

AROUND THE VILLAGES

SAVANNAH SPORTS POOL



Photos by Michael Fortuna / Daily Sun

Larry Wood leads some stretching routines during a water aerobics class Monday afternoon at Savannah Center.

Low impact, high energy

Larry Wood leads a challenging water aerobics class three times a week

THE VILLAGES –

Barbara Hays has had several surgeries on her knee, and Larry Wood's water aerobics class has helped her through the recovery.

Hays started coming to the class in 2007 to get ready for her surgery in 2008. Within several weeks after surgery, Hays was back in the water.

However, in April, Hays was in a golf cart accident, hurting her knee and rotator cuff.

She went back to the operating room to have those things repaired, and was using a walker and a knee brace afterward.

Now she only uses the brace during high-energy portions of the exercise session.

"Larry runs a great class," said Hays, a Cottages at Summerchase resident. "It's challenging, which is great. We have lots of laughter."

Hays was one of several residents who came to Savannah Sports Pool on Monday afternoon for the first of three sessions held every week.

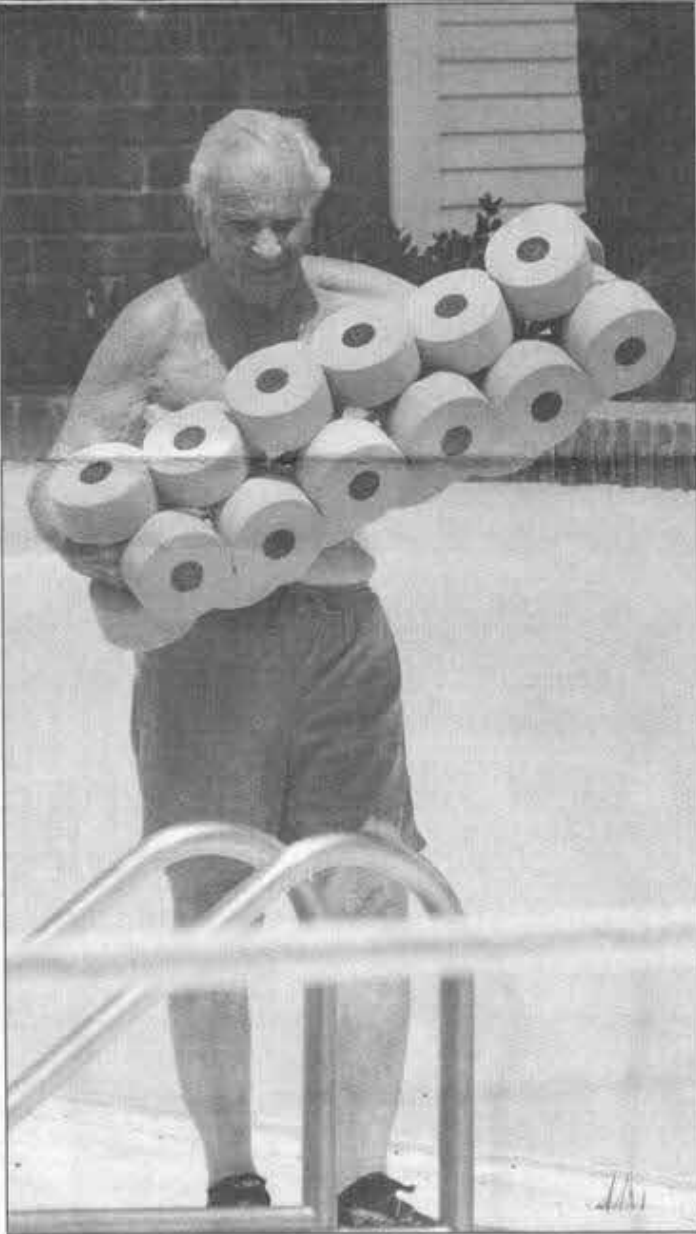
Wood's class is low-impact because the water protects the body from stress.

"We work on every area of the body," Wood said. "We start at the top and go down. It really keeps you fit and loosened up."

But it is not a gentle swim through the pool.

"It's a challenging course," Wood said. "I challenge you to do better. We never stop."

Some of the exercises include cross-country skiing, jogging, jumping jacks, rocking horses, and the Incredible Hulk (flexing one's arms



Seth Rhodes carries out water weights that will be used during Wood's class.

underwater).

The group meets whether it is sunny or raining, even if the temperature is on the cool side.

"The only thing we stop for is lightning," Wood said.

Seth Rhodes met Wood two years ago, and Wood mentioned that he taught a water aerobics class. Rhodes decided to give it a try.

"It's the most strenuous (workout) in The Villages," said Rhodes, who lives in the Village of Virginia Trace. "I'm 85, and I can keep up with all the 'youngins.' (The workout) really keeps you young.

"It's the highlight of my week. I feel rejuvenated, exhilarated."

About five years ago, one of the recreation directors

Water aerobics

Larry Wood's water aerobics class meets at 2 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays at Savannah Sports Pool. For information, call Wood at 259-8950 or visit larobics.orgfree.com.

was leading a water aerobics class. She was moving on to another position, so she asked the residents if anyone wanted to take over.

"(My wife) said, 'Larry'll do it,'" Wood said.

Wood, who never had taught anything before, found himself memorizing the exercise routine.

"I lost sleep for a couple of weeks," Wood said. "The first session went well. I remembered everything. (The class) was so well put together by the previous instructor."

He started out with 20 or 30 people, and now 60 to 70 people enter the pool at each session.

"Word has gotten around," Wood said.

Wood first got into water aerobics in 2004 when he moved to The Villages.

He already had an exercise regimen under his belt that included running three miles a day.

"I wanted to find something that works," said Wood, a Village of Belle Aire resident.

He found a high-energy water aerobics class, and after the first session, "I exerted myself. It took a couple of months to get up to speed," he said. "It was as good a workout as (going to the gym)."

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