

# Seniors can exercise for free while helping with study

By Amy Becker

TIMES STAFF WRITER

If you're 60 or older, fit enough to participate in one aerobics class and have two hours to spare, St. Cloud State University senior Amy Johanson wants your help.

Johanson is conducting a study to examine psychological wellness and exercise next month at Whitney Senior Center, and she's looking for volunteers.

Here's how it will work. Johanson's 50 or more volunteers will meet at the center and fill out some forms. Then, they'll be divided into three groups. One group will take part in an aerobics class for seniors, one will take part in a nonaerobics activity class, and one group will not exercise. At the end, the groups will fill out more forms.

The two-hour study will allow seniors to take part in the exercise classes for free — there's usually a small charge — and try out the classes, Johanson said.



**SILVER LINING**

The role of exercise in people's physical well-being has been well-documented, Johanson said. Evidence of whether it helps psychologically is less clear.

There are numerous theories on the matter, said Johanson, a psychology major. A psychological benefit could be related to increased endorphins or the social aspects of exercising with a group of people. It could be a positive distraction from other thoughts as well.

Johanson will measure optimism, perceived stress, happiness and cognitive functioning as part of the study.

Concerns about the psychological well-being of seniors will become more significant, Johanson said.

"Elderly people are an extremely quickly growing segment of the population," she said.

The study is part of Johanson's experimental psychology class at the university. To participate or for more information, call her at 654-5191.

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