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Since Dick and Linda Mulvihill opened Eugene's National Academy of Artistic Gymnastics in September 1973, the club has become the most successful in the country.

A renovated Ford auto-body shop at 12th and Olive streets serves as the training center for the girls' program. A similar academy for boys, directed by Hideo Mizoguchi, has had a gym of its own since September 1980 located off 10th and Garfield streets.

But more importantly, the academy is one of the only programs of its kind in the United States, says Dick Mulvihill.

All but one of the girls in the "elite" group at the academy — those bound for national competition and the 1984 Olympics — are from outside of Oregon.

The training is expensive, in excess of \$200 a month. The team trains six days a week. Each athlete attends only a half day of school and trains all afternoon and into the evening.

And the cost of room and board more than doubles the expense for those from out of state.

The National Academy girls' dormitory is two large Eugene homes. Dick and Linda live with the girls in one, and Dick's 72-year-old mother supervises the other.

The heavy price tag for academy training has forced some students to leave, such as 1980 Olympian Tracee Talavera.

So Dick Mulvihill is looking for ways to subsidize the training of the young athletes and remain competitive in international competition.

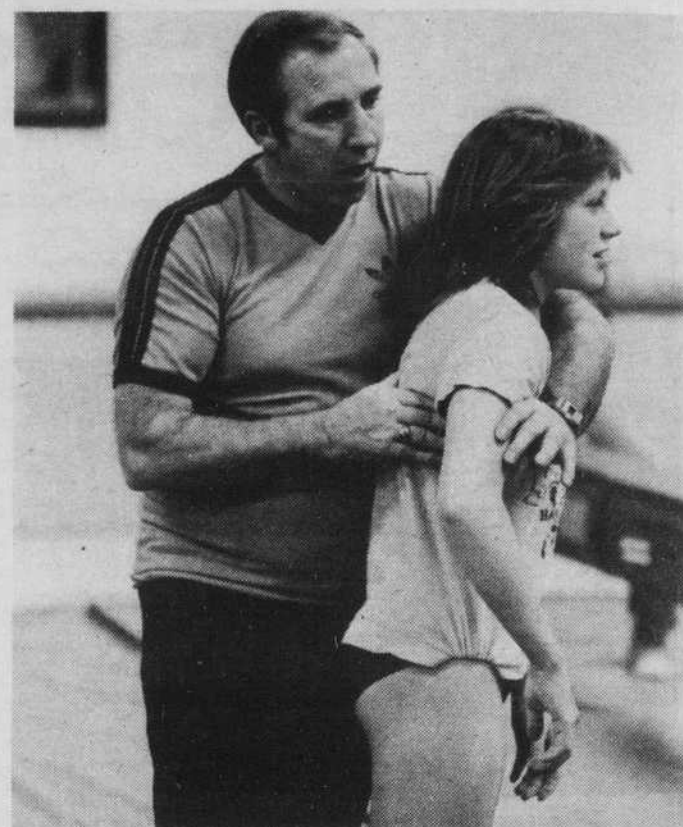
Revenues from the recreational portion of the academy's program help subsidize the organization, but costs are restrictive. So he plans to solicit contributions from local businesses and private foundations.

Dick Mulvihill envisions a network of similar Olympic training sites across the United States, but first he wants to financially establish his program in Eugene.

"Every coach in the country should come spend a week here," says academy instructor Tony Ammons. The academy's coaching staff is young and enthusiastic.

"Enthusiasm generates enthusiasm," Ammons explains, which prompts coaching colleague Val Neilson to add, "I can't even call what I do a job."

"I envy those kids. They're special kids," Neilson



Academy director Dick Mulvihill assists one of his students.

says.

Why are these coaches — who just took a pay cut — so thrilled about Eugene's version of an Olympic training camp? They work six days a week — officially, that is — and travel to competitions on weekends. The only time Ammons has time to himself is "the six hours or so that I sleep every night."

Ammons says he decided to move toward a gymnastics career when he was teaching a child how to tumble. "She learned a cartwheel, smiled and gave me a hug. Although it took months for her to learn, it was a big accomplishment."

And Ammons isn't going to give up gymnastics in the near future, either. "My goal — at about 30 or 32 — is to have my own gym." But he admits that "10 years is a long time to spend in one sport."

Continued on Page 4B

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