more people joined us and our vision for what we wanted to do in the community was starting to outgrow where we were.

So we thought, ‘Why not just start our own spot and grow it into what we thought jiu jitsu should be in the community?’

We opened Funky Flow in February.”

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Laykyn: “For me, owning a business is terrifying. Amber’s had more experience with it, as far as, you know, being a business owner. She’s the creative one—the visionary—she sees the potential. And I’m like, let’s pump the brakes a little bit. She’s like, ‘We can have four schools!’

Eventually, our vision matched up.”

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Amber: “Well, and honestly, I would think of it as: ‘why would YOU be interested in coming?’ Because our reasons aren’t going to be the same. It all depends—are you looking for fitness? Are you looking for community? Are you looking for self-defense?

That’s actually one of the things that got me to go to jiu jitsu in the first place. I just had my third child. She was very young, and I wanted to lose all the weight. And I also was going through a

Laykyn: “I’m a licensed counselor, and was just going to work nine to five when a friend said there was a jiu jitsu school in town and asked me if I wanted to go.

I did—and it just never stopped.

I was definitely nervous. I was scared. It was something new and I knew there would not be many women there. But the founder and instructor there was Tim Jones. He was the founder of Swamp

divorce, so the self-defense piece of it intrigued me. And realizing that they say jiu jitsu is great for the smaller person. That was like, really?! Let's see if this really works.

So the reason you get into it is one thing.

Jiu Jitsu is a mental challenge too. You not only learn how to use your body for whatever reasons you want to use your body for, but mentally you learn how to strategize—get through tough positions that are very difficult physically. We are in each other's space, very tight. Some of those are very scary places to be. So, if we can do that in a safe environment and get used to that—that shock of being in that position—outside of the class, it takes that away and helps build some of that confidence to get through those situations.”

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Laykyn: “We’ve already been able to be involved in several different community events in the area that we feel pretty passionate about. And then, just as far as a community within the school—every time somebody opens the door, everybody’s like, “Hey!”

You know, this is like you’re coming home. It’s a very welcoming environment. After a long day—or how you want to start your day, depending on if you’re the morning crowd or evening crowd, it’s either the best part of your day at the beginning or the end.

We offer kids programs, too—that’s very new for us. We’re in week two of that. And we have our women’s-only program, which is where we started. So we are continuing that. And then we have a full access program that includes morning classes, evening classes, and competition classes.

I think the way that we design classes, it reaches the first-day beginner. You’re going to walk away feeling like you learned a little bit of something cool, and that you have a lot to learn. And then also, if you’re just a very seasoned grappler who’s already been here—or if you’re dropping in from somewhere else—there’s something in that class for you, too. So I think we do a good job of making a class functional for anybody who walks in the door.”

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Amber: “You don’t have to schedule a time as a brand-new person to come in and have a beginner’s class, because we do a good job of structuring the curriculum that really offers something to every person that walks in.

We’re basically here every day except Wednesday and Saturday. We have Monday night adult class at 6:30, we have kids’ classes at 5:30. Tuesday morning at 5:30, women’s class at 5:30 PM, and then a co-ed class at 7 PM. Off on Wednesday—we encourage cross-training, like, go find something else. Thursday morning at 5:30, Thursday night at 6 PM, and we have our 6:30 PM kids class Thursday at 5:30. So it’s every day.

And then on Sundays at 11, which is a part of our normal class schedule that members pay for, we do a competition class. It doesn’t really get away from the self-defense, but we focus on the

sport of it. People who want to go to tournaments—they can learn the rules and how to strategize their game and focus on their fitness a little bit to be prepared for that.

We also have a fitness area in the back. It's a small area with fitness equipment that helps our jiu jitsu athletes with movements that will help them on the mat.”

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Laykyn: “We have supporters everywhere, which has been nice—even if they can’t train with us, they support us and encourage us. Being downtown has been super welcoming and encouraging. Being part of the revitalization has been fun.”

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Amber: “Funny story—we were dreaming a couple years ago, like, “One day we’ll own our own place and we’ll get downtown,” and we would just keep driving downtown, looking at spots, looking at spaces, and just dreaming that one day we could get into downtown.

When this spot was available, we were like, “Oh my gosh, there’s a spot open!”

—Laykyn and Amber Bendle, Funky Flow Fitness and JiuJitsu