

PROGRAMMING PERFECTION

By Jennie Queen, CALA Trainer

A workshop on programming was offered at the CALA Conference 2001. Following are some ideas that were shared and generated during the session. The workshop was designed to help guide facility managers, programmers, coordinators and instructors through the many facets of creating, and implementing a fitness program at their facility. All in attendance agreed that it takes time, energy, creativity and lots of patience to see an idea through from its inception to actually implementing it at a facility. My experiences as the fitness coordinator at a large complex in the City of Ottawa, and a fitness instructor for more than ten years, have given me very different perspectives on programming. Following are fundamental programming ideas including some triumphs and challenges from my experiences working in a city owned and operated facility. The diversity of facilities and management styles at pools in Canada make it a difficult to satisfy all programming challenges.

Programming requires the *evaluation of the facility* and the *target market*: clients you hope to attract to the facility. Pool venue, demographics, and staffing are the key issues to research first. Identifying the facility and target market can help determine the types of programs that the facility naturally lends itself to.

Ask the following questions:

- 1) Is the pool depth primarily deep water or shallow (chest deep)?
- 2) How many people can comfortably fit in the pool with enough workout space?
- 3) How large is the deck space to allow instruction and other traffic?
- 4) What are the available changing facilities in terms of capacity for changing and showering?
- 5) Who will attend the classes and use the facility?
- 6) What is the general profile of the participants in terms of age and gender?
- 7) Are the participants starting new families, older adults, middle aged, retired, working full or part time?

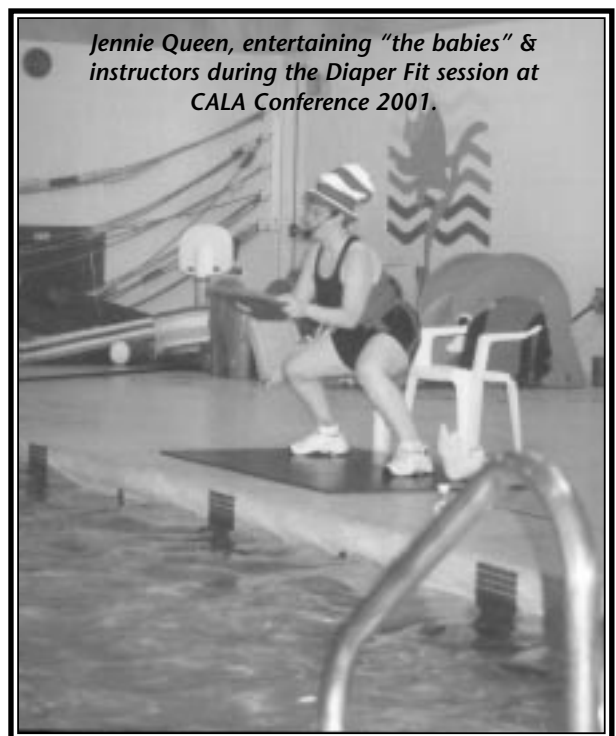
Answers to the above questions will enable you to determine whether to run specialty programs such as:

- a) Pre and post natal aquafitness
- b) Diaper Fit for caregivers and babies
- c) Aqua Arthritis
- d) Aquafitness for Older Adults
- e) Aqua Muscle
- f) Cardio Splash
- g) Water Running
- h) Aqua Spinning
- i) Aqua Kick Box
- j) General Aquafitness for Everyone
- k) Aqua Circuit Training

Evaluate the *specific income range* of the population who will be attending the aquafitness programs. Combine this information with the pool capacity in order to decide the fees to charge participants to cover the costs of offering the program.

Determine *staffing needs*. Will you have enough qualified staff to run these aquafitness programs?

Upon completion of the basic research as discussed, it is time to begin *brainstorming program ideas*. Compile a list of ideas, then decide how to plan and prepare to run the types of programs on the list.



Jennie Queen, entertaining "the babies" & instructors during the Diaper Fit session at CALA Conference 2001.

For example, if a "Diaper fit" program is identified as a potential program then take a close look at all the issues around offering this class. Following is a record of how a "Diaper Fit" program came to be offered at the Nepean Sportsplex:

Challenges:

- o there are no day care facilities available at the building.
- o There are a large number of new moms. Many of these Moms came through the "Prenatal program" and then disappeared after the babies where born.
- o A potential niche market existed. How can the market be targeted?
- o What equipment could be used so that the caregivers could exercise with the little ones nearby?
- o Would the equipment be both safe and effective?
- o How would the class be structured?

Solutions:

- o Pool space was available that would be ideal for young children and babies. The water was shallow (chest deep) and warm water.
- o Floatation seats available for the "tot's classes" would be ideal for a "Diaper Fit" aquafitness class.
- o The floatation seats were tested using real babies with the care givers performing CALA movements.
- o Lesson plans were created through trial and error and the staff was trained to teach the program.

Next came the marketing strategy.

Flyers were designed and distributed to:

- o Pre natal participants,
- o New moms,
- o Wellness drop in centers in the area,
- o Inserted into brochure for the city.

Spreading the news:

- o With the first session underway, we invited a local news channel in to film a special noon hour edition news clip, featuring the babies and moms participating in a "Diaper Fit" aquafitness class.

THE PROGRAM 'TOOK OFF'.

Keeping the program on track:

- o Surveys were distributed to the participants to determine whether the program was meeting there needs.
- o Instructor feedback about the program was solicited to keep the enthusiasm high.

To this day the "Diaper Fit " program is running smoothly.

This is an example of a programming idea that has worked well. Not every idea will evolve and grow into a successful program.

"Success seems to be connected with action. Successful people keep moving. They make mistakes, but they don't quit." – Conrad Hilton

CALA AQUA MATT

A Must for all aquafitness leaders!

Details about the mat: It's a cellular urethane pool deck mat that comes in two sizes: 1.0 metre and 1.7 metres, easily portable , non-slip surface , ultra violet, chemical resistant & odourless, no maintenance required, immediate return to original thickness following rapid & repetitious impact.

Why buy it? Aqua Matt protects your most valuable asset - "you" - from damage to your joints and loss of earnings. Designed for the safety of the pool deck Aqua instructor, Aqua Matt provides maximum shock absorption for cushioning and protecting against impact and vibration and a non-slip surface to guarantee sure footing even when wet.

Sizes available and cost:

1.0 metre mat: \$125.00 + \$25.00 S&H + applicable taxes

1.7 metre mat: \$185.00 + \$25.00 S&H + applicable taxes

