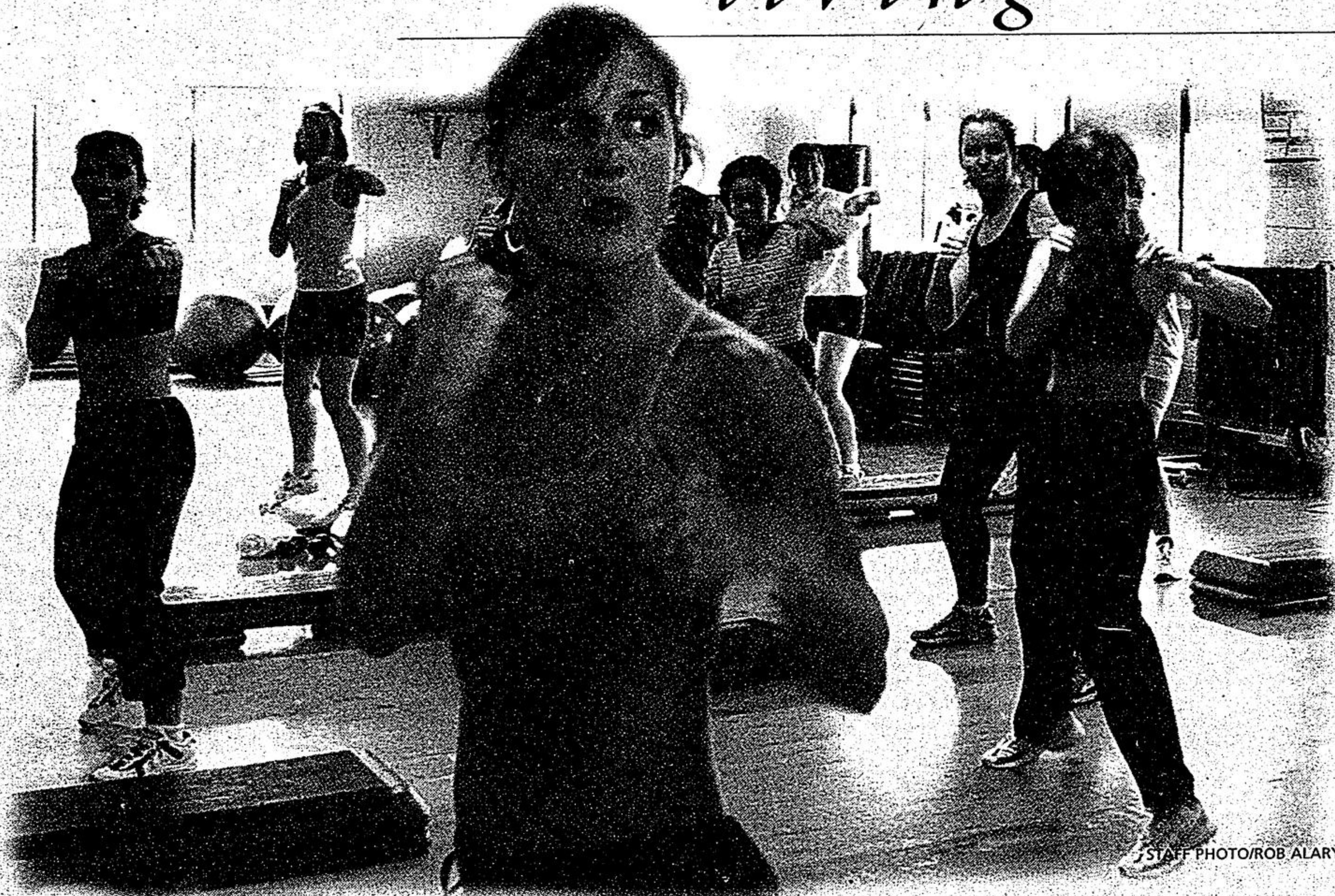


Economist & Sun/Tribune

HEALTHY *Living*



Kelly Punzo, aerobics co-ordinator at Fit City in Newmarket, leads a class in punches and jabs during a cardio boxing session.

CARDIO CLASSES PACK A PUNCH

Martial arts experts concerned about quality of boxing instruction

BY AMY WEST
Staff Writer

Cardio kickboxing and boxing workouts provide an alternative to the monotony of stairmasters and stationary bikes by combining martial arts kicking techniques and various boxing punches.

The result is a sport that has participants raving but has many martial arts experts concerned.

Made popular by Billy Blanks' home-training videos, the sport's success may be attributed to the expedient and visible results. Kickboxing burns between 700 and 1,000 calories an hour, as

opposed to the 300 to 400 calories burned by the average hour-long step aerobics class.

While burning calories and breaking a sweat, boxers are gaining self-confidence, a particularly appealing aspect to women.

"I like to go running early in the morning before I go to work," said Jenna Quinn of Thornhill. "I started incorporating cardio boxing into my workout routine because my mom was always worrying about me being out by myself. She wanted me to know how to defend myself and I wanted something that would help me stay fit without having to lift weights or use a bunch of equipment."

The feeling of empowerment, of being able to defend themselves, is a common side-effect of boxing workouts, said Kelly Punzo, aerobics co-ordinator for Fit City in Newmarket.

'Punching is something most women are not comfortable doing. Growing up, we are taught not to hit, not to fight!'

Kelly Punzo
aerobics co-ordinator, Fit City

"Punching is something most women are not comfortable doing," Ms Punzo said. "Growing up, we are taught not to hit, not to fight. Taking these classes teaches women how to throw punches and feel positive about it."

But Tim Wakefield, owner of Villari's Self Defence Centre in Aurora, is concerned cardio boxing and kickboxing classes are creating a false sense of security among participants — especially women.

