

# Program helps truckers lose 'spare tire'

By Ira Dreyfuss  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — An exercise program supported by the federal government and the trucking industry aims to eliminate spare tires on truckers.

The goal is to make interstate drivers slimmer, healthier — and safer.

The Rolling Strong Gym has opened at a truck stop in North Little Rock, Ark., and others are planned elsewhere along Interstate 40. The president of the Richardson, Texas, health club company and government and industry officials are watching to see if the truckers will work out.

"It's been long overdue," said Paul Todorovich of Myrtle Beach, S.C., an independent driver. "I'm really hoping it catches on and they flourish."

Transportation Department officials also hope so. "Research shows that drivers who are physically fit are safer drivers, and that exercise is key to getting people into healthier lifestyles," said Transportation Secretary Rodney E. Slater in a statement endorsing the concept.

About 70 percent of truckers are seriously overweight, said department transportation specialist Jerry Robin.

Excess weight creates a higher risk of heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes. And diabetes could cost long-haul truckers their jobs, Robin said. "When a driver becomes an insulin-using

diabetic, they are prohibited by our regulations from interstate commerce."

Overweight truckers also may be less safe on the road. A 1994 study found the accident rate doubled among seriously overweight drivers, Robin said.

Robin could not explain why being fit would make a driver safer, but Todorovich had a theory — exercise fights fatigue.

"When I am feeling fatigued and it's not time to pull over and take my 8-hour break, I might run around the rest areas or do jumping jacks to get the blood reoxygenated," Todorovich said in a telephone interview at the Rolling Strong Gym, in a Pilot Truck Stop.

Some big trucking companies find the fitness argument so compelling that they are opening fitness centers in their terminals, said Bill Rogers, research director for the American Trucking Association Foundation, an educational arm of the industry group.

The trouble is that truckers spend most of their time away from the terminals, Rogers said. "We have heard from many drivers that it is awfully difficult to have an exercise routine because there is no place to do that," he said.

That's where Rolling Strong comes in. It has a line of aerobics and weight equipment from StairMaster and is open 16 hours a day to accommodate truckers' schedules. Eventually, the club hopes to grow into a chain on

heavily traveled routes, to make it convenient for truckers to get in their workouts, said Jeff Abrams, Rolling Strong's president.

A driver on a tight schedule could fuel, stop at the rest room, get in a quick workout, grab food and still be back on the road in a half hour, Abrams said.

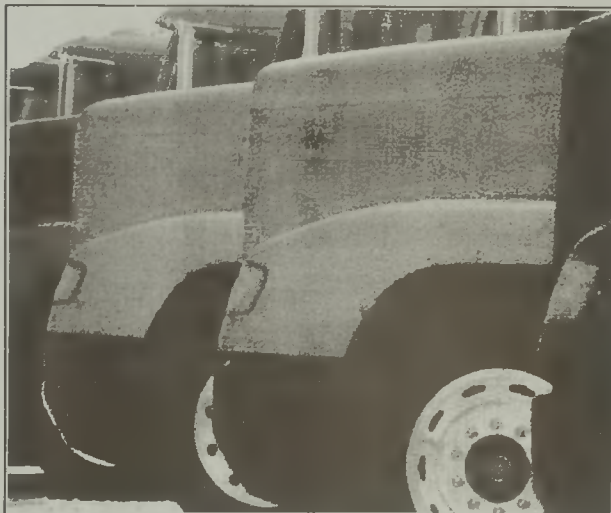
However, it's not known if truckers will flock to the club. They don't fit the typical demographic profile for health club members, which is middle class or higher and at least half female.

Abrams doubted he'll see truckers dashing onto the floor in Spandex outfits, but he said street clothes will do fine. He also noted that truckers, who spend long hours simply sitting, may be unfamiliar with weights and treadmills, and may have to be introduced to exercise. Rolling Strong has professional fitness staffers to help the truckers, he said.

Nor can Abrams be sure that truckers, after a long day of driving, even will see the health club as the place to go to relax. He hopes they do.

"For those on mandatory rests, it's a great way to unwind and gives them a place to kick back."

So DOT and the trucking foundation are funding the Truck Stop Fitness Facility Study. The study will provide 500 truckers with free memberships for a year, and track what use they may make of the clubs. If the concept proves itself, DOT will urge the development of more clubs, Robin said.



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## Pathology seeks answers in deaths

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handled by medical examiners result in autopsies.

