

Frances Gross, Bodymenders Physical Trainer

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column the week of March 1, 2019)

Another long-time exercise guru in Oak Ridge is Frances Gross. She gives the following reasons for what she has done over the years to help others with their physical health, "Several years ago I was dealing with major emotional trauma in my life and was praying for an answer to relieve the anxiety. The Lord sent me to Charlotte Hensley's exercise class at the Civic Center.

"After a couple of weeks of going through organized exercise and releasing the endorphins into my system I began to have my energy return and start to pull out of the depression that plagued me. I went on to become one of the first fitness instructors for Charlotte's Energizing Exercises company.

"After working for Charlotte for many months I realized that it was time for me to move out on my own and offer my own version of exercise to the community. From Body Recall I added an aerobics program, Pilates, Yoga and a class for seniors that incorporated Body Recall into what I now offer as Body Menders for Seniors.

"I also offered a program for children at the Children's Museum summer program. I have continued to teach all of these years because I see the results every day in the bodies of all of the people that are in my classes - either verbally or physically. It is very rewarding to know that I have been able to help some of the issues they are dealing with.

"All of my classes are different and bring a special satisfaction and love to my heart. I will continue to teach as long as the Lord deems that I am able. Thank you, Charlotte, for giving me my start!"

Here is what Miriam Wankerl had to say about Frances: "Exercise plays a major role in aging gracefully. Frances Gross began her exercise program called Body Recall at the Y before moving to a little room in the back of a loading dock at the local hospital thirty-four years ago. Today she continues classes now named Body Menders at the Children's Museum, ORICL, FUMCOR, and National Fitness Center. Knowledgeable about the human body, Frances understands the role exercise plays in aging gracefully.

"Her program provides a total body workout for anyone, for any fitness level, at any age. Although simple and accessible to all, the exercises when done accurately and regularly are challenging. The day after a seventeen-year-old exchange student visited the class with mostly older people, she was surprised how much she enjoyed the class and how sore unused muscles were. Frances makes us believe in exercise.

"Designed for adults, her exercise program includes slow, controlled movements to deliver benefits for all: athletes, diabetics, heart patients, the obese, those recovering from knee or hip replacements, injury or illness. Using an educational approach to physical fitness, she teaches how to incorporate fitness and proper movement skills into daily lifestyles.

"Frances neither demands nor pushes anyone. Instead, she guides, encourages, and celebrates improvement. Always tactful and kind, she provides helpful suggestions tailored to personal needs. Classes begin with a warm up and stretching before beginning arm and leg movements while using bands, optional weights, wands, or balls while sitting or standing using a chair for stability.

"Another beneficial aspect of the class is balance work along with learning how to get on and off the floor. In each session of her exercise program, she incorporates music that invigorates at the beginning and soothes at the end. A caring friend, she encourages social interaction and is a good listener.

"Because of her openness, a camaraderie exists among her participants. We laugh a lot. "She can talk effortlessly during a Pilates routine when the rest of us are puffing for air."

"Frances is far more than an exercise instructor; she is committed to a healthy and active lifestyle for all. She energetically and faithfully serves our community.

Frances was initially certified by Charlotte Hensley of Energizing Exercises in 1982 to teach aerobics. She has also been certified by NDEITA, National Dance Instructors Association-Jazz Dancercise and

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Aerobic Dance Training, Instructors Training Clinic & Choreo-Aerobics, Fitour Step Aerobics, Fitour Pilates, Fitour Hatha Yoga and has attended the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports.

Her Body Menders Aerobics Program offers a wide variety of low to medium impact aerobics (your choice). You will have fun while you bring your heart rate to a safe zone - improving stamina, energy and strength with cardio work, band and weight training. Floor work is combined with Pilates and Yoga movements that will condition, tone and shape your body fast! Stress reduction is a specialty. Pilates is a total body conditioning mat exercise method combining flexibility and strength from both Eastern & Western cultures. It is for all ages, shapes and sizes. The emphasis is on correct breathing as you execute the movements.

Frances has taught the Body Recall program in the Oak Ridge area since 1985 and received her exemplary certification in June 1987. She was also awarded an Outstanding Leadership Award in 2002 by Body Recall Headquarters. Frances has conducted classes, hosted workshops, held numerous video reviews and has recertified numerous times to maintain leadership capabilities.

Body Recall was founded by Dorothy Chrisman of Berea, KY in 1978 for senior adults but is a program that delivers to all ages and all body conditions. Because of the slow, controlled movements it delivers benefits for the most toned athlete as well as the diabetic, the heart patient, the overweight, those recovering from illness and injury, those in nursing homes and wheel chairs and especially for those who are sedentary. Body Recall is an educational approach to physical fitness teaching students proper movement skills and how to incorporate lifetime fitness into their daily lives to upgrade their quality of life.

This slow movement allows a student to go deep into the body massaging blood vessels causing them to deliver blood to all parts of the body. The exercises are simple, accessible to all and possible to do. They are challenging because they must be done accurately, patiently, consistently and regularly. Use of a chair allows you to devote your full attention to the movements while you are achieving your goal of feeling good. As you progress, free-standing and floor work are added (optional).

Frances is also a certified trainer for the state of Tennessee for Body Recall Special Populations. Special Populations is for leaders who work with adults in residences or with groups that meet for a common purpose. She has conducted training for the Oak Ridge Retirement Community, First United Methodist Church-Keystone Elder Day Care and Shannondale Retirement Center & Assisted Living Center

She has taught Body Recall to Elderhostels which were sponsored, planned and directed by the Children's Museum of Oak Ridge. She has done many lectures and demonstrations at various civic clubs, churches and many other organizations. She welcomes the opportunities to share the value of the exercise programs she teaches.

Frances has volunteered her services at the Children's Museum during summer camps by teaching the gym classes and soccer camps. She has also been part of the Kids in Action program.

She branched out with an ORICL class for Roane State this past August teaching many aspects of exercise, the need for it and what it does for you. She has conducted another such class during February. She has taught and is teaching senior classes along with Pilates at National Fitness since their opening. She teaches several classes at the Children's Museum and First United Methodist Church.

Frances is a member of the Highland View Church of Christ where Fanny and I attend. There she leads the "Love Bear" program which has a personal connection to Fanny. The Love Bears are small stuffed bears that are given to children who are in the hospital or having health issues. They originated because of a very bad car accident where a young child was in the car with Fanny and his pregnant mother who was driving.

After the accident the young child was taken from the hospital by ladies from the congregation. His mother did not survive. The ladies thought he would have been comforted if he had something to hold. His mother's last name was "Love" and the "Love Bears" program began by those two ladies hoping to

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help other children. Those small stuffed bears have been given to thousands of children and now programs in other churches and have gone to places overseas. Frances has done this program for years.

She also collects items for the Free Medical Clinic by letting the congregation know what is needed and taking the donated items to the clinic. Frances is just naturally one to seek ways to be helpful to others.

I am pleased to have been given the opportunity to publish this recognition for a wonderful lady and a dear friend.



Frances Gross serves her community in her unique way of helping others

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Exercise classes are for all ages and are especially helpful for the elderly

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Exercise can be fun and take many forms