

# HEALTH

## Local Gym Goes Healthy and Green

On  Street

### Exercise bikes generate electricity

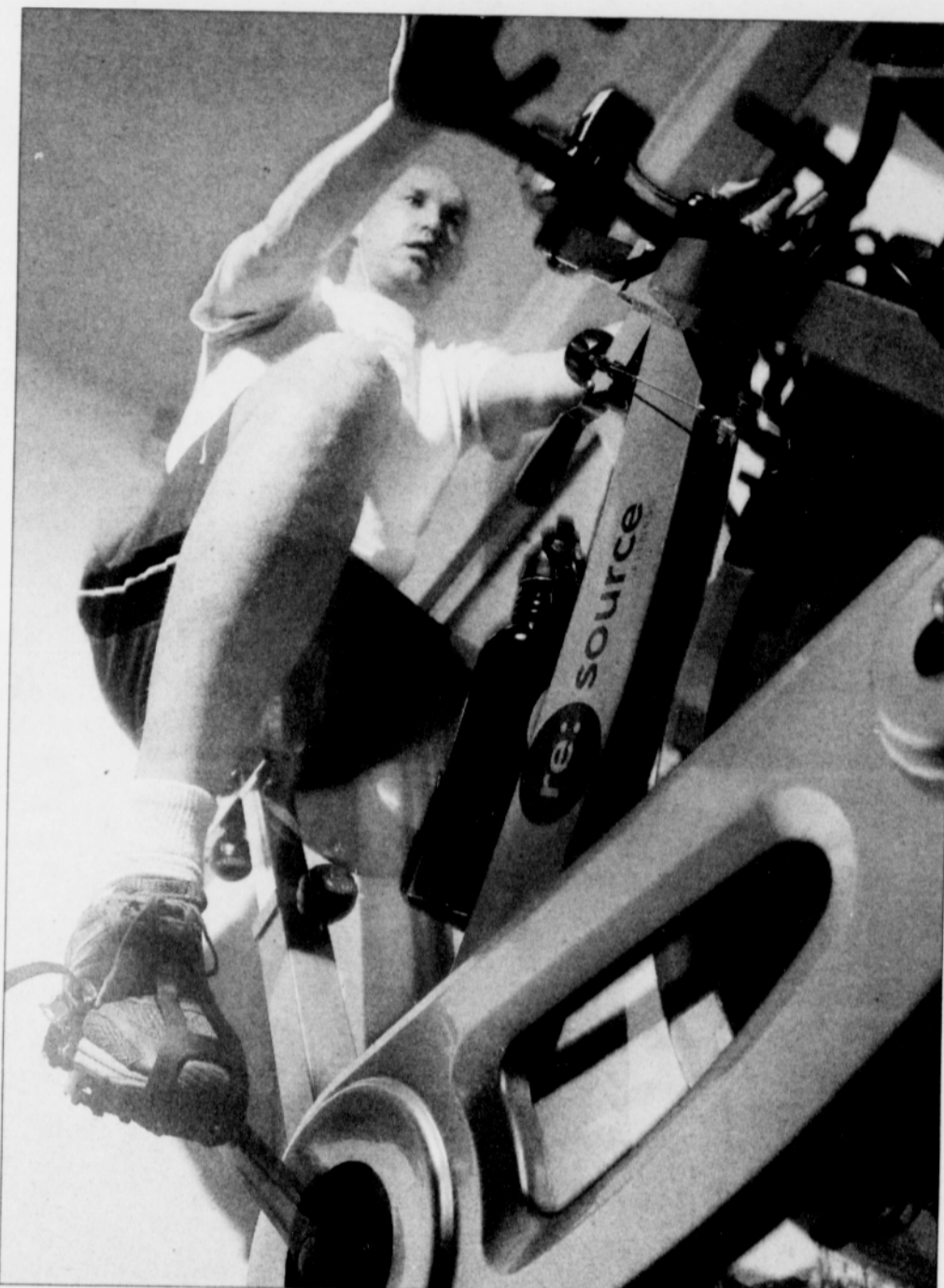
(AP) -- Reddening, a rivulet of sweat running across her cheek, Amy McCullough hunched over the stationary bike, pumped her legs like crazy and began producing serious power — enough watts to run a flat-panel TV and a ceiling fan.

She thrust her arms upward and exclaimed: "Oh, 180!"

And, with that, her electrical output drooped. The generator attached to her exercise machine slowed, and the digital readout from the device on the handlebars fell below 100 watts.

The transient burst was a personal best for the 43-year-old legal aid lawyer who works out five days a week at a storefront fitness center on Northeast Alberta Street where members on exercise machines fitted with compact generators can burn calories and generate electricity at the same time.

Their workouts satisfy a modicum of the electrical draw at the 3-year-old Green Microgym. More important,



Adam Boesel workouts on a stationary bike hooked up to a generator at the Green Microgym on Northeast Alberta Street. (AP photo)

they satisfy a demand among its 200 members to be fit in a way that fits Portland's green-indie-local ethos.

The 3,000-square-foot gym aims for a neighborhood trade. It features solar panels, recycled toilet paper, renewable-source flooring and lots

of reminders on the wall about turning off lights, fans and TVs.

"I was really attracted to the idea that it would be green," said McCullough, who joined shortly after the gym opened in 2008. "I could go in and generate electricity.

