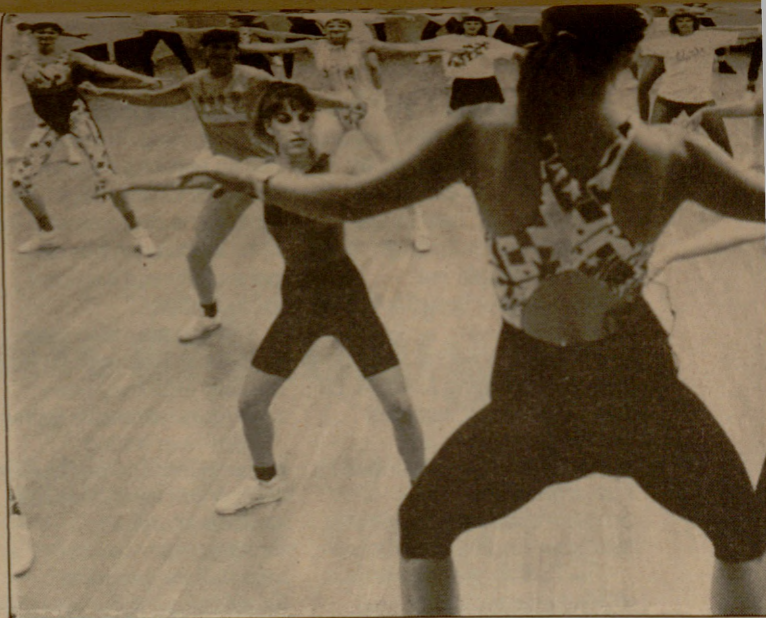


# Shaping Up the Student Body

By Mandy Mikulencak



Jazzercise students mix dance with aerobics to stay in shape.

Feeling healthy inside and out is becoming a top priority for Americans. It's no wonder that the 80s have been labeled the Fitness Decade. Business is booming in the health and fitness industry as more and more individuals make the lifelong commitment to keeping their bodies in top shape. No longer is exercise just a pastime or hobby. Making time for fitness is now a must for many, even in the face of hectic schedules. College students are no exception.

Sally Scaggs, a registered dietitian in charge of Health Education at the Scott & White Clinic, suggested that students have an especially important reason to stay fit.

"Exercising, whether at one of the local gyms or just getting out and walking or swimming, or running on campus, is very beneficial in reducing stress," Scaggs says.

When she was at Texas A&M working on her master's degree in Health Education, the times she was under the most stress with deadlines and exams were the times that exercise helped the most.

She urges all students to start some kind of fitness program early in life and to form good eating and exercising habits to prevent health problems, such as cardiovascular disease, later on in life.

The high rate of cardiovascular disease prompted the American Heart Association to issue a warning that sedentary living habits lead to degenerative cardiovascular disease of the heart, lungs and vascular system and is a major health problem in the United States.

Frightening news, yes, but college students are more aware of the necessity of good health and are actively seeking exercise programs to keep their bodies and hearts in shape.

Aerobic exercise is one of the most beneficial because the large muscle groups are used continuously for extended periods of time to keep a person at his or her target heart rate. Brisk walking, jogging, swimming, rowing, biking and aerobic dance fall into this category. Their health benefits are immeasurable.

For the weight-conscious, it's the best way to shed excess pounds and keep them off because more calories are burned in aerobic activities than in "stop and go" activities like racquet sports.

The American Heart Association recommends aerobic exercise for everyone because it helps prevent coronary heart disease and helps control high blood pressure, elevated blood fats and diabetes, as well as improving circulation.

Perhaps the most popular activity is aerobic dance. The International Dance-Exercise Association stated that a good workout always includes a warm-up of five to 15 minutes of stretching or low-impact moves to make muscles pliable for the workout. The next stage is 30 minutes of continuous exercise at a target heart rate. To find the ideal rate for exercise, subtract your age from 220 and multiply that number by .6 and .9 to find the lower and upper limits of heartbeats per minute. Your target heart rate zone falls within those two numbers.

Although most people don't think of weight training as good for cardiovascular conditioning, one form of weight lifting is an excellent exercise. Circuit training is a system in which a combination or set of exercises with weights are performed consecutively for a designated number of repetitions or for a specific length of time. Instead of spot-building muscles, this training promotes overall endurance, muscle tone and conditioning of the heart because the large muscle groups are used for extended periods. Most gyms incorporate some form of circuit training into their weight or aerobic programs.

One of the pluses of joining a professional exercise program is that the common thread among fitness centers and gyms today is an emphasis on the individual. Trained personnel meet with prospective members to get feedback on their needs and their goals. Most will take the time to develop specific fitness programs on a one-to-one basis. Because fitness includes healthy eating habits as well as regular exercise, many offer diet and nutritional counseling also.

This year, College Station is home to almost 40,000 students, so the demand for quality fitness centers has reached an all-time high. To keep up with this demand, gyms and aerobic studios around the city offer the latest technology in weight training as well as innovative and flexible aerobic programs.

Gold's Gym is just one of many gyms that have recognized the need for a variety in aerobic facilities. No longer do aerobic zealots have to settle only for a choice between high and low impact classes.

Gina Spain, aerobics coordinator at Gold's, has developed a program with seven different levels. The Fundamental class is one of the most flexible because the instructor modifies the routines to fit the needs of the class, Spain says. The Low Impact class is basically for beginners

or those who need a lighter workout because of knee or back problems. The next level is called Moving Up, an intermediate class involving 25 minutes of moderate aerobic activity plus warm-up, cool-down and floor exercises to tone the abdomen, legs and arms. The Challenger class is a fast-paced workout, 45 minutes of moderate aerobic moves, while the Ultimate class is 45 minutes of high intensity aerobics for the very advanced. The Super Circuit is a specialized aerobic class designed to keep the heart rate in the fat-burning range for an entire hour. By far, the most popular class, Spain says, is Body Shaping.

"This class is 45 minutes of complete conditioning and toning," Spain says. "It's a very intense class but our members seem to love it."

Steve Lumpee, owner of Gold's Gym, says that the instructors in weight training are also very adaptable.

"We try to meet with our members on an individual basis and talk about their goals," Lumpee says. "We take into account their medical history and design a program around that."

Gold's offers Flex, Nautilus, and Icarian machines as well as free weights. The Icarian machines are heavy duty machines but can be used by novices as well as professional body builders.

Aerobics cost \$49 per semester, while membership at the full facility is \$89.

The Waist Basket is predominantly a female club and the majority of its members are Texas A&M students. In fact, the majority of the instructors are also students.

Kathy Samaan, a senior English/Business major at A&M who has taught aerobics at the Waist Basket for three years, says that students feel more at ease when the instructor is the same age.

"We're essentially on the same level," Samaan says. "That way, it's easier for me to teach and it's easier for the members to relate to me or come to me with their problems."

The Waist Basket, too, has an aerobics program with different levels. In addition to Low Impact, Beginner and Intermediate classes, there is a Combination Impact class. Their heavy-duty class for the advanced is called the Super Workout.



Photo by Jay Janner

Cathy Lyles leads her jazzercise class.