

Profs do exercises too

By Kristi Outler

Fitness is no longer pursued solely by health fanatics. In today's world of expensive health care and new fitness-related research findings, many "normal" people are discovering the benefits of well-being.

Three years ago to help promote this trend at A&M, Dr. Stephen Crouse, assistant professor of health and physical education, founded Fit Life, a general wellness program directed towards the faculty and staff at A&M.

The Fit Life program is divided into two major components, one section devoted to testing and the other to exercise.

"It's a program designed to do two things," Crouse says. "There is a component of the program that enables faculty, staff and students to have a full fitness, cardiovascular health profile at a much reduced price."

This testing division encompasses many different areas. Selected laboratory tests are performed to measure cholesterol and triglycerides levels. Body composition is determined using skin fold and underwater techniques. The profile also includes a pulmonary function assessment and a strength and muscular endurance test.

"The other aspect of this component is not only to find out what fitness level somebody may be on, but also to provide them with an exercise opportunity in a scientifically designed class to help improve their fitness," he says.

The other component of the program is an adult fitness program, which includes aerobic dance classes, both beginning and intermediate, and pool aerobics, Crouse says. A walk-jog conditioning class and a class designed specifically for overweight people are also available.

Fit Life is utilized primarily by faculty and staff, but Crouse says that some students take advantage of the program.

"It is primarily directed toward the faculty and staff, but we have students every now and then, particularly in the testing component," Crouse says. "We are the only group on campus that performs these evaluations. We have a lot of students that come to be a part of that program and we try to keep the costs as low as we can."

The adult fitness program is primarily designed to be used by faculty and staff at A&M.

"The reason we don't market it for the students is

because the intramural program here on campus also has an aerobics class for students, Crouse says. "We have some students who want to be involved in our class particularly and we don't exclude them."

The program also uses students to help staff Fit Life, but only after they have undergone extensive training.

"Both our testing components and our exercise component have graduate students as well as undergraduate students that help staff the program," Crouse says. "Of course they are well trained before they have an opportunity to actually work in the program."

In addition to students, various health care professionals are on hand to aid the Fit Life program.

"We have a cardiologist who comes in and works with us to help supervise the testing," he says. "Our exercise testing is very clinical. We have physicians that help support us in the context of doing preliminary physical evaluations."

The idea of a faculty wellness program is not new,

and many other universities employ similar programs, Crouse says. In fact, prior to the establishment of Fit Life at A&M, the Aerobics Club offered some of the features Fit Life does today.

The link between physical fitness and its relation to job performance influenced the program's creation.

"The research is a little sparse at this time, but there are a number of studies that suggest that fit workers are more productive workers," Crouse says. "There is unequivocal evidence that individuals who participate in fitness programs in the corporate setting have much lower health care costs per individual. Fitness programs have been shown to function very well in cost containment and the idea of disease or heart attack prevention is very attractive."

Crouse has high hopes for the future of Fit Life and expects it to grow and encompass other programs of health.

"What we are really trying to make grow is a total faculty wellness concept," Crouse says.

