

Physical fitness at the Y starts with the diaper set

By LORRAINE McCLISH

Y classes keep growing, both in content and in numbers, for the preschool set, who are swimming, with or without their mothers, tumbling, with or without their instructors, or learning new concepts with numbers, or having their own variety show in Mercy Center.

Shella Wade holds sway over the Preschool Variety Show, a 90-minute session of mixed art, gym, stories, music and games activities.

"Nobody gets bored and nothing gets old hat," said Carol Green, who is program director and aquatic director for the Farmington YMCA.

Ms. Green has been associated with YMCAs for the past eight years, and after her graduation from Michigan State University, took her first full-time job at the local Y.

She teaches a couple classes in addition to her directorship positions, and overall it's been "a lot of running around from Mercy Center to schools to churches" where satellite classes are given, pending the opening of the Y's new building in 1980.

The big thrust at the Y is still fitness, both by design and demand, as Americans become more and more conscious of the value of keeping physically fit.

"AND HERE IS where it starts," Ms. Green said, pointing to babies in diapers learning the ways of water and a gym full of tots crawling through barrels and balancing on teeter-totters.

She inherited many of the programs and classes that are offered in the spring brochure, but a portion of her job has to do with developing new ones.

"I have a strong theater background so I'm looking forward to the new drama club we've started for teens," she said.

Another something-new she points to is "Fun With Numbers," designed for 4- and 5-year-olds.

The Preschool Variety Show is winding up its first season and "going excellently," she stated. She described the class for the 3-to-6-year-old set as "a learning experience but really recreation and leisure oriented rather than educational."

The tot attends the class without mother with an option of times, dates and places.

In another section of Mercy Center, preschoolers are taking gym and swim classes on their own, and yet another class invites both parent and tot to get together for a gym workout.

"The kids teach us a lot," Ms. Green said.

Equipment in the gym sessions is changed from week to week following



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the nobody-gets-bored-and-nothing-gets-old-hat formula, "but the kids are constantly showing us new and neat ways they've decided they want to use the equipment," Ms. Green said.

ALL TOLD, there are better than 50 classes offered by the Y in aquatics alone running from the diaper group up to "Fraidy Cat" for adults.

Ms. Green highlights the classes that wind up with lifesaving certifications, Swimastics, for swimmers and non-swimmers, "and all of those in between for every age level and every level of expertise."

The Y is open year-round with a fitness staff that has grown to 12 in number, all of whom are certified as fitness instructors by the Y's standards.

"What that means more than anything else is that we all have the same philosophy on how to go about getting fit," Ms. Green said, "and all of our fitness programs have built-in monitoring systems for the participants."

The monitoring system is a pre-screening process and periodic checks on heart beat, blood pressure, cholesterol, body fat and the like.

"This is most important in our cardiovascular programs, or programs like Slim Living, Healthy Back, Smoking Withdrawal and Weight Control or DanceFit, an aerobic exercise," she explained.

THE FARMINGTON Area YMCA serves Farmington, Farmington Hills, Novi and West Bloomfield, with headquarters at 28100 Farmington Rd., north of 12 Mile Road.

Its new \$2 million facility, now under construction adjacent to the present location, will contain a 25-meter pool, high school sized gym, handball and racquet ball courts, an indoor running track and health clubs.

The Y sponsors Indian Guides and Indian Maidens, Trailblazers, a gymnastic team, a swim team and Gays and Dolls, a social and learning group made up of adult handicapped persons.

The Y offers camping, including day camp and overnight camp for preschoolers.

Growing activities are the Y's hiking, canoeing and skiing trips. The next back-packing jaunt on the calendar will take hikers to North Carolina in April.

The Y's executive director is Gary

Unruh. Its community program director is David Heiser.

All classes for the next session begin the week of March 5.

Registration and inquiries will be taken by calling the Y at 553-4020. A brochure listing all activities on the spring agenda will be sent upon request.



Beth Parkinson gets an assist on the teeter-totter from her mother Pat in the "Parent & Tot Gym" sessions for the child who is walking up to three years of age. Two morning classes are offered, on Tuesdays or Thursdays, in the next term which begins the week of March 5. (Staff photos by Harry Mauthe).



Aquatic specialist Penny Stone encourages Chris Kelbert in a morning swim workout. Chris spends 90 minutes in the "Pre-School Variety Show," then takes to the water. The variety show continues on Mon-

days and Tuesdays for the next set of classes. Pre-school gym and swim classes are scheduled for Thursdays.



Toddler Danny Kinney is fascinated by the nuts and bolts that hold together one of the pieces of gym equipment for the small fry. All of the tots' equipment, for crawling,

climbing, pushing, pulling, and balancing aims to strengthen motor development and coordination.

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YMCA program has solution for that aching back of yours

The Y's way to a healthy back is a special exercise program for people who suffer back pain and discomfort, estimated to be about seven million Americans.

The classes come to Farmington YMCA beginning at 8 p.m. on Monday, March 5, with Kay Burns, a fitness specialist and physical fitness coordinator for the local Y, the instructor.

The program is an integral part of the Y's National Cardiovascular Health Program and has its own national committee of medical consultants.

It differs from other methods used to combat the malady of aching backs by testing to assess minimum muscular strength and the flexibility of key postural muscles, and it stresses relaxation.

The program is progressive. Participants begin with six exercises and at the end of the six week program are performing 35 exercises within about a 45 minute period.

The program avoids multi-repetition of exercises and thus eliminates muscular soreness and stiffness, and all classes are limited to 15 persons.

Overall, the three distinct patterns of exercise are relaxation, gentle muscle toning, and muscle stretching.

MS. BURNS STATES that according to studies conducted at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital in New York City, 88 percent of all back pain is attributed to a combination of muscular-skeletal deficiencies and stress.

Only a small percentage is known to be caused by pathologies.

Supporters of the program claim an 88 percent rate of those who

have been in the Y program have obtained relief.

Students are requested to bring comfortable stretch clothing to the classes on Monday and Thursday. The two-sessions a week, Ms. Burns said, are necessary for participants to obtain maximum benefits from the program.

Fee is \$20 for a Y member or \$35 for a non-member, which includes a text booklet and tapes for continuing the exercise at home.