



Dance time at Vital Options spa is led by Jennifer Noyer. Women were introduced to jazz, African, modern, folk and Greek dancing, all designed to shape up the hips in a hurry.



Deanna Hawthorne (front row center) leads a group of joggers on Mercy Center grounds. Ms. Hawthorne is co-owner of Vital Options with Joan Thornton whose philosophy for fitness includes emotional and mental health as well as physical health. The owners are both marathon runners.

Vital Options, Inc.

Women give themselves a week to relax, refresh, rejuvenate



An optional class is exercising to music with weights strapped to the participant's ankles for an all-over leg conditioner and back strengthener. Weights are also used for trimming up arms, abdominal areas, thighs, buttocks and bust.

By SALLY GERAK

Eighty women checked in to Mercy Conference Center on a June Monday morning for a Women's Fitness and Health Retreat. They ranged in age from 18-67 and included homemakers, brides-to-be, new mothers, business women and grandmothers.

Some were participants in regular exercise programs. Others had attended fitness camps conducted by Vital Options, a very rustic YMCA camp for the past several summers. Others, who by their own admission, had done nothing more strenuous in recent years than think about getting in shape.

All were attracted by the retreat brochure, which stated in part, "If you have always wanted to attend a spa and felt that was out of your price range, now's your chance. Let us pamper you."

ONE OF THE lures was the price of \$158. The posh spas in California and Arizona are running ten times that amount now, plus airfare.

For their money, the women occupied twin-bedded rooms until Friday

noon, ate three meals a day cafeteria style and were given numerous opportunities to relax, refresh and rejuvenate.

On the daily schedule were classes in body awareness (early morning stretching), walk-jog-run (depending on one's fitness level), FigureFit (total body conditioning to music), body contouring (exercise with weights to music), hatha yoga (accent on breathing), dance and swimming in Mercy's olympic-sized indoor pool.

Two outdoor courts were available for tennis, women could have a body massage for an extra \$8 per half hour, and attend lectures.

Lecture topics were varied, from diet to financial planning, from skin care to goal setting.

On Thursday, the last full day of the retreat, hairstylists, manicurists and a make-up artist were available for appointments. More women than could be accommodated wanted appointments.

AS TO GETTING their money's worth, two young women said they had hoped for a more strenuous regimen, but all others interviewed felt the week was decidedly beneficial.

One participant, who had attended a prestigious spa out west, said she lost as much weight with less effort at Mercy than at the higher priced place.

Not everyone desired to lose weight, however, and not everyone did. The food was appealing. Fresh vegetables were steam cooked and crisp. Fish was flaky and light. Fresh fruit was plentiful. The noon salad bar was well stocked.

But because the meals were self-serve, those with little will power could over-indulge and, or, take foods not listed on the retreat diet.

And because there were conferees from other seminars using the center that week, their higher caloric entrees, side dishes and desserts were accessible to all who went through the cafeteria line.

If a participant chose to watch television, read, sleep or just goof off instead of going to an exercise class, there was no scolding. The week was a lesson in self-discipline, not enforced discipline.

BUT THE SORE muscles experienced by most served to remind them how far removed they were from being in shape. The majority disciplined themselves to take advantage of all the planned activities.

Vital Options, Inc. will conduct another week-long fitness retreat at Mercy beginning Aug. 18.

Those who chose not to live in the hope of taking the program on a daily basis, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. for \$30 a day.

Several women who were members of the June retreat have already signed up for the one in August.

Others who are interested in taking a giant step toward physical fitness may call Mercy Center, 467-8010 for registration information.

Where It's At

By JUDY SOLOMON

Ink Spot

It's the only kind of pen that John F. Kennedy would write with. Manufactured in Germany, Mont Blanc pens are considered to be the Rolls Royce of pens. Featuring real gold nibs, many types and styles of ballpoint and fountain pens are available at Chocolatissimo. They can also be special ordered from the Mont Blanc catalogue. Prices start at \$25 and go all the way up to \$3,000 for a pen that is completely encased in 18 Karat yellow gold.

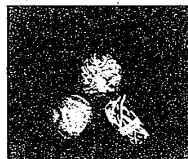
Chocolatissimo, Somerset Mall, Troy, 643-7748.



Knit Picking

When President Carter insisted that we dial down, high fashion designers picked right up on the idea and started designing sweaters left and right. The good news is that the styles, colors and textures of the sweaters are fabulous. The bad news is that the prices are fabulous too. May we suggest that you save a heap of money by learning to knit your own? At Amy Blatt you'll find over 40 different kinds of wonderful French yarn in more than 700 different colors. The shop also conducts classes for both children and adults.

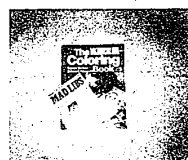
Amy Blatt, Applegate Square, Northwestern at Inkster, Southfield, 354-2470.



Care Packages

It happens every summer. First you send the kids to sleep-away camp because it's "good for them." Then, hundreds of dollars later, you feel sorry for them because you've sent them away. What's a mother to do? Well, for starters, you can go to the Children's Bookshop and fill up a "goodie envelope" which the shop will mail post haste to your offspring. You may choose from such items as Mad Libs, Anti-coloring books, camp-themed stationery (including check-off pads), stickers, jump ropes, jingle books, paperbacks and more.

The Children's Bookshop, Applegate Square, Northwestern at Inkster, Southfield, 354-4741.



In Shape

It's a great way to break the ice at your next party. PsychOptics (\$15.98) is a fun game that allows you to analyze your friends and then let them discuss your findings. Packaged in an attractive plastic case, the game contains four plastic cubes. Each cube is imprinted with a different symbol. First, the player is asked to select the symbol he finds most visually

appealing. He then repeats this procedure until all four of the cubes have been chosen in order of their appeal. Now, using the PsychOptics guide book, you can tell him what his choices reveal about himself.

All for Learning, Orchard Mall, Orchard Lake Road and Maple, West Bloomfield, 851-6770.

Staff photos by Randy Borst

When Its Gift Giving Time
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By
bill williams
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