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Two years ago, I realized that sitting at a desk all day long was making me stiffer and flabbier every year, so I decided to join a nearby Curves. At the same time, I began a secret project: writing a novel. I was not satisfied with what I found on the bookstore shelves—every book I opened seemed to be about gossip, sex, violence, or shopping. I wanted a good long read about people who meant something to me, with plenty of colorful historical details that took me to another time and place. I wanted personality, suspense, and life-changing love. And I wanted to be inspired by a great story. I finally decided I would have to write the book myself.

Sitting at a computer all day at work and then again at night to write a book is a lot of sitting. I had seen writers who were overweight, out of shape and unhealthy because of their sedentary lifestyle, and I didn't want to end up like that. I went to Curves regularly after my day at the office. The Curves routine is perfect for me – I can put the analytical side of my brain in neutral and just work my way around the circuit without counting reps or waiting to get on a certain machine. I mentally and physically relax from the strain of the workplace. And visiting with other women lifts my spirits and keeps me in touch with my community.

As a beginning writer, I was reluctant to tell people about my book, for fear of discouragement. But Judy Staats, the manager at my Curves location, was so supportive and encouraging that I opened my heart to her and told her about my project. She read every chapter and kept asking enthusiastically for more pages. I'll never forget the day she called my house and left a long message on my answering machine, telling me how moved she felt by the story and how much she believed that it needed to be told. I heard her message at a moment when I was feeling discouraged—so I immediately played it over again two or three times, just soaking up the goodness of the moment and thanking God for good friends and His special timing.

Eventually I began talking about the book to my other friends at Curves. They gave me terrific support. My exercise routine became more than just a maintenance chore – it became a source of encouragement that helped me finish the story and get it published. And then, in a final touch of Curves-related serendipity, I met two women, Alexa _____ and Betsy _____, while on an plane trip. Alexa and Betsy turned out to be Curves owners in San Antonio, and they encouraged me to send my story to *diane* Magazine. My two adventures, writing a book and joining Curves, had grown together.

The novel, Found on 16th Avenue, is set in 1934 and centers on a fourteen-year-old boy living in the gangster underworld of Prohibition. But when his mother suddenly dies, the boy is sent to stay with his uncle's family—and the uncle is a minister, struggling to pastor his flock through the hardscrabble years of the Depression. So the silent teen with the violent past must learn to live a new kind of life—and to discover that the success he so desperately seeks only comes from the One he's been running from.

Set in a colorful, fun-loving community of first- and second-generation Czech immigrants, this story weaves vibrant historical details and psychological drama into an unusual

tale of a heartbroken boy, a faithful family, and the tenacious love of God. It can be ordered from karenrothbooks.com or from bookstores everywhere.