

Published April 13th, 2011

## Deep Water Aerobics Class Forms Friendship Pool

Cathy Dausman



Deep Water Aerobics at Soda Aquatics Center Photo  
Cathy Dausman

It's only natural to think about swimming when the sky turns denim blue and temperatures climb into the 80's. But outdoor pool exercise when it's foggy, windy, cold or snowing? Some Lamorindans say "bring it on!" as they work out in their Deep Water Aerobics class at Campolindo High School's Soda Aquatics Center (SAC).

The class, taught by Peg Shasky, meets for an hour Tuesday and Thursday mornings at 8:30. Participants range in age from 40 to mid 60's and include a nurse, a geologist, a pastry chef, a cosmetic company executive, an occupational therapist and retired military officer. Teachers swell the class ranks during summer months.

The class aims for a brisk low-impact exercise, alternating workouts with Hydro-Tone barbells and boots (specially designed for water aerobics) and water polo balls. Neck deep in water, most still manage enough breath to socialize. Members say the group has talked their way through dating, weddings, divorces, jobs, school graduations, moves, puppies and grandchildren. And surgeries. Plenty of surgeries. Many of the "mermaids" (Shasky's tongue-in-cheek moniker for the largely female group) have undergone hip, knee and back surgeries and found the class offers a way to re-build strength gently.

John Sims, the group's current lone male, sometimes joins his cousins Lucy Talbot and Dana Farkas in the aerobics class. He enrolled originally to continue a workout regimen while recovering from an injury. "The days I swim laps and take Peg's class turn me into Jello afterward," he says.

Deep Water Aerobics started at SAC in September, 2006. Shasky, facing retirement from a 30-plus year teaching career, was looking to redefine herself. Pool manager Andrew Morris suggested she teach a swim class. A swimmer since she was five, with years in the pool as an athlete and on the pool deck as a swim parent, Shasky agreed. Half a dozen students showed up for her first classes, but Shasky says attendance was "pretty skinny" during winter months. To begin with, she taught standing on the deck. On days when only one or two showed up, she'd get in, and "swim laps with a kick board, and talk."

Swimmers wore flotation belts for the first couple years. Then one swimmer decided to abandon the belt for a more rigorous cardio workout, and others followed suit. Average daily attendance now is 10-15 swimmers.

Regulars rise to the challenge of inclement weather. They know the pool water is heated to 80 degrees, and only once have they endured a weather-related cancellation (lightning threat). But Wendy Jacobs says when air temperature dips below freezing "you may have to really force yourself to jump into the steamy pool."

"My first day in class, in January this year, the air temperature on my car gauge was 28 degrees. I could not believe that I was going swimming in subfreezing weather!" says Patti Witalice. Dana Farkas adds, "The best feeling is when it is the middle of winter, in the 20's or low 30's outside, maybe even rain and wind...getting through the workout and then going for a hot shower and off to Starbucks."

Benefits seem to outweigh the challenges, climate-wise or otherwise. In addition to weight loss, muscle tone and post-surgical recovery, regulars cite the friendship and camaraderie they've felt inside and outside the pool. Robin Bradley sums it up: "Rain or shine, being outside in the Soda pool beats being in a gym any day."

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