

Senior Lifestyles

Mall walkers find exercise exhilarating, cheap

As far as Jack Phillips is concerned, it's the best gym in town.

"You can't beat the price — zero!" remarked Phillips, a 60-year-old Greece resident.

Phillips and dozens of other health-conscious folks consider Greece Towne Mall on Ridge Road West to be the perfect spot to exercise. The group of predominantly senior citizens enjoys several advantages while vigorously walking the mall.

"They don't have to deal with pavement or the wind, rain, snow and sleet," said Eileen Cerami, a registered nurse at St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester. Cerami is one of many volunteers through the American Heart Association who assist the mall-walkers by offering free blood pressure, pulse and weight checks.

"There's no curbs, red lights or dogs," said Phillips.

Greece Towne Mall opens at 8 a.m., seven days a week, to accommodate the walkers. Cerami noted that other malls in Rochester — such as Market-place, as well as several schools —

offer their space to walkers.

Walking the malls has coincided with the health and fitness craze of the last decade, and is apparently still growing in popularity. Cerami estimated that there were 15 new participants the last time she volunteered at Greece Towne Mall.

"It's really grown in the last eight years," added Phillips, who became part of the original mall-walkers at Greece Towne after undergoing heart surgery eight years ago.

At the Arnot Mall in Big Flats, people begin their hikes as early as 6:30 a.m. during the week.

"We probably have at least a couple hundred mall-walkers," said Penny Cole, marketing director at the Southern Tier mall.

Arnot Mall even offers an "Arizona Club" membership for those who walk 2,000 miles — the approximate distance from Horseheads to Arizona — over a period of time. The mall distributes T-shirts to club members for their efforts.

— Mike Latona



Marla Selvaggio (center) has her blood pressure checked by Eileen Cerami, a registered nurse who volunteers for the American Heart Association, as Selvaggio's husband Pasquale checks his records.

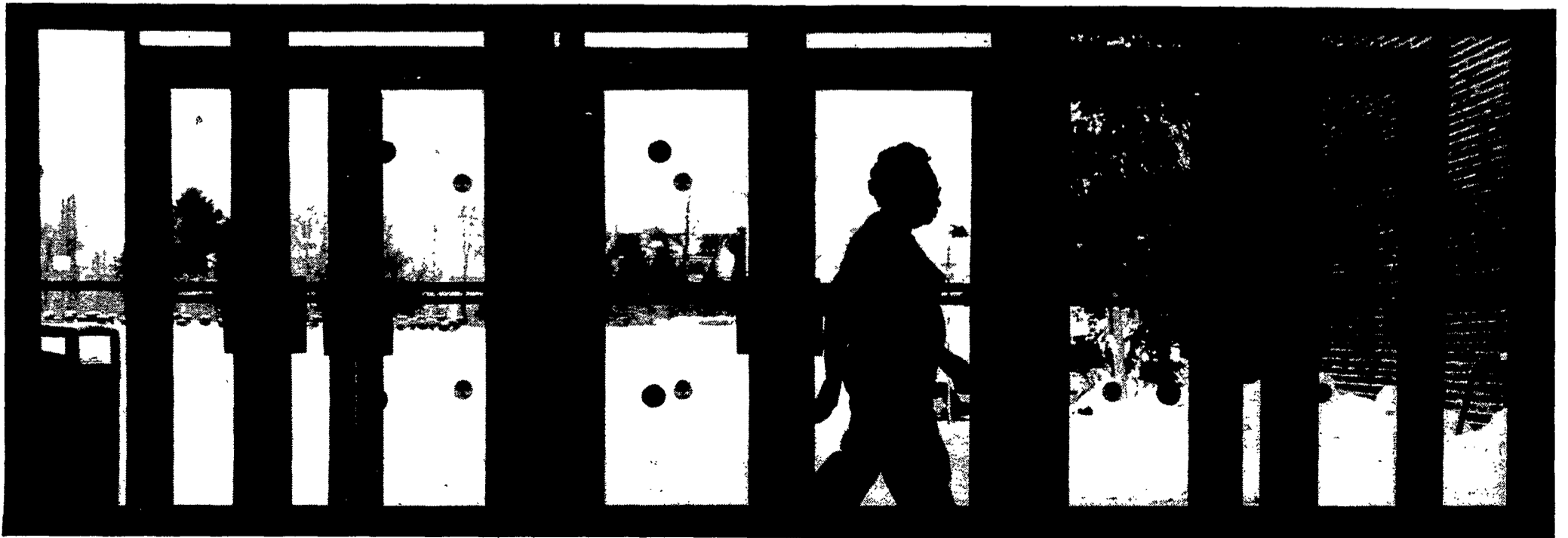
Courier Photos by Babette G. Augustin



Jack Phillips preps for a brisk four-mile-per-hour trek through the mall.



Sam Fedele (left) and Sal Bongo race around the seven-tenths-of-a-mile perimeter of Greece Towne Mall Jan. 22. Walkers who use the mall year-round cite climate-control, security and camaraderie as attractions.



An unidentified walker passes by one of Greece Towne Mall's entrances.