

RECREATION

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Gym motivates teen girls to exercise

Free FitTeen program gets youths active

BY JIL WATSON

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The weight is over.

Walking the dog used to be the extent of her exercise, but Cape Coral teenager Angelena Lopez has gotten off the couch and into the gym. Lopez, 18, is one of several teen girls who have signed up for the FitTeen program at Lady of America gym. The program offers girls ages 13 to 19 the opportunity to step out of the heat and into the gym for three months.

"It's designed to give some semblance of working out," Angelique Pilcher said. Pilcher is a sales person and personal trainer at Lady of America.

The program, now in its sixth year, is designed to address teenage obesity and to encourage teens to embrace an active life. Lady of America gyms are open to women of all ages.

"It helps them build confidence and helps them build awareness," Pilcher said. "They're in here, working out. They're not sitting home watching TV."

Cape Coral resident Angelena Lopez is taking advantage of the program this summer. It's her first experience heading to the gym several days a week.

"I thought it was a great opportunity," Lopez said. "We haven't been a physically fit family but we're trying."

Lopez is diabetic, and while she monitors her condition and feels healthy, dropping a few pounds wouldn't hurt.

"I'm really doing it to get healthy," she said.

Since joining the club two weeks ago, Lopez has worked out for at least an hour a day. Sometimes she works with weights, but her favorite pieces of equipment are the elliptical

machine, stationary bicycles and the treadmill. She has already noticed a difference in the way her clothes fit and her face is getting thinner.

"By the end of the summer I'd like to lose 30 pounds," she said. "And add some muscle tone."

Lopez's mother, Karen Huff-

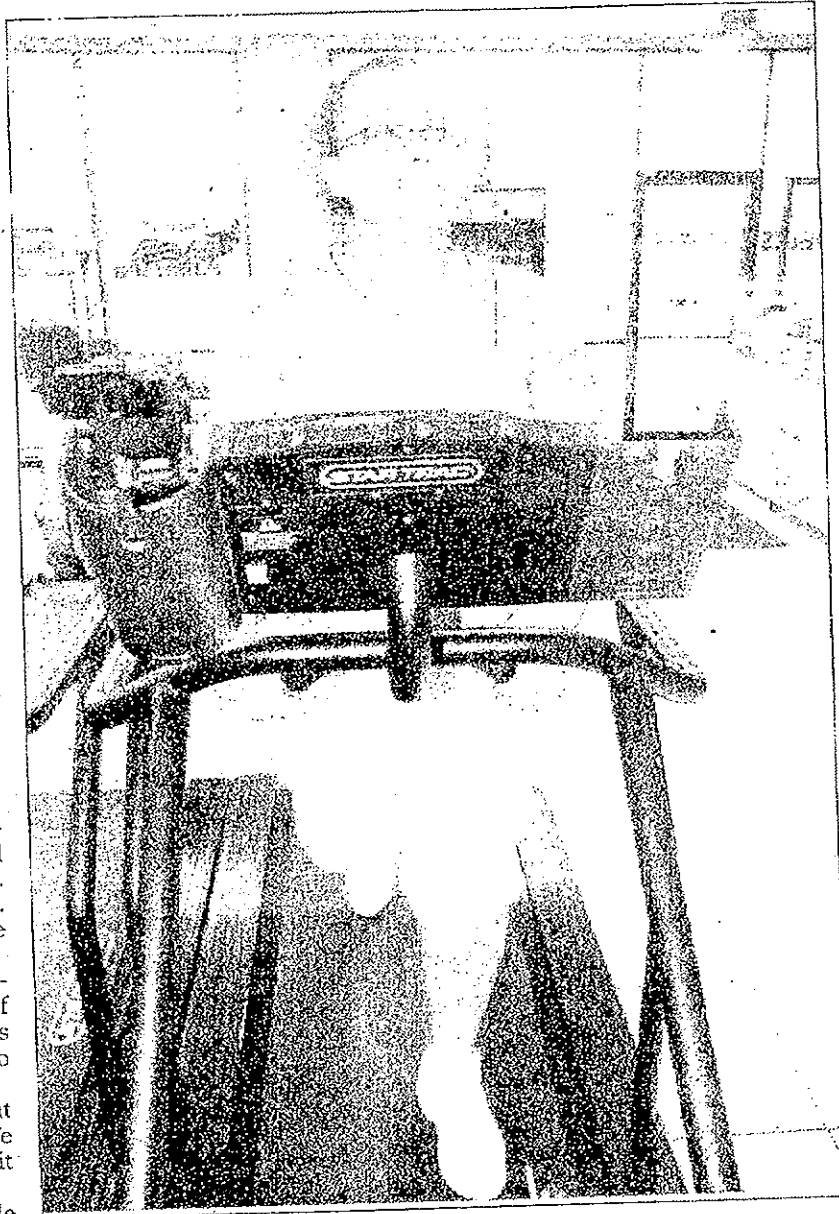
man, was a Lady of America member and heard about the summer teen program when she was at the gym. She told Lopez she would buy her new workout clothes if she committed to a summer fitness routine.

"She's diabetic and that's one of the reasons (for her to be here)," Huffman said. "And it's a

good way to be more productive in the summer."

The mother and daughter sometimes work out together.

"It's amazing how much quicker 45 minutes on treadmill goes when you have someone to talk to," Huffman said. "It's nice."



■ Cape Coral resident Angelena Lopez walks on the treadmill at Lady of America gym. Lopez and other teenage girls can use the facility free of charge this summer as part of the FitTeen program. The program, now in its sixth year, is designed to address teenage obesity and to encourage teens to embrace an active life. Lady of America gyms are open to women of all ages.

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IF YOU GO

- What: FitTeen Program
- Where: Lady of America, 1751 Pine Island Road
- Who: Girls ages 13 to 19. Parents must sign a consent form.
- When: 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. daily, through Sept. 1
- Info: 574-2401