

Warm way to work out

By Joleen Hammell/Enterprise correspondent

When Aaron Reiff's mother, Lorri Gill, talks about the indoor heated therapy pool at Physical Edge, the boy's eyes light up and a huge smile spreads across his face.

Aaron, 14 and an eighth-grader at Holmes Junior High, was born with cerebral palsy. In September, he underwent spinal fusion therapy to correct his scoliosis, which had caused a 90-degree bend in his spine. Several weeks ago, Aaron was cleared to begin warm-water therapy.

Aaron is assisted into the pool by a lift, and works with an instructor specializing in aquatic therapy and pediatrics. He started treatment two weeks ago to assess the range of movement in his arms, legs and shoulders, and will begin working to improve his flexibility.

"The pool takes a lot of weight off his body, and allows him to relax," said Aaron's father, Dave Gill. "With (cerebral palsy) kids, it's harder to move them and bathe them when they are really tight, so the more he can stretch out the easier it is to take care of him and the more comfortable he is."

After only four sessions, Lorri Gill already has seen improvement in her son's ability to move and relax.

"He stretched his legs more than he has in a long time," Gill said. "I could see from the first day this was really going to benefit him."

Gill herself has considered taking a warm-water therapeutic exercise course due to the toll everyday care for Aaron can take on her body.

"There is a lot of effort, and it can be exhausting to take care of him, but when I see him having a great time, it makes it worth it," Gill said. "We've been waiting a long time for a pool like this."

In addition to one-on-one therapy, Physical Edge offers three exercise classes conducted under the direction and supervision of occupational therapist Amy Snodgrass and occupational therapy assistant Debbie Eernisse.

"The primary purpose is to help treat neurological and orthopedic patients who don't have the ability to walk or move on their own," said Bud Cassell, physical

therapist and club president. The classes, he said, “allow you to exercise in a way you wouldn't be able to outside the water” because of the buoyancy and the 50 percent difference in weight bearing on muscles and joints.

Classes are designed to increase a person's range of motion, strength and flexibility, as well as improve balance and coordination, which patients experiencing neurological disorders find difficult when attempting land-based exercise.

“The pool makes it easier because it puts people in an environment where they are more confident and can move more freely without the fear of falling,” said Mat Moore, physical therapist and club vice president.

The pool measures 11-by-25-feet, with a depth of 4 to 4 1/2 feet, and is kept at a temperature of 90 degrees, which is warm enough to relax and move in comfortably.

“Any warmer or colder and it wouldn't have the same effect,” Cassell said.

Eernisse, one of two instructors, focuses on individualizing the exercises she teaches by providing variations of every movement.

“Anyone who comes can make it work,” Eernisse said.

Classes are available Tuesdays through Fridays at varying times.

Physical Edge has two fitness centers in Davis. The therapy pool, which debuted with the new center on Sept. 1, is at 1460 Drew Ave., Suite 200. Physical Edge still operates at its original site at 1970 Lake Blvd., Suite 4, in West Davis.

Monthly membership rates vary, and visitors may pay a \$10 fee to attend a class or use the pool. For more information, contact Marianne Moore at 753-9011 or visit www.physicaledge.net.

The Davis Athletic Club, at 1809 Picasso Ave., also provides aquatic exercise therapy, with 28 classes available per week in its larger, L-shaped pool, kept at 89 degrees in the winter, and three classes in its heated lap pool. The club is offering a free guest pass to try out a class.

For more information, contact Cindy Murphy at 753-5282, or access a full schedule of classes at www.daconline.com.

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