

Local seniors train to become physical fitness ambassadors

By Mia R. Cortez
Editor

Maj. Gen. James Maloney (Ret.), 74, is currently training for a very important role. Along with 29 other seniors over the age of 60, Maloney is on his way to becoming a physical fitness ambassador for the city. A new program called Physical Fitness in the Golden Age, under the UTEP Department of Kinesiology and funded by a grant from the Paso del Norte Health Foundation Ageless Health Initiative, is aiming to turn the participating seniors into ambassadors of successful aging.

Maloney said he was "reasonably physically active" before being recruited for the program – he would ride his bike about 40 miles a week.

But since January, Maloney has trained with the other 29 participants three days a week for about 75 minutes a day – weight training and other cardiovascular exercises included.

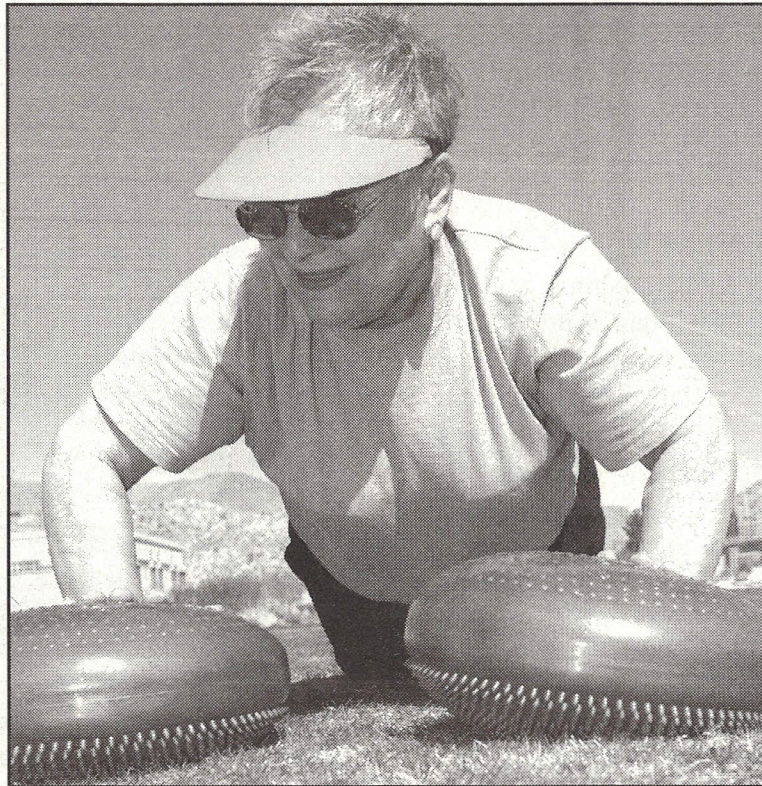
"This demands a lot of

Fitness in the Golden Age, said the 30 participants were chosen out of a pool of 200 applicants.

"We advertised and the interested applicants came to UTEP and we had a series of orientations and gathered specific information about their health, personality, history," Dorgo said. "We had a very specific scoring program related to the selection process because we wanted the best successful aging individuals to be our ambassadors. We are not only training them to become healthier and more physically fit, but during the training session we are actually teaching them how to train others – they will not be certified personal trainers – but people able to motivate and supervise others."

And for the fall semester, the 30 participants must recruit 60 more participants to continue with the program, Dorgo said, noting that the projective plan is to double participation in this way each semester.

The ambassador trainees



Carmen Searns does push-ups as part of her three day a week training to become a physical fitness ambassador.

tional components provided to the UTEP Kinesiology students who are acting as trainers for the current participants, Dorgo said.

"Kinesiology major undergrad students are training the seniors on a 1 to 2 basis," he said. "Training sessions serve as fieldwork experience for senior students, allowing them to

tell how the program is affecting them in terms of fitness results, it has been a slow and steady progress – and he already has two friends in mind for fall recruitment.

