

# A place where women get in shape



The Leader/John Patillo

Shayna Bayard enjoys a muscle building workout at the Sisters In Shape (SIS) gym fitness facility which is based in Logan, but very accessible to women living in the neighborhoods of West Oak Lane, Mt. Airy and Cheltenham who want to get in shape in order to look good for the summer and for health reasons as well.

## Sisters In Shape helps ladies develop exercise programs

BY ARLENE EDMONDS

CORRESPONDENT

Temperatures are climbing slowly. Soon those who live in Mount Airy, West Oak Lane and Cheltenham will be able to shed their outerwear for at least several months. While this will be a welcome relief to many, for some taking off the layers of clothes is something they dread. This is because the winter coats and bulky clothing has been hiding their burgeoning midriffs, flabby thighs, and sagging upper arms.

The good news is that it is April. With the official start of summer still over 10 weeks away, there is still time to get that taunt swim-suit figure. If there is one message from Sisters In Shape (SIS) it is that the time has come for those who want to attain that

bikini figure to get moving.

The Logan-based SIS is owned by New Orleans native Melanie Marchand. She is gearing dozens of Northwest Philadelphia area women for physical activity and lounging on the sunny beaches in their swimwear. This she does at 1320 Somerville Ave. at her state-of-the-art facility.

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Melanie Marchand of SIS

"A good exercise program should have five key components," said Marchand, who left her corporate chemical engineering career to establish SIS nine years ago. "They are strength and flexibility, cardiovascular exercises for your heart and to burn fat, strength exercises to build muscles so that one will not hurt yourself and have the strength to increase intensity, good nutrition to support the workout of the muscles and muscle repair, and getting plenty of

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

rest because this aids the body in restoring itself. We need a solid six to eight hours of sleep a night for overall health and wellbeing."

Marchand suggested that one have a plan, a goal, a formula and a program for shaping up for the summer. First, the plan should be one that can fit into one's lifestyle, according to the SIS owner. Secondly, one should set a goal of what is to be achieved whether it is weight loss, weight management, stress reduction, a healthier body, to be more toned or fit, or any combination of these.

Thirdly, one should choose a formula. This is where a little legwork comes in, said Marchand. She recommended researching the various types of programs. This ranges from visiting several gyms, looking at exercise videos checked out from the library, watching various cable and other television workout programs, and learning about nutrition.

"I do not feel that fad diets last in the long term," says Marchand. "If you want long term success then you have to choose a formula that you will stay with. You have to have realistic expectations because often people want rapid change. If there is a program that promises you will lose 10 will lose 10

pounds in a week, that program is probably unsafe. It's best to lose the weight slowly through exercise and good nutrition."

Furthermore, Marchand pointed to the benefits of having a personal trainer. Recently, national reports have been released that shows that one can even be skinny and be classified as obese if they have too much body fat.

Consequently, Marchand said that a personal trainer will assess one's body measurements, body mass, cardiovascular endurance, core strength and flexibility, and nutritional habits. They can then create a program that is tailor made for the individual. If one cannot afford a personal trainer, Marchand suggests reading fitness magazines or purchasing a video.

At the SIS campus they use geometric shapes to help members customize their classes for their needs. Circles are cardiovascular classes, squares are strength building, and triangles represent flexibility. Marchand encourages members to have three circles, two squares, and one triangle a week. Courses range from aerobics to line dancing, salsa dance, African dance, belly dancing, basic stretching, self-defense, qigong, yoga, and even jump rope. Her facility further offers spinning for high energy athletes.

Marchand further recom-

mended not using the bathroom scale to assess fitness progress. She said that the way one's clothing fits is the best barometer whether one is gaining weight, especially in the wrong places.

"As far as the scale I would say do not use one," says Marchand. "If you have to use a scale then use it only about every six to eight weeks. The best tool to use is a tape measure. You can measure your waist, hips, thighs and upper arms at the midpoint between the shoulder and elbow. That's a better indicator that you are slimming down or staying in shape than the scale. Since a good workout involves strength exercises you may not lose that much weight. This is because muscle weighs more than fat."

Once one does start a program initial weight loss will be immediately evident, says the experts. Yet as the body gets used to the workout the weight will stabilize. Consequently, if one wants to lose weight they will have to increase their workout to get those benefits.

"Your program needs to be progressive," says Marchand. "It should involve strength so that you can push harder. At some point your body will get used to the workout and it won't be as effective anymore. You have to increase your resistance to

get more results. You have to change something. Change creates changes. If you want to create something different in your body then you have to be willing to change and keep changing what you are doing."

There are many other by-products to getting fit beyond just how one looks, according to the experts. Marchand is quick to point out the health and wellness benefits of moving the body. Back in the 1990's when studies were released that African Americans were dying of an alarming rate from heart disease and other ailments prevalent in the community, Marchand did not feel that this was being adequately addressed. No one at that time was really talking about the physical changes those in the Black community needed to make to reverse this trend, she says.

At that time Marchand had just received her MBA from the University of Pennsylvania in 1991. She returned to the corporate world working in corporate planning, product management, technical sales, and marketing management. Previously she was a production and efficiency engineer for Union Carbide Corporation and Air Products and Chemicals, Inc.

For more information on SIS call 215-457-TONE (8663) or log on to [www.sistersinshape.com](http://www.sistersinshape.com).