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(F98)



Pregnant women work out right up until their due date with non-vigorous exercises that prepare them for an easy and comfortable birth. Instructor Gail Greenfield is at far right.



Three-month-old Julie Holzman goes through her knee-bending routine with her mother Carol during the twice-a-week sessions.

Keeping in shape For new and about-to-be mothers

By LORRAINE MCCLISH

The women in Gail Greenfield's classes in the Jewish Community Center run through their exercises so smoothly that a passerby might easily mistake them for a dance troupe.

The motions are not choreographed, but they are done to music and they have all been designed by the instructor specifically for mothers-to-be and those who have just had a new baby.

"The prenatal exercises are made up into a non-vigorous routine geared towards a healthy and flexible pregnancy. The woman is much better fit for the labor process and she enters the hospital knowing this, with a sense of calm," Ms. Greenfield said.

The pregnant women work out right up until their due date. Then, more often than not, they are back two months after delivery for another series of exercises with their babies.

"It's the best feedback an instructor could have, seeing them come back with their infants," Ms. Greenfield said. "No. Maybe better is when they come back pregnant with their second child."

THE SVELTE Farmington Hills resident is a good advertisement for her own keep-fit philosophy. She studied classical ballet, then child psychology, then dance therapy. She takes from each of these studies to form her program for new mothers.

A portion of her dance-therapy curriculum concerns effort-shape analysis; effort as related to behavior patterns. "Psychologists who have worked extensively in this area contend that many motor and emotional problems in small children can be traced to the woman's moodiness, lethargy and lack of physical activity during pregnancy," she said.

"The unactive mother can produce a child with moods and lethargy. The twice-a-week classes gets the mother out of the house, keeps her motivated and keep her moving."

"Being active is really a gift you can give your unborn child."

The prenatal classes concentrate on arms, legs and controlled breathing. Women exercise at their own pace, but in no case is a woman allowed to register after the classes are underway.

Both the prenatal and postnatal classes are progressive, striving for advanced exercises. We can't allow newcomers once we've started," Ms. Greenfield said.

THERE IS NO baby sitter in Ms. Greenfield's postnatal classes. Infants from 2-3 months old are wheeled or carried into the exercise room by their mothers in leotards, then placed on blankets or infant seats on one side of the room.

"It's their first experience with their peers," Ms. Greenfield said. "Their attention time is stretched and it is amazing how quickly they become adapted to this 45-minute period. After two or three sessions they are content to stare at one another or steal a toy from some other baby's blanket."

Bringing the baby into the exercise room is part of Ms. Greenfield's program. Mothers work out for the first part of the period, then bring their babies into the act for exercises together.

"The concentration here is on leg and abdominal work for the mother. It gives time for mother and baby to do something together just by themselves."

"My mothers get themselves back into shape quickly and they don't suffer from postpartum blues," she said.

THE JEWISH Community Center, at 6600 West Maple Road in West Bloomfield, offers several programs for the new mother through its physical-education department.

In addition to the prenatal and postnatal exercise classes, the winter agenda will include natural childbirth (Lamaze) classes, and a prenatal seminar on different aspects of pregnancy, delivery and baby care.

Ms. Greenfield's next sessions will begin the week of Dec. 1.

Registration information will be given by calling the center's physical-education department, 661-1000, ext. 189.



The balancing act performed by Nancy Lefkowitz and her four-month-old daughter Dana is exercise specially devised for both mother and infant by instructor Gail Greenfield (center).

Staff photos by Randy Borst



Michele Samson's infant is content to watch other babies, just a few feet away from their mothers, off to one side of the exercise room. The instructor is adamant that women who exercise after the birth of their baby do not suffer from post-partum blues.



Gail Greenfield studied classical ballet, child psychology and dance therapy. She takes from each of these disciplines to devise her fitness program for about-to-be and new mothers. The next session of classes begins the week of Dec. 1 in Jewish Community Center.

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