

Cardiothon raises heart rates, money

EVENT HONORS GYM INSTRUCTOR'S LATE FATHER

By Beverly Fortune

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After 100 minutes of a turbo-kick class at the Urban Active gym off Palumbo Drive, Beth Gaddis didn't know whether to collapse or cheer. "I haven't worked out for a long time. This is hard-core cardio," she panted, dripping sweat.

The class involved punching, kicking and fast footwork. Gaddis took part at the urging of friends Chrissy Chumley and Stephanie Drosick. "They kind of threw me to the wolves," Gaddis said, laughing.

But Chumley and Drosick didn't let up. After a 10-minute break, the sisters headed back into the gym for a 100-minute Zumba dance class, taking Gaddis along.

About 80 exercise buffs turned out Saturday morning to take part in a "cardiothon" — two 100-minute classes to raise money for the American Heart Association.

The event was planned in memory of Byrd Perry, who died April 22 after a massive heart attack. His daughter Allison is an Urban Active workout instructor and taught Saturday's turbo-kick class with Stephanie Lester.

This was Urban Active's first cardiothon. "We planned this as a surprise. We wanted to do something for Allison," said Wendy Jett, corporate group fitness coordinator for 36 Urban Active locations in several states. "We kept it a secret until the time got pretty close, then we told her."

Jett said 22 of Urban Active's gyms were sponsoring cardiothon fund-raisers this weekend.



Byrd Perry 65, did many things right for his health, his daughter said. "Typically, when we hear of a heart attack, we expect somebody who is frail or really obese, but not somebody who is active," she said.

Her father walked 3 miles a couple of times a week and worked out at a fitness center in Morehead. He and his wife, Christie, lived on a farm in Salt Lick, where he did light farm work.

However, Allison Perry said, her father's family has a history of heart disease. His older brother, Tom, died of a heart attack in 2004 while sitting in his armchair.

Her father's heart attack was similar. "There was no warning, no chest pains," Perry said. "But he was 65, and men in that age bracket are at more of a risk." Her father collapsed after her parents ran to the basement seeking shelter from a tornado that was reported in their area.

While her father had not been diagnosed with heart disease, "It's entirely possible he had symptoms and he ignored them," Perry said. "It wasn't his nature to complain, and he hated going to the doctor. It could be he had really, really minor symptoms that he didn't think were anything."

The American Heart Association recommends exercising at least 30 minutes a day, five days a week to have a healthy heart. This might include walking, swimming, cycling, jogging, skiing or aerobics.



Stephanie Lester, left, and Allison Perry led a group during a 100-minute turbo-kick class Saturday as part of the Byrd Perry Cardiothon at Urban Active in Lexington.

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