

Non-swimmers take lessons to become drown-proof



TOM MANDELKA

Dick Tomlinson is flanked by members of a support group for those who have had strokes, taking their first swimming lesson that will lead to therapy through exercise in the water. Tomlinson is a De-

troit police officer volunteering his off-duty time to teach a method of swimming called 'drown-proofing.'

By Loraine McClash
Staff writer

Detroit Police Officer Dick Tomlin-

son had his hands tied together and his legs bound about his ankles when he jumped into Mercy Center's swimming pool to give a demonstration of drown-

proofing.

His audience was made up of area persons who were recovering from strokes, ready to take their first lesson in a swimming technique leading to water therapy exercises.

"I'll have the reluctant ones floating before the hour is up," Tomlinson boasted. And so he did.

Tomlinson has taught drown-proofing since his college days. It is a method of breathing while swimming with such a minimum of energy expenditure that complications such as cramps, heavy clothing, injuries, high waves, rough waters or long immersion have little or no effect on survival.

Drown-proofing has its basis in applied physics, depending on air rather than muscle and produces rest instead of exhaustion.

"So it works equally well on he's or she's, old or young, fat or skinny, tall or short, smart or dumb and is extremely effective for the handicapped," Tomlinson said.

"Anybody, and I mean anybody, can swim."

TOMLINSON admitted that the class of students he had last week, and has committed himself to see a few more times to perfect their drown-proofing, may be one of the hardest groups he's tackled yet.

"Adults who have never swam are the hardest to teach, probably because of old fears left over from a childhood experience. With these students their handicap builds up yet more layers of fears that have to be worked through."

Even so, he expects success in the same degree he's seen success come to those "with every type of handicap imaginable," he said.

"When the swimmer learns to float, we teach how to cough under water,

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— Dick Tomlinson
Detroit Police Officer

how to open their eyes under water so they know where they're at, what to do in case of cramps, and most important how to relax because panic is the principal reason for drowning," he said.

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THE PEOPLE who are learning how to drown-proof themselves now are all members of Farmington Hills Senior Center's "Stroke Support Group."

"The group was started just for recreation and socializing away from home," said Maggie Loradis who is the center's senior adult specialist.

"The tendency is for these people to hide, to become house-bound. They don't want old friends and neighbors seeing them in a wheelchair or using a walker. That can be a terrible blow to your pride."

The support group, now facilitated by Cathy Carrier, did its job. As more persons joined the group, more recreation activities were planned. More members stayed on after the weekly meetings of discussion or hearing a speaker, to play bingo or cards or to lunch together.

"They had gone about as far as they could go. They had reached a plateau and maybe a complacent plateau. It was time to push them on to something



TOM MANDELKA/staff photographer

Florence Viergutz and Roman Galwalski (at left) are two of almost 100 who do aqua-exercises every Friday morning, which are part of the Farmington Hills Senior Adult Center's program. They're on hand now to help Marge Hamina and others recovering from stroke receive the benefits water therapy can offer. The lessons are an off-shoot of the Stroke Support Group initiated by Maggie Loradis, in the pool.

else," Loradis said.

"With the beautiful pool right next door, water seemed to be the answer. We knew these people should be exercising in the water, but we also knew it was going to take guts on their part to get them in the water."

Loradis took her how-to-get-these-people-in-the-water problem to Dr. Joe Gadow of Henry Ford Hospital, West Bloomfield. Dr. Gadow sent Lillie Strakys, a physical therapist from the hospital, to get the water therapy under way.



TOM MANDELKA/staff photographer

Bob Battel (at left) and Ken Schwartz are both members of Stroke Support Group who have both been swimming for some time as their chief means of exercise. Their instructor for drown-proofing lessons is Maggie Loradis, a gerontologist, who is Farmington Hills Senior Center's adult specialist.



TOM MANDELKA/staff photographer

Willow Hughes is lowered into the water onto the shoulders of Maggie Loradis. Volunteers from Farmington Hills Senior Center who will be on

hand to help the new group of swimmers are from left, Florence Viergutz, Barbara Meteyer, who is a physical therapist, and Roman Galwalski.



TOM MANDELKA/staff photographer

Cheers and a round of applause filled Mercy Center's pool for Marge Hamina when instructor Dick Tomlinson released his student and she was able to float by herself. Her next lesson will be in learning how to float face down.