

## Great-grandmother inspiration as leader of exercise class

A FFY lifeguard kept watch from pool side, but Dinkins, wearing a bright blue one-piece suit and pink lipstick, also closely monitored her students, mostly women over age 60.

The white-haired greatgrandmother provided guidance and encouragement when needed and made sure everyone understood the exercises and kept up with the routines.

Never mind that she turned 90 in February.

"Dotty is a role model and definitely an inspiration to all of us," said class member Sandy McCoy, 66, a retired nurse.

McCoy believes the class keeps her flexible and helps her maintain a good range of motion,

"I wanted to keep in shape. You have to keep moving," Mc-Coy said.

"She's such a special lady," added class regular Carolyn Goss, also a retired nurse.

"She took me under her wing and is such an inspiration at 90 years old."

The class meets three mornings a week at 8 a.m. when the women exchange coats and sweaters for swimsuits and take part in an invigorating morning workout.

Age doesn't matter to Dinkins, who is convinced the class can help women of all ages wanting to remain limber and flexible, including those with hip, knee or back problems and arthritis.

Dinkins is proof that a regimen of pool exercises can keep a body moving smoothly on land.

During each class, Dinkins stretches her arms over her head, swirls her legs in a figure eight, twists her body side to side and lifts herself up on the pool's edge,

The hour-long class includes constant motion, stretching and exercising everything from the neck to the ankles.

Dinkins said any exercise done in water, even simple walking, is three times more taxing than when done on land, and therefore, requires more energy.

"The exertion is less stressful, however, due to the water's buoyancy," she said.

Dinkins is so passionate about water exercise, she encouraged FFY leaders to contract with her to teach the class.

She learned about exercising in the water from a friend who taught water aerobics when she lived in a Columbus condominium complex.

She also followed the advice of her doctor after having two knees replaced.

"I caught on and liked it," Dinkins' said.

Dinkins' husband of 68 years, Paul, said his wife has been enthusiastic about the class from the beginning, and it's helped her keep up with her favorite activities.

"She's out in the garden right now," he said on a recent sunny afternoon.

"I'm just delighted that she does this. I'm real proud of her."

He also encouraged his wife's passion by putting together a tape to be used in the class, mixing his wife's vocal instructions with appropriate songs.

"He listened to the rhythm and picked out the songs," Dinkins said.

Such familiar favorites as "King of the Road" and "Moon River" set the mood and beat for classes.

#### Cancer survivor

Dinkins credits water exercise with helping her stay active and young at heart. She also is careful about the foods she eats.

"I try to take care of myself," she said, noting that she and her husband also take short walks.

Dinkins had added motivation to focus on her health after a bout with cancer five years ago.

She was forced to stop leading the class for five months while she had chemotherapy and needed recovery time, but was glad when she could get back in the pool.

Dinkins said people sometimes tell her they don't like to exercise, but once they get in the habit, they don't want to skip class.

"They tell me if they don't come to class they start feeling stiff," Dinkins said.

Since many of the women have had hip or knee replacement surgery, the class offers them a way to exercise that is gentle on their joints.

Dinkins prefers to play down her longevity as an exercise leader, instead eagerly expressing her enthusiasm for water exercise.

"It will not only improve your physical strength, endurance and flexibility," she said, "but also your mental and emotional self."

Class members say the time together with other women also makes exercising fun.

"We like to talk," said Goss. "It's a social time for us too."

And at 90 and still active and feeling good, Dinkins is the best advertisement her class has.



**Dotty Dinkins**  
**WHO:** Columbus resident who leads "Aquarobics" class at Foundation for Youth.  
**FAMILY:** Husband of 68 years, Paul; sons, Doug, Greg and Phil; two grandchildren; three great-grandchildren.  
**CLASS:** Meets from 8 to 9 a.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday at FFY pool. Costs \$30 a month. Information: 348-4555.

