

Travail on the trail

Scenic route ready for runners

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

So you're convinced your swim suit shrunk a size since you stashed it away last fall. You're feeling flabby, crabby and chubby, out-of-sorts and out of shape.

Girl Scout Troop 3410, Oakland Community College and the city of Farmington Hills just may have paved the way for you to slim down and cheer up — free of charge.

A 1.5/2.5 mile fitness trail recently dedicated on the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College features a series of exercise stations along a scenic wooded path designed to combine the benefits of jogging and calisthenics.

For walkers, the Dynatrack Alpha Course fills the bill as a nature trail, replete with a babbling brook, trillium, cattails, cottonails, pheasants and frogs.

"Under two years ago, Sue Cromwell of Girl Scout Troop 3401 asked us about the feasibility of constructing a fitness trail," recalled Doug Gaynor, Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation director who religiously runs the route.

"We thought it was a good idea, but told them the city couldn't fund the whole thing as they hoped we could."

The Girl Scouts began hurdling that obstacle by talking Readers Digest

magazine into granting \$500 towards the \$8,000 project.

The city then allocated \$2,300 and a team of OCC environmentalists, biologists, maintenance and physical education staffers and Farmington Hills Parks and Rec personnel tackled the job of installing a fitness trail and seven or eight exercise apparatuses.

Gaynor is hopeful the city will allot the remaining \$3,000 necessary to complete the set of 20 exercise stations by the summer's end.

CONSTRUCTED OF HEAVY-DUTY metal and wood, the apparatuses currently in place are designed for exercises such as sit-ups, chin-ups and pull-ups.

Several stations consist of an exercise area and a placard with instructions for executing the sprinter's stretch, toe touch, arm circle, squat thrust, and Achilles stretch.

Gaynor said he is sometimes asked what is indicated by the small hearts posted on the first, eighth, 14th and 20th exercise stations.

"I let people know that's not where you're supposed to stop and make love," he joked. "Actually, the idea behind exercising is to increase the heart rate, and the heart rate stations are there to remind you to monitor your heartbeat."

The fitness trail represents a perfect

marriage between the college and the community." Tom McPhillips, chairperson of OCC's physical education department and an avid frequenter of the fitness trail.

"I don't think that many people in Farmington and Farmington Hills realize what their tax dollars have done. For \$1, anyone can use our pool, gym, indoor track, lockerroom and showers."

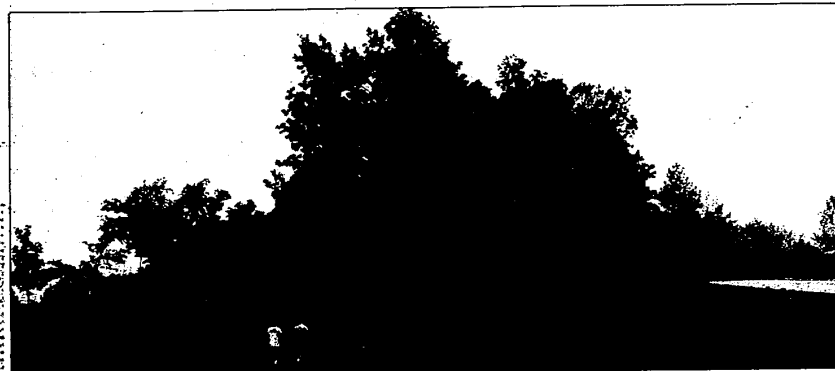
Access to the fitness trail is free.

It's Gaynor's hope that senior citizens and persons confined to wheelchairs will be the beneficiaries of a future fitness project.

"Eventually, what we'd like to do is set up a course along the road and parking lots of the campus," Gaynor said. "That way we'd have a fitness trail that walkers, senior citizens and the handicapped could use."



Carol Ouellette measures up to the challenge of the Ladder Walk, one of the exercise stations along OCC's Fitness Trail.



OCC's Dynatrack Alpha course offers joggers an escape from the congestion and gas fumes of city traffic.



Sandra Smilove and Jeff Stinson give their stomachs a workout on the Body Curl.



This group of avid runners, all OCC instructors and students, welcomes joggers wishing to join them for their daily 7 a.m. scamper along the fitness trail.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Marathoner Mark Muzzarelli (left), Judy Shafir and Brian Pribe log a few miles ensconced in the wooded runners' route through OCC's campus.

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