

Health and fitness program expands

By Louise Okrutsky
staff writer

ALFRED STRANSKY, the man intent on making anyone within shouting distance of Oakland University think twice before eating pork chops, has literally gained ground in his fight for everyone else's better health.

His health, maintenance and improvement programs and the cardiac rehabilitation programs have made the long-awaited move from Lepley Sports Center to a renovated barn on the Meadow Brook estate in Rochester Hills.

After existing cheek to jowl with OU's sports programs, Stransky's programs and methods have room to grow at Meadowbrook Health Enhancement Institute.

The new facility offers the institute 10,000 square feet of offices, exercise rooms and research areas as well as 30,000 square feet for jogging, walking and other exercise programs.

But gaining more examining rooms in what once were horse stalls and holding exercise classes in the spacious ring where Matilda Wilson's horses once strutted their stuff hasn't mellowed Stransky's attitudes toward the way Ameri-

cans eat and die.

"I DON'T care if you run 'til you're blue in the face and don't smoke. You're still going to be vulnerable to cardiac problems," said Stransky, the institute's director who has studied exercise physiology at Florida State University.

In the United States, the chances of succumbing to cardiac disease increase with age. But Stransky doesn't see age as the culprit. It's the "rotten diet" born from affluence that promotes heart disease.

Slowly, Americans are coming to realize that a plateful of eggs for breakfast and a juicy t-bone steak for dinner don't constitute a

healthy diet. "In the last three years," he said, "red beef consumption's gone down by 18 percent, pork by 12 percent."

Stransky scoffs at claims within the food industry that moderate consumption of pork isn't harmful. "There's no such thing as a lean pig."

Vegetable consumption, he's obviously pleased to announce, has increased in the United States.

WHILE HEREDITY does play a role in one's health, Stransky says that proper diet and exercise can play a greater role in one's physical well-being.

"People are assuming more responsibility for their health."

His preventive regime includes strict provisos against smoking and caffeine.

"We have a lot of charlatans in our society who talk about vitamin and mineral deficiencies. That's a big rip-off of the consumer. You should reduce your fat intake, reduce sugar," he said.

There are other factors that affect health. "The quality of life is so rotten in Oakland County. Among patients that doctors see, between 75-80 percent exhibit symptoms related to stress. They've got a crummy job or it's the way they live. You need a feeling of well-being to be healthy," Stransky said.

ABOUT 800 people each year participate in his fitness programs. These include stress tests and medical evaluations before participation begins. Fitness programs help participants to quit smoking or drop weight.

His preventive programs have a dual approach. Not only do they aim at preventing an initial appearance of a problem, a second regime aims at preventing recurrence of cardiac problems and fighting progression of coronary artery disease.

With its larger facilities, the Meadow Brook Health Enhancement Institute will expand the latter program to include persons with problems including hypertension, obesity, diabetes, gout, high levels of cholesterol and blood lipids.

Just as with patients in the cardiac rehabilitation regime, participants in the expanded rehabilitation program will be placed there under recommendation from their physicians. The programs don't replace the care of the patient's doctor but augment it.

"We have a nonpharmaceutical approach," Stransky said. "We hope to reduce the amount of medicines taken as (participants) lose weight and exercise. There's the potential for modifying the disease state through a lifestyle approach."

If we can get them off drugs, so much the better."

EXPANSION PLANS also call for the institute to advise firms on corporate fitness programs.

"Most corporations do it haphazardly through personnel departments," he said. "We'll supervise the program or offer our recommendations. It depends on how far they are from the university."

In addition to changing patients' attitudes about health maintenance, Stransky wants to alter the outlook of the physicians as well. Many physicians are required to take one nutrition course in medical school.

"Their whole orientation is toward the actual disease. We're hoping to start a master's degree program for physicians in prevention," he said.

The institute was constructed with about \$643,000 of a \$941,000 insurance settlement on a Meadow Brook barn destroyed by fire in 1983.

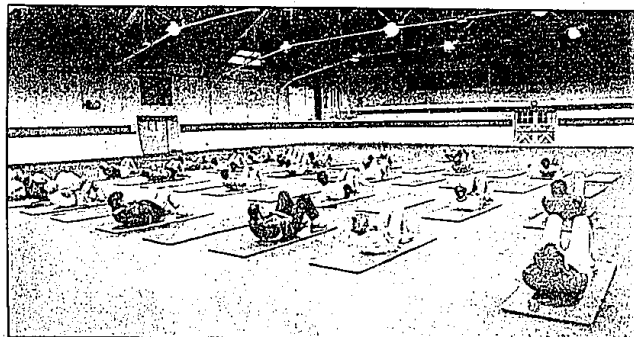
THE AREA of the Shattell-Gustafson Pavilion, which now includes an indoor running track, lecture rooms, saunas and locker rooms, was financed with \$218,000 of a \$700,000 gift to the university.

The institute is planned as a financially self-supporting facility open to the university community and residents of a 12-county area.



Capt. James Curtis, an Oakland County sheriff's deputy, pedals an exerciser while being monitored and observed. Many deputies are

undergoing stress evaluations at the health center.