"I think one of the most important things at this point is that I am beginning to believe I really can improve, and I believe that is a sign and an important step for anybody in their later stages of life."

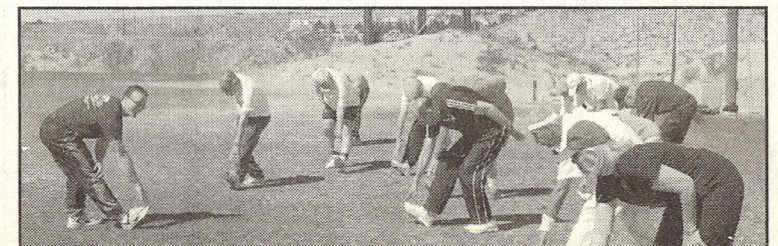
Meanwhile, Dorgo is moving forward with plans to make the program something that will impact many seniors in the region.

"By our plans, in a couple of years, our program will become the most significant and largest senior citizen exercise program in El Paso," he said.

For more information on Physical Fitness in the Golden Age, call 747-7222.

Photos by Stacy Kendrick
Basically they will all face this as the population of El Paso grows."

Maloney said although he feels it is still too early to



different muscles in your body, as compared with any single sport like bicycling," he said.

And he said he realizes now how beneficial the well-rounded group training can be.

"I was just individually doing my own thing, but I really see it was something I needed, it provides a disciplined framework, close to your maximum level (of potential). Plus it's a fun group of people with whom to work and we are all in the same boat, so just peer pressure causes you to do your best. It gives me a discipline that I needed in personal fitness training."

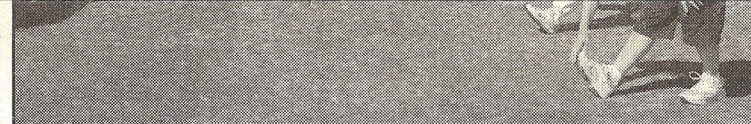
Dr. Sandor Dorgo, director and creator of Physical

are currently training in the UTEP Swimming and Fitness Center, but one of the program's goals is to have their own facility within one year, Dorgo said.

"Our own 24-hour facility is on the drawing table and will be available hopefully by spring," Dorgo said. "The grant money is for one year, with the opportunity to reapply depending on the success of the program. But the other facility will be paid for by UTEP internal grants – and will be a multi-purpose research facility, for training for various populations and all ages."

Yet another key aspect to the program is the educa-

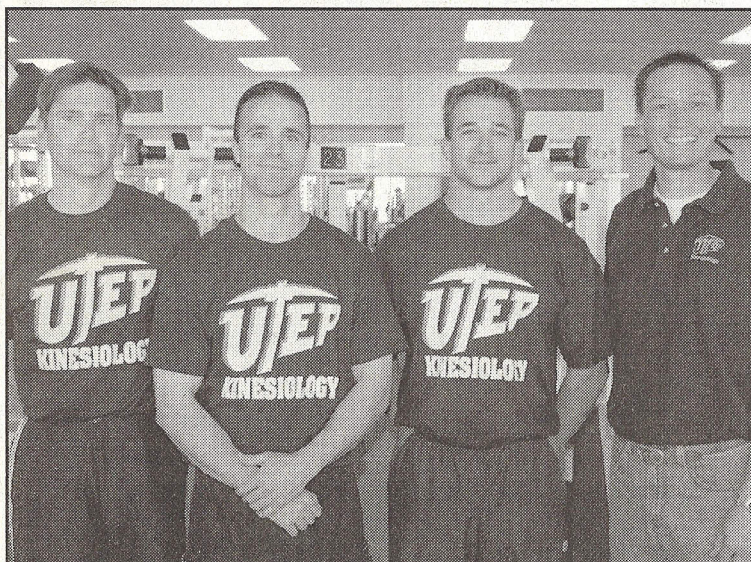
gain practical experience, which is the most challenging issue for grad students.



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