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SPORTS
& recreation

First step is taking the first step

BY JOHN CUDMORE
Staff Writer

You missed the summer completely, wasting away the days and nights by the pool. Or hiding out in the cool depths of the air-conditioned rec room.

Now someone else has the fallen leaves raked and bagged and you are still as out of shape as a marshmallow. It won't be long before the snow flies and it accumulates to the point you have to shovel it or you won't be able to get out the door ... Hmmm, not a bad idea except you need to get out now and again for food and supplies.

To top it off, another holiday season is fast approaching with ample opportunity to sloth out.

But the startling reality is friends are starting to mistake you for the mayor of Pillsburytown. Enough of living large. Clearly it's time to do something about yourself.

You're not as alone as you think, according to Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living, which suggests a staggering 63 per cent of Canadians are not active enough to achieve the health benefits of physical activity.

It is not necessary to join a health club to look after your health. In fact, alternatives exist in our daily lives. Almost any activity can be positive and healthy.

"Anything is something, from gardening, as opposed to running a marathon," said Sandy Maisine, certified fitness consultant at Fitness Horizon Health Club in Bradford and a personal trainer for nearly five years.

"There are so many easy things to do to burn off calories. You don't have to belong to a gym. Just talking to someone in the fitness field can be a big help."

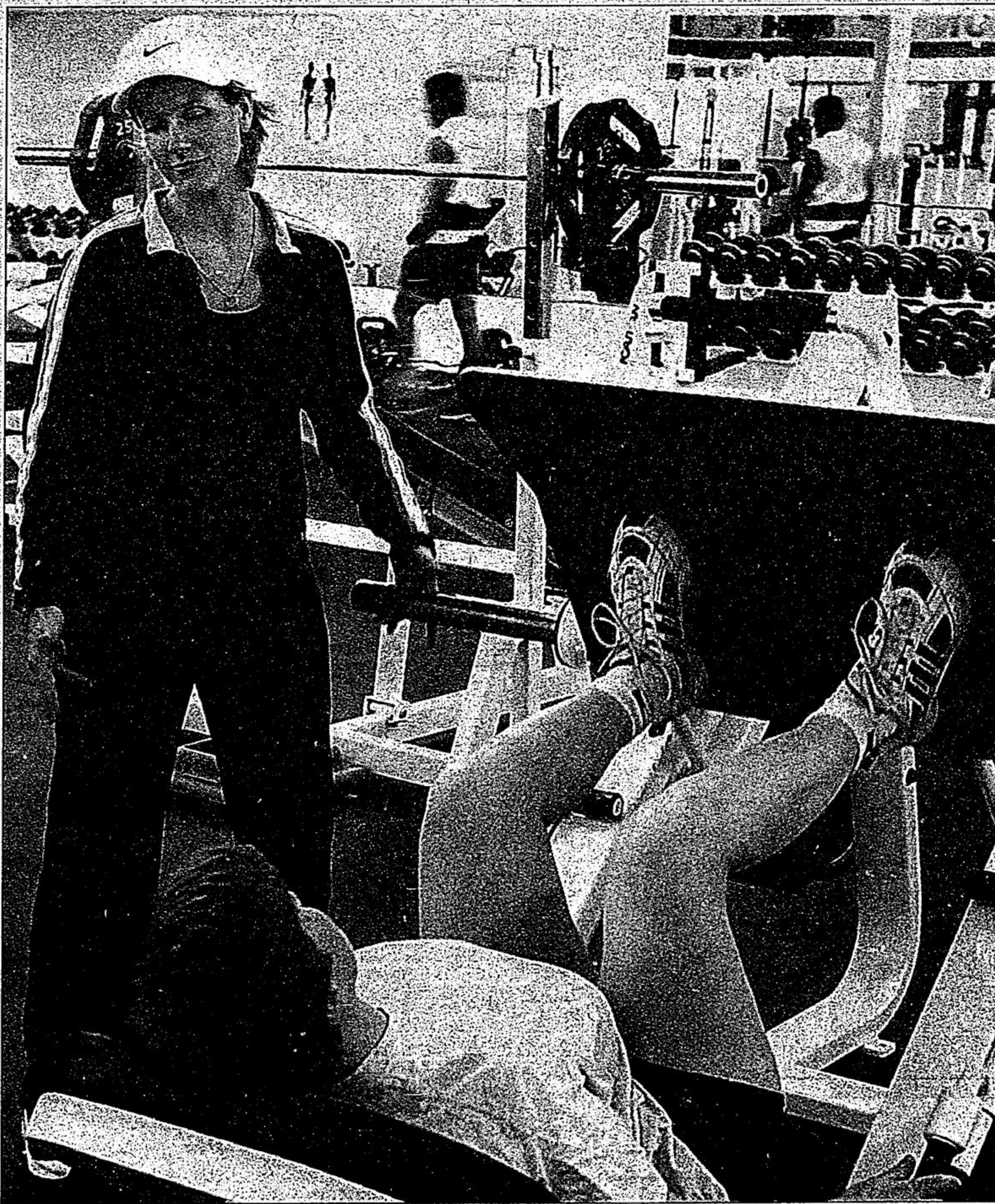
A simple 30 minutes of walking per day works toward increasing energy levels and stamina, relieves stress and tension and helps create self-esteem, confidence and strengthens bones and muscles.