How cool is that?"

It has occurred to many exercisers during long stretches on machines that it would be cool to turn sweat into watts. In recent years, a few tinkerers and entrepreneurs have brought the idea to market.

So far they have but a teensy sliver. The two leading startups sell equipment to retrofit existing bikes and elliptical trainers, and each reports hooking up about 1,000 machines. An executive of one company estimates that American fitness centers house 8 million to 10 million machines that could generate power.

They don't, though. Like much in energy that's efficient or alternative, from plug-in cars to compact fluorescents, initial capital outlays are steep. Absent a subsidy, or a quantifiable green marketing rationale, the returns on investment don't come quickly, if at all.

Kurt Broadhag, a Los Angeles consultant to health clubs and an advocate of greening them, says it appears the payback period for electricity-generating exercise equipment is about 15 years — two to three times the machines' life span.

"The only sense it makes is in educating people in taking care of the environment," he said.

When Adam Boesel opened the Green Microgym in Portland's artsy, gentrifying Alberta district, he figured on a market among people already educated about the environment.

The former teacher from Seattle looked at Portland, a city that, when

cut, bleeds green. It's regularly in top 10 lists for bicycle and mass transit commuting, recycling, composting, energy-efficient buildings and so on.

"When I was researching Portland businesses, they all were talking about sustainability — all the good ones," he said.

He's gotten a lot of publicity about the technology — helpful for a business that opened on credit-card financing a few weeks before the economy tanked.

But the machines, he said, are "just the shiny wrapper on a package, which is energy efficiency," something gym members such as Martha Jones take seriously.

"Whoops, I have to turn off the lights," she said at the end of an interview in the gym's basement studio, dashing back inside.

Prominent in the gym are signs that explain how to use the individual, adjustable controls for lights and fans. A wall-mounted button connects to a remote device that allows the cable boxes to be shut down, not just put on standby and using 29 watts when the flat-panel TVs are not in use.

Jones is an Intel engineer who likes seeing her workout quantified in watts. But it's not primarily the electricity that attracts her to the Green Microgym.

"It's just really supportive," she said. "If you have somebody who knows you, who knows your name, they will keep you moving. I know for sure I will cheat right and left on my workout without that."

### For Your Health

#### Preventing Teen Pregnancy

BY DR. JAMES N. MARTIN JR.



Teen pregnancy impacts hundreds of thousands of families in the U.S. each year. The good news: Teen births have fallen to

an all-time low. The bad news: More than 2,000 teens still get pregnant each day.

The US has the highest teen preg-

nancy rate of any developed nation—overall, three in 10 women will become pregnant before age 20.

Nearly half (45.9 percent) of high school girls have had sex at least once, putting them at risk of pregnancy. A sexually active teen that is not using contraception has a 90 percent chance of becoming pregnant within a year. Emphasizing the benefits of waiting to have children is the focus of National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month in May.

Teens may not readily recognize the long-term costs of early sex and parenthood. One-third of teen pregnancies end in abortion. Of those who decide to carry a pregnancy to term, few teens choose adoption—90 percent raise the child themselves.

Adolescent moms are significantly less likely to receive their high-school diploma than those who wait to have children. They are more

likely to live in poverty, receive public assistance, and have long periods of welfare dependency.

When compared to women who delay having children until their early 20s, teen mothers are much more likely to remain unmarried and raise their children without a partner. Teen fathers are also less likely to finish high school and are more likely to have lower paying jobs than their peers who have children later.

Children of teen parents are also affected. Pregnant teens often experience pregnancy complications due to the lack of prenatal care. Teen moms may not be getting the proper nutrition and may use alcohol, drugs, and other substances that are harmful to a fetus. Nearly 10 percent of babies born to teen mothers are low birth weight. Later in life, the daughters of teen mothers are at high risk of having children in their adolescent years, and their sons have a

higher chance of being incarcerated than the sons of older mothers.

As parents and adults, we should continue to encourage behaviors that have contributed to the drop in teenage pregnancy rates. These include abstinence or the delaying the start of sexual activity and consistent use of condoms and hormonal contraceptives among teens who are having sex. Studies have also shown that parents can be very influential in discouraging teens from early sex and pregnancy. Parents who clearly convey their own values toward sex, relationships, contraception, and pregnancy can have a huge impact on how their teens respond to sexual situations.

Find more information on teen sexuality and pregnancy at [www.thenationalcampaign.org](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org).

Dr. James N. Martin Jr. is the new president of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

#### Harris Photography

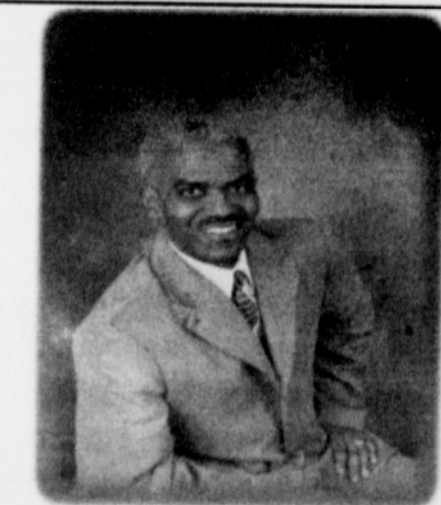
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