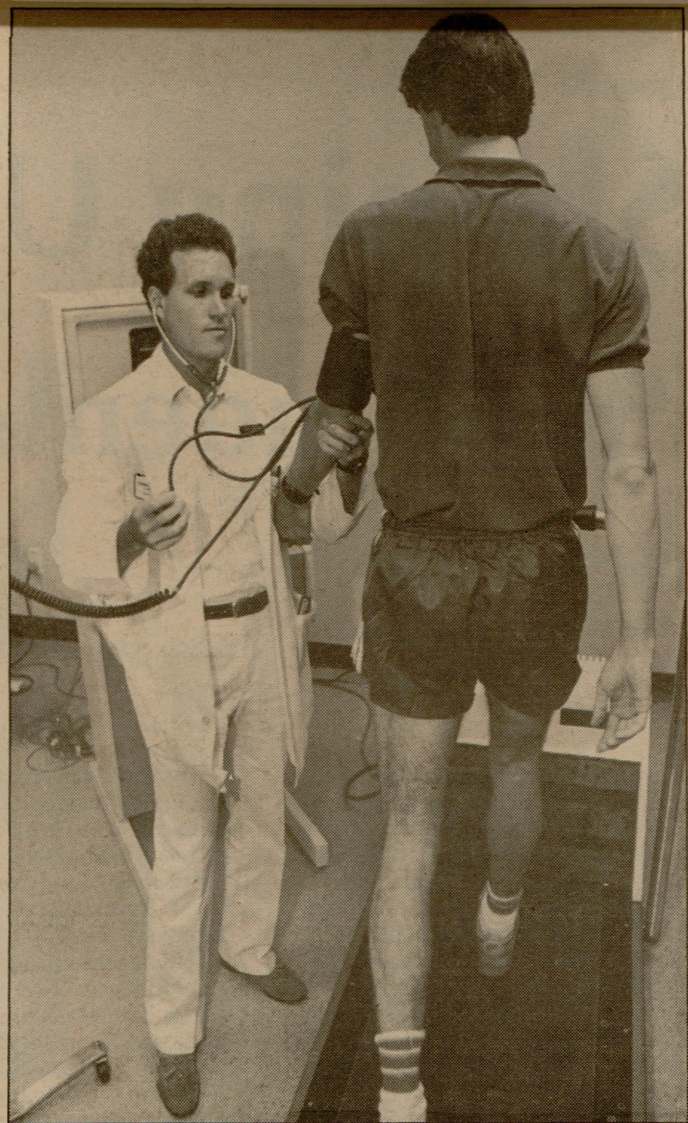


Photo by Fred Joe
Dr. Stephen Crouse, director of applied exercise science, examines a patient's treadmill performance.

Balancing books, body building

By Kristi Outler

It started during high school. Out of a need for clarity during that turbulent period known as adolescence there arose a classification system for various cliques. There were nerds, metal heads and, of course, the jock.

For athletes however, it takes more than just a title to maintain athletic prowess. The life of an athlete is one of year round dedication to training.

Athletes do not simply hibernate when their season ends. A collegiate athlete's job includes training during both the in- and off-seasons.

"During the season we basically do a strength and conditioning program. It is also to get us in shape cardiovascularly," explains Veronda Roundtree, senior women's basketball player.

The training incorporates a variety of different workouts, Roundtree says.

"This (the training program) involves weight training and sprint running as well as long distance running," Roundtree says. "Besides that we do flexibility and agility work through different exercises."

The women's basketball

team begins practice and workouts prior to the season but the number of practices increases when the season arrives.

"We have regular practices for the pre-season," Roundtree says. "We work out five days a week. When we actually start practicing for the season it'll be seven days a week."

Even after the last ball falls through the hoop the training continues. Practices continue throughout the school year. An individual summer routine is employed during the break to maintain physical fitness, but Roundtree said the intensity of these summer programs differ with each individual.

"The summer workouts depend on the individual schedules because a lot of people can't work out during the day but they can at night," she says. "Or they can't get in as much running or get in as many weights."

Despite the time consumed, Roundtree says her love for the game is reward enough for strenuous training.

Cheri Steensma, a senior volleyball player, also maintains a busy workout

schedule.

"We practice on the court about three hours a day and aside from that we lift two days a week," Steensma says. "Obviously, we also have our games."

In volleyball, however, the off-season training differs from the season workout.

"In the off-season we stress more physical training," she says. "We work out harder. Our workouts in the weight room during the season are condition work. It's just to keep us going. In the spring and off-season we work to get stronger and better, whereas in the fall we work to maintain."

The workouts in the off-season increase from approximately 45 minutes to almost two hours. Weight training is held three times a week. The program continues during the summer as well.

"We get a summer workout program that is about as long as the spring," Steensma says. "The summer workout is all physical. Three times a week we run and three times a week we lift."

In addition to the physical exertion, there is the struggle to balance athletics with

academics. Surviving, says Steensma, requires mental as well as physical endurance.

"Right now going into my fourth year it is kind of just a mind set thing," she says. "You know you have to do it so you just find a routine. It was hard at first to incorporate everything. We travel so much that it's real hard sometimes. You try to keep up physically and mentally. It hurts sometimes. You can get drained."

Kelli Kellen, another senior on the volleyball team, agrees that it can be difficult to occupy the roles of both student and athlete.

"It is hard," Kellen says. "It gets harder the higher the classification you are because the classes you need are only offered at specific times."

"Since my freshman year we've always practiced at the same block of time so it has worked out pretty good," she says. "We try to get most of our hours in the morning so we can practice in the afternoon. You have to have discipline."

Continued on page

11.