



Kristan Mack, Kids Get Fit instructor, leads her class in a move she calls "circles," in which the hands are rotated in circles in front of the body. While in the circle, the students take turns deciding what exercise to do next.

MIRROR PHOTOS BY C. JULIA NELSON

## Fitness Program Teaches Youngsters Importance Of Healthy Diet, Exercise

BY C. JULIA NELSON  
MIRROR REPORTER

Adults are not the only ones who should pay close attention to staying physically fit.

Even young kids need to have an understanding of fitness and how to make healthy lifestyle choices. In a class called Kids Get Fit, a junior Jazzercise program offered at the Heart and Soul Wellness Center, 4444 Heatherdowns Blvd., children have the opportunity to learn the basics of fitness and healthy eating while enjoying new friendships and getting exercise.

Sherri Koback, owner of Heart and Soul Fitness, first promoted the class at local elementary schools to get the ball rolling. She said the idea is to encourage the kids to commit to staying healthy and fit.

"We want to encourage them to make healthier choices because it does make you feel better," she said.

She added that the class also serves as a confidence-builder for the youth.

"It's a great way to build self-confidence, especially for the younger kids," Koback said.

During each session, the children receive a healthy snack, a water bottle and nutri-

tional handouts.

"We keep track of the fruits and vegetables that they eat throughout the week," she said, "but it's not a diet."

Koback said a poster board system where kids get to post a sticker by their name if they ate veggies has encouraged the children to eat more veggies and fruit.

All snacks aside, the children work on dance routines, relay races and light-hearted competition. Kids Get Fit instructor Kristan Mack said the key is to keep the kids motivated and in constant motion.

"I try to keep them moving," Mack said. "The goal is to make them aware of fitness and to give them an idea of what a lifelong thing it can be and how important it is in life."

She said in addition to exercise, it gets the children counting and thinking, especially when it comes down to the Jazzercise routines.

"It's about trying to get the word out about the importance of fitness for kids," Koback said.

Connie Szakovits of Toledo enrolled her daughter Chloe, 7, in Kids Get Fit over the spring. She said she found it to be a great outlet for her

daughter.

"Things got a little too sedentary this winter," Szakovits said. "This is a nice way to get Chloe the exercise she needs."

The cost to participate in the program is \$50.00 per child and \$30.00 for additional siblings. The fee covers the cost of snacks, games, a certificate and a T-shirt in addition to the weekly one-hour classes.

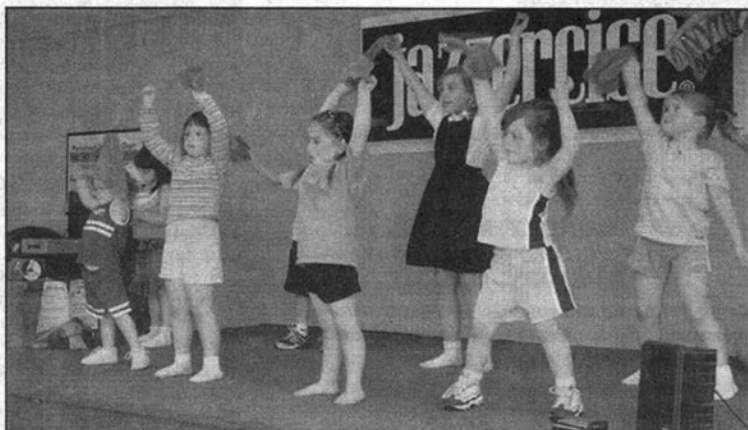
"We had such good feedback about it that we're going to do a couple more through the summer," Koback said.

One summer session of Kids Get Fit will begin on Thursday, June 23 and run for six weeks for kids ages 4 to 12. Kids ages 4 to 7 will meet at 10:00 a.m., and the 8- to 12-year-olds will meet at 10:45, both for an hour each Thursday.

Other sessions may be scheduled at a later date.

The Kids Fitness Camp will run July 11 to 15 from 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. for kids ages 4 to 12. The \$50.00 cost for the camp includes a healthy lunch, T-shirt and water bottle.

Registration for either the camp or summer class is available by calling (419) 385-9777 or by visiting [www.toledobeartandsoul.com](http://www.toledobeartandsoul.com).



Children in the Kids Get Fit program offered by the Heart and Soul Wellness Center rehearse a dance with their washrags to the classic song "Car Wash."



Seven-year-old Chloe Szakovits of Toledo gets some air time during the Kids Get Fit program at the Heart and Soul Wellness Center on Heatherdowns. During the junior Jazzercise program, kids participate in relays, games and routines, and get a healthy snack and water bottle at each session.