"Our job is to fill in the gap for those cases where there is no physician to certify the death," Butts said during an interview in his cluttered office one floor below the autopsy room atop the Brinkhous-Bullitt building at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Stacks of papers and slides were scattered throughout the room. A white lab coat hung on a rack in the corner, and a large microscope rested on the floor next to a file cabinet. On the bookshelf was a bumper sticker reading "Medical Examiners Do It In The Public Interest."

A blackboard on the wall was cluttered with several drawings, including a heart, a motor vehicle, a knife, and a diagram of a knot that a little girl used to hang herself.

"We were questioning whether the child did it deliberately or

whether it could be some kind of accident," Butts explained. "This is a very obvious knot.... We ruled it a suicide."

Butts, head of the state child fatality prevention team, said some of the most difficult cases can be child abuse cases.

"It's hard to kill a healthy adult who doesn't want to die... without producing a lot of marks," he said. "But a small child can be very easily asphyxiated, and the degree of force required to produce significant trauma in a child is considerably less than that required in an adult."

Even when the cause of death is apparently obvious, things always aren't as they seem, Butts noted.

He recalled one man who died after being clubbed in the head with a cuedstick during a fight in a pool hall. The victim, drunk and groggy, was taken to a hospital but refused treatment. He was found dead a couple of hours later, and his alleged assailant

was arrested.

"It turned out that the guy actually had a heart attack," Butts said.

Seems the man had told a coworker earlier in the day that he was going to get drunk to forget about the pain in his chest.

## Language barriers dropping in Old South

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHARLESTON, S.C. — The new wave of immigration that has hit other parts of the country is finally showing up in the Old South as schools offer English as second-language courses and television ads target Spanish-speaking viewers.

But since the numbers of new immigrants is small, the cultural feuding that has affected some other areas is not a problem in Charleston, College of Charleston sociologist Von Bakinac says.

"As long as the numbers are small, people who define 'other' people find them more as being interesting and nonthreatening," she said. "You really don't have racial problems until a group becomes threatened by competition in the business or job market."

While over the centuries Jewish, Irish and German immigrants settled in the Lowcountry, the new immigrants are more likely to speak Spanish or Chinese.

According to 1995 census figures, the population in Charleston, Berkeley and Dorchester of people who are neither black nor white is roughly 14,000 people out of about 563,000.

The second most-popular foreign tongue spoken in Charleston County schools today is Cantonese Chinese. Spanish is the most popular.

In Berkeley County there are almost 2,500 Filipinos, many of whom settled in the area when Charleston Naval Base was open, while in North Charleston, Korean schoolchildren spend Saturdays learning Korean history at the Korean United Methodist Church.

The minister, the Rev. Tong Il Han, said marriages between U.S. servicemen and Korean women usually led to entire Korean families coming to this country.

The impact of the new wave of immigration is being felt in business as well. A North Charleston used-car dealer advertises an employee who is fluent in Spanish. A local lawyer also advertises she speaks Spanish.

On upper King Street, three Asian-owned businesses — two wig shops and a restaurant — recently opened in what traditionally has been a district of black-owned business.

Local police agencies have started keeping a list of people who speak foreign languages in case they are needed as interpreters in dangerous situations.

## COMMUNITY



Saturday mornings, Mary Hopkins-Navies lets local students transform her three McDonald's parking lots into car washes. Last year alone, the Clinton, Maryland, teens raised over \$8,000 for groups like the Boys and Girls Club. Mary also donates 10 yearly PSAT scholarships, offers weekly senior citizen bingo games, tutors math, and has helped raise over \$22,000 in the last two years for neighborhood causes.



As founder of the Jackson, Mississippi chapter of "100 Black Men," LeRoy Walker, Jr. serves as a role model by mentoring to disadvantaged black teens. As owner of 10 McDonald's and Chairman Elect of the Jackson Chamber of Commerce, LeRoy is dedicated to the economic development of his community and to improving local education and race relations. This former high school teacher and football coach is a true community activist, leader and visionary.



Louis C. Henry, Jr. is about "getting kids productive and giving them a chance." Louis meets with local police, clergy and schools to identify needy "at risk" teens in St. Paul, Minnesota, and helps teach them work and life skills at his four inner-city McDonald's. He's also Vice-Chairman of the Mayor's Workforce Development Council, supporting student programs which provide tutoring and jobs. Last summer alone, Louis' dedication and commitment helped find 1,000 jobs for the youth in his community.

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