Terry Dibble leads early morning warmups, which come before the exercise class.

photos by RANDY BORST/staff photographer

11 Mile-Inkster area is target of concerns

By Jackie Klein
staff writer

The proposed expansion of Blue Cross-Blue Shield in the 11 Mile-Inkster area is prompting concerns about overdevelopment and inadequate roads to handle traffic.

The Southfield Planning Commission voted 5-1 July 23 to recommend that the city council approve a temporary parking lot to accommodate tenants in the insurance corporation's seven- and 10-story office towers on the north side of 11 Mile, east of Inkster.

Commissioner Danny Raskin voted against the project and Commissioner Jon Heinrich was absent. Blue Cross is planning to build a 12-story office structure between its existing towers on the 70-acre site, with a central services building and a second parking structure. This proposal will be considered by city officials in about 30 days.

IN THE meantime, the temporary, 773-car parking lot, if approved by city council, will be used for about 18 months while the first, five-level parking structure is being built for 880 cars.

But the major problem, according to Roger Smith, director of public services, is that massive road improvements are needed to prevent "chaotic" traffic conditions when more office buildings are developed in the area.

Officials are talking about a "super special assessment district," charging traffic-generating developments for widening and other road improvements needed for access. Eleven Mile and Inkster are both two-lane roads.

OREL HERSHISER, who's constructing a 10-story office building on the site, is concerned about overdevelopment of the Blue Cross property.

John Beras, attorney for Hershiser and a former Southfield city councilman, asked that the planning commission shelve its recommendation on the parking lot site plan until the proposal for the next phase of development is submitted to the city.

"With road problems as they are, we're concerned about Blue Cross using more right-of-way to help solve its parking problem."

"The company in 1984, when the

site plans for the two buildings were approved, said they would use only surface parking.

"THERE'S NO justification for an exception based on Blue Cross's immediate parking problems. There are 800 employees in one building, twice as many as was proposed. This is a 'sweet shop.'"

According to Ted Kilroy, deputy city planner, the ordinance requires one parking space for each 200 square feet of floor area. Blue Cross has created a ratio of one space per 100 square feet, he said.

Beras said Blue Cross showed negligence in failing to provide sufficient parking space for employees. Five earth moving machines are building the parking lot before a permit has been issued, he maintained.

Marvin Kramer, attorney for petitioner H.C. Real Estate, said the company is grading its own property and no permit is required for leveling the ground. There will be no blacktopping or landscaping until the site plan is approved, he said.

BERAS ALSO maintained that Blue Cross built a road to Inkster from its property, despite a covenant agreed to in 1984 that there would be no access to Inkster.

Based on trust, commitments, promises and cooperation, my client decided to build a 10-story office structure on the site," Beras said. "For two years, tenants in the building will have to look at a parking lot with no landscaped buffer."

BERAS SAID he obtained Blue Cross's engineering plans, which have never been submitted to the city.

Commissioner Denise Alexander said the proposed parking lot meets ordinance requirements, but a master plan should be prepared for the 70-acre property.

Commissioner Howard Nudell, an architect, said Blue Cross isn't violating any codes or ordinances. "I hope we don't find out that a storm sewer is being installed under the proposed parking lot," he said. "If that happens, I'll lose faith."

BERAS LATER said that in the fall of 1984, an architect-attorney came to the city to present a site plan for the 10-story office building.

He said he didn't know who he was representing.

The petitioner maintained the seven-story building was under construction as a speculative project, Beras said. The architect then said the "undisclosed principal" (Blue Cross) would occupy both structures.

"The city council was concerned about the density of the project on two, two-lane roads in the center of the city," Beras said.

"Blue Cross offered to pay part of the cost of a service drive north of 11 Mile, between its two buildings east of the freeway and a service drive to American Motors Center and Franklin Road."

A CONCEPTUAL site plan for the 70 acres showed four other buildings and surface parking in a low-density executive office park. The boulevard was never built and the two parking lots are full.

"Either Blue Cross was negligent in underestimating its parking needs or the company knew its buildings would be overused. But the company got its foot in the door."

The master plan for the office complex was proposed to be 1.3 million square feet, Beras said, but there is already 800,000 square feet on the 11 Mile frontage alone.

"The city is talking about a super special assessment district," he said. "And my client, who expected an executive office park, is saying the rules of the game have been changed."

"NOW WE'RE facing a third building on 11 Mile, parking structures and temporary parking for 800 cars in a sea of asphalt. Cars will be flooding over to my client's lot."

Attorney Kramer said later that an office building for insurance agents requires more parking than is sometimes expected. According to the ordinance, Blue Cross's parking facilities are overcrowded, he said.

"We're talking about a five-story office structure to the east of the temporary parking lot," he said. "It won't be a sea of asphalt. This is a large tract of land and things that made sense in 1982 make no sense in 1986."

According to Kramer, in the chain of title to the land, no covenant was recorded. Blue Cross, he added, isn't violating any codes and the proposed project, when completed, will be outstanding in the area.

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