"The mindset associated with defending yourself from attack is completely different than the mindset used in these classes," he said. "When facing an attacker, are you really going to remember something you learned bouncing around to music and hitting pads?"

Another problem with these classes, Wakefield said, is the lack of qualified instructors.

"People who teach martial arts have been at it a long time," said Mr. Wakefield, a 20-year veteran of the sport. "Now you have aerobics instructors teaching people how to kick and throw punches without the proper training or capability to correct students' mistakes. This creates a huge potential for injury."

If not performed properly, kickboxing can result in hyper-extend-

See **QUALIFIED**, page 27.

VENT offers shoulder to cry on

BY CAROLYN BARRY
Special to The Era-Banner

At first, she is hesitate to talk with others about what is on her mind. Small wonder, because what is on her mind is what she does to make herself feel better.

She wants to talk about cutting herself with a knife. She is sitting in a room with seven strangers drawn together by one common need — to talk.

She turns to a young mother and asks if her child is teething yet. Within minutes the topic switches to self-harm. Others listen, offer advice and a shoulder to cry on. That's the purpose of a new counselling group in Newmarket called VENT.

'With the supportive elements involved, we hope we provide an environment where teens feel free to speak about what they feel like.'

Aimed at teenagers and young adults, VENT, operated by young adults and funded by the United Way, was started in mid-March by Kati Murray and Jenny Haggart, in conjunction with the Canadian Mental Health Association and Positive Connections in York Region.

"With the supportive elements involved, we hope we provide an environment where teens feel free to speak about what they feel like," Ms Haggart said.

From 6 to 9 every Wednesday night, those who feel the need to talk are welcome to join others at the Newmarket Kinsmen Club hall, at the corner of Main and Water streets.

Discussions range from teenage pregnancy, to self-harm, suicide, drugs, alcohol, sex and more.

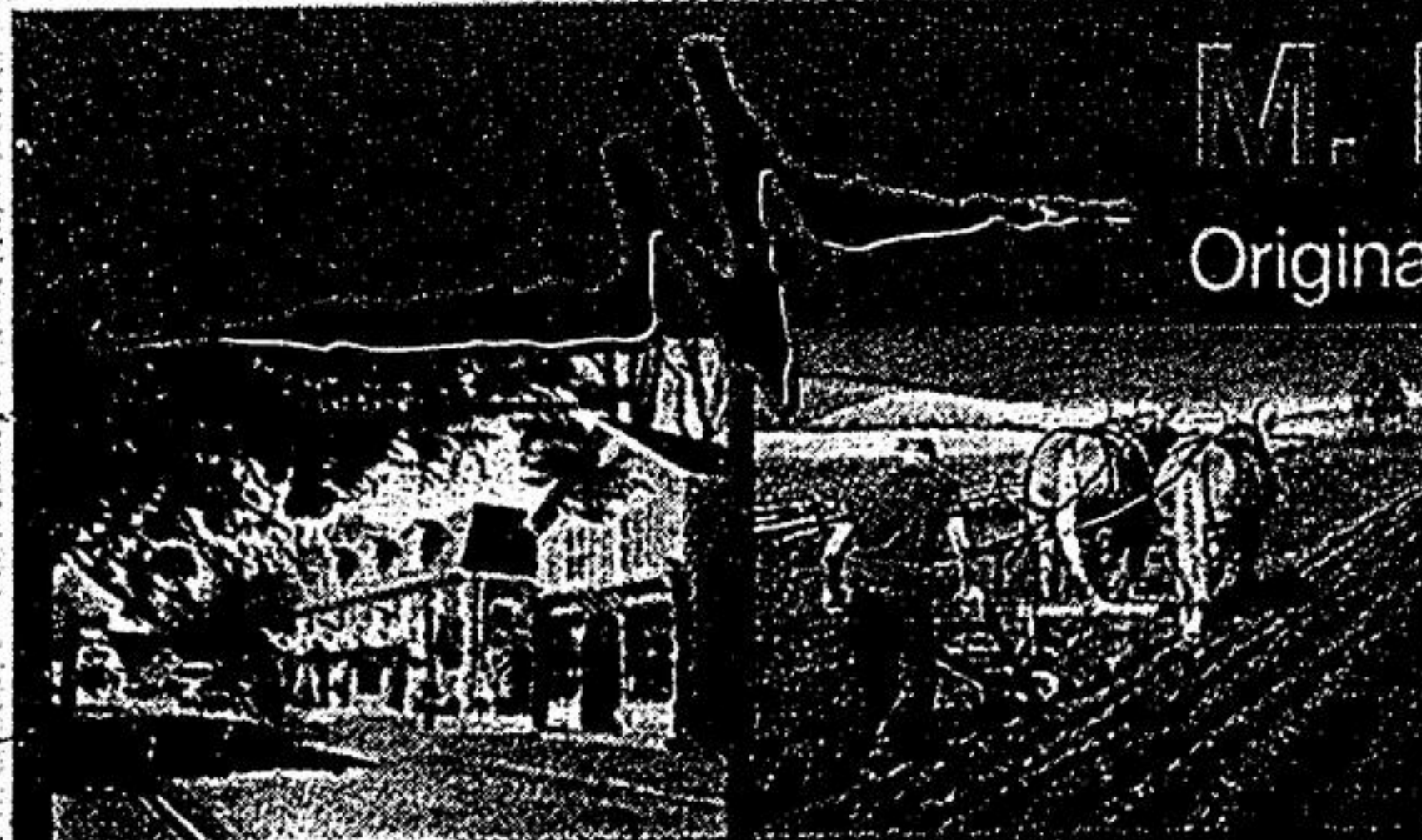
On the very first night VENT started, 11 young people arrived.

"Even having one person out is the

See **SUPPORT**, page 27.

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