Everyday functions, such as household chores and playing with the kids, are also considered excellent light activities.

There are three activity groups — endurance, flexibility and strength.

Endurance — Activities that help the heart, lungs and circulatory system stay healthy and provide energy. Ranging from walking and household chores to organized exercise programs and sports performed four to seven days per week.

Flexibility — Activities such as mopping the floor, gardening, bowling, curling and simple stretching, four to seven days per



Sandy Maisine, certified fitness consultant at Fitness Horizon Health Club, says there are many easy things to do to burn off calories.

week, promote relaxed muscles and mobile joints and easier movement.

Strength — Ideally, a combination of activities that exercises muscles in different areas of the body, such as legs, arms and mid-section performed two to four times per week, will help ensure good overall strength. Keys include some form of resistance in order to make muscles work harder.

Activities can include heavy yard work, including cutting and piling wood, to stair-climbing and pushups and curls.

Your choice of activities may depend on your body and health. It's never a bad idea to consult a doctor or a fitness specialist before undertaking strenuous

activity.

For instance, a recent heart attack victim would hardly be up to a marathon run.

"We always put people through a light fitness test and find out what they are good at and enjoy doing. Often they are surprised to find they can do more than they thought they could but it's all about having people be successful and comfortable with what they do," Maisine said.

Maisine pointed out useful work can be accomplished from the comfort of a sitting position, as she has discovered from running a chair aerobics program at a seniors centre in Bradford.

"When we're finished, you look around and see a little bit of sweat and that's making muscles con-

nect and fire up."

No matter what your fitness level, activity should always be preceded by proper warmup.

"The one thing people seem to forget about the most is stretching," Maisine said. "I like to refer to playing with playdoh — you have to warm it up so that it stretches nicely."

It is important to remember to take it at a sensible pace. Human bodies are not designed to go from zero to 60 in a flash.

"Even if it is just something to be active — a dance class, for instance — do what you can do, not what your neighbour can do. You're only competing with yourself," Maisine said.

The first step, though, is taking that first step.



Gianni Colavecchia

Been There, Done That

He's a lover,
not a fighter

"Oh my God." The shooter blurted out the words as naturally as a person suffering a gunshot wound would shriek with pain.

The attractive wooden grip and stainless steel frame of the model 617 Smith and Wesson .22-calibre firearm belied the brute force with which it discharged its deadly ammunition.

The moment it went off, the gun ceased to be a complex assemblage of polished parts. In the eyes of the shooter, it had become an instrument of death.

The shooter, by the way, is me.

Given the shooter's reluctance to brandish anything with the power to snuff out a life, it's not a stretch to conclude firing a few rounds at the Sports Shooting Range in Gormley was not terribly enthralling.

Perhaps one can chalk up the reluctance to my upbringing.

In the deep recesses of consciousness, mom's voice gently asked if it was really necessary to shoot a gun for a newspaper assignment. Dad's voice demanded to know why any reporter would become entangled in such craziness.

Sure, you say. Blame the Italian parents.

Well, perhaps the reluctance has to do with the way this scaredy-cat sometimes lives his life. A fellow St. Mary's parishioner from Richmond Hill once said Catholics are afraid of everything and yours truly would constitute pretty solid evidence for that claim.

Don't get me wrong. In many situations, the scaredy-cat has reams of fun without the slightest pang of conscience.

But shooting a gun is different somehow. I'm not a John Wayne. I'm a lover more often than he is a fighter.

"Are you going to go out and play?" a woman behind a counter asked as I prepared to enter the firing area.

"Play?" I repeated, uncomfortable she would use the word as a substitute for "shoot."

The woman noted she cringes when hearing cowboy-wannabes use the words interchangeably at the range.

Admittedly, the expectation was men with names such as Billy Joe or Bubba would abound at the place.