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to go twice a week for water exercises since I had recently discovered this was the one exercise I could do with an arthritic knee and one that I actually enjoyed.

My daughter, Vicki, decided that since the kick-off walk-run was the beginning of my new lifestyle, we should start with that activity. As I huffed and puffed that two mile walk, watching her effortlessly carry a friend's five year old on her shoulders, I seriously questioned my decision to get involved in this program.

Because of the demand for additional water exercise classes, the YMCA opened up their class and now I went three days a week. It wasn't long before I was in the pool seven days a week to work out.

What I found was that it was a great way to relieve stress while losing weight and increasing my fitness level. I was finally on my way to becoming a healthier person.

My knee has improved to the point that it is totally pain free and I was able to eliminate the daily doses of medication that for over two years had barely made the pain tolerable.

My diabetes, which was fluctuating like a roller coaster, is now in excellent control, allowing me to reduce that medication to a mere half pill a day. My physicians had repeatedly explained the benefits of exercise and weight loss, but until this incentive, those

words fell on deaf ears. The proof lies in the fact that whereas, completing 30 repetitions of each exercise in an hour was a struggle, 80 repetitions now can be accomplished and I can easily keep up with the preschoolers at our school as they seem to need a teacher from one end of the playground to the other.

My family's commitment keeps growing as they also notice the difference this has made for them.

My husband now goes to the Y four times a week, was able to complete his stress test, and has more energy. I noticed that his snoring is decreasing as his fitness is increasing. I don't know the relationship between the two, just that it has worked for him.

My daughters have made great progress and our pleased to need new wardrobes.

We may not qualify for the before/after pictures of those ads for fast weight loss yet, but we understand that it is better to lose slowly and keep it off.

As fat is replaced by muscle, it sometimes seems the weight loss is too slow, but as clothing sizes drop, it is worth the effort. There is quite a supportive group of people in our classes who keep reminding each other that muscle weighs more than fat - be patient!

Nutrition classes by Moira Sheehan and Rebecca Rogers from the Oakland County Health Department are hosted

by St. Alexander's Church Monday evenings.

Although I have attended a myriad of nutrition classes, these are reinforcing and encouraging me to make healthier food choices. The classes consist of short lectures, group discussions, recipes, food tasting, goal setting and a general feeling that we are there to offer support to each other.

As part of a community team, there is the desire to do well not just for one's own sake but for the whole team as well.

With summer vacations taking a bite out of our team, we still had an impressive number of members competing in various events the weekend of the Community Challenge. This FCS staff is a close group who care about the progress each one is making.

If I thought going back to college with five small children to care for was hard, this commitment to myself for physical improvement was a greater challenge.

For me it means the difference between living a longer healthier life while reducing and prolonging the devastating effects of uncontrolled diabetes. My concern is how we can continue at the YMCA once September and this program ends so as not to undo all that has been accomplished.

Barbara Crisp is a Farmington Hills resident employed by Farmington Schools.

After cancer from page B1

"I think it is exceedingly important to have faith and trust in your doctors," she emphasized.

"I had to make a quick decision on whether or not I wanted reconstruction. At that point I met Dr. Daniel Shervett, of West Bloomfield, the most wonderful kind man. He works magic with his hands. Plastic surgery is so fascinating. It's amazing what they do."

Opting to go that route, reconstruction work began during the same operation that removed her breasts.

"What they do is insert chest expanders. Each week I'd go in for a saline injection. Like a pregnancy, it would stretch out the skin."

During the reconstruction process, Bennett was also receiving chemotherapy.

"I thought I'd be unique and not lose my hair. I also thought I wouldn't get sick."

She was wrong on both counts.

"I am so fortunate. My employer was absolutely accommodating and understanding. I was able to work from home electronically by computer. The Farmington Hills library is very progressive."

Treatment lasted about four months.

"I was totally overwhelmed by the kindness of

my co-workers and friends. Not a day went by that I didn't have a phone call, a card, an e-mail message, offers to bring me dinner, clean my house.

"And this continued throughout the entire process, not just at the beginning. I am still at times overwhelmed by it," she said, wiping away a tear.

Bennett says she would like to tell women who may find themselves in her shoes to persevere.

"The double mastectomy has not impacted my professional or my social life," she proclaims emphatically.

She would advise women who have a mastectomy to have reconstructive surgery. As a research librarian for 18 years, she studied all of her options carefully.

"To think that husbands leave their wives - how devastating. Life is not over. Keep a positive attitude. Be involved in your treatment."

To women over 40 in general, she stresses: "Get a yearly mammogram."

Light the Night Gala



Helping kids: These Farmington Hills residents enjoyed an evening at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Dearborn benefitting the National Research Program and Local Children's Services of the American Cancer Society of Southeastern Michigan. Over \$100,000 was raised at the July 26 gala.

Gilda's walk/block party seeks helpers for face painting, photography and other jobs

Care to supervise face painting, donate photography skills, sell T-shirts, direct walkers through downtown Detroit, set up or clean up at Cobo Center? Then sign up as a volunteer for the 4th annual Gilda's Club family walk and block party on Sunday, Sept. 28 at Cobo Center.

The walk begins at 10 a.m. with day of event registration from 8:30-9:45 a.m. Hundreds of

volunteers are needed before, during and after the event which raises funds for Gilda's Club of Metro Detroit, a free, non profit cancer support community for men, women and children with all types of cancer.

Course marshals are needed to direct walkers along the 5K walk which begins at Cobo Center and loops through Greektown and Harmonie Park, past the Fox

Theatre and along Washington Boulevard to return to the Macomb room at Cobo for an indoor block party.

Volunteers can schedule their time so that they can participate in the walk and block party festivities which will be co-hosted by Vickie Hamilton and Tom Sorrells of WDIV TV 4.

Call 248-851-6557 during business hours to volunteer.

Garden club hosts naturalist

The Farmington Garden Club will meet Monday, Sept. 8 at the Longacre House, 24705 Farmington Road.

Naturalist Joe Derek will present a slide program "Planning a Butterfly Garden." Members will learn which plants attract

butterflies and hummingbirds and which of them come to our area.

Guests are welcome. Newcomers can call Eleanor Sanders at 459-0335.

Winners will be announced for this year's Good Neighbor con-

test. Many beautiful gardens were visited by Betty Ritchie and her committee.

Under the leadership of newly elected president Jan Hunt, a busy year is ahead. Plans are taking shape for a garden walk in 1998.

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