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Two Louisburg Fitness Club members workout Monday morning on elliptical machines, which are used for cardiovascular workouts. Owner of the fitness club Lesley Seuferling said despite the sour economy she still has new membership applicants.

Despite economy, local gym thrives

Louisburg Athletic Club beefs up available services in order to attract new memberships

By Jesse Trimble

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Despite the down economy, Louisburg residents are still hitting the gym, and owner Lesley Seuferling doesn't attribute it to New Year's resolutions, either.

The Louisburg Athletic Club, 401 S. Metcalf St., is coming up on its sixth year of business and already Seuferling has seen gas prices sky rocket and the economy come crashing down during that short time period.

But, Seuferling said, the economy has yet to phase out Louisburg residents and regular fitness-seekers.

"With Louisburg being such a bedroom community and most people traveling between here and Kansas City, when gas prices went up a few summers ago is when we saw the greatest decrease," she said. "But, we have a steady trade-

off of people, since people move away and then move to town."

As for being the only athletic club in a small community, Seuferling said she still has to pump up a few things to keep it interesting.

January, according to Seuferling, doesn't see an increase in members as one might suspect after the holidays, instead she said, the majority of new members sign-up during the months of November and December and February and March.

"It's human nature to have a starting and stopping point," she said. "If they don't get in here by January first, then they set a date for themselves, that tends to be the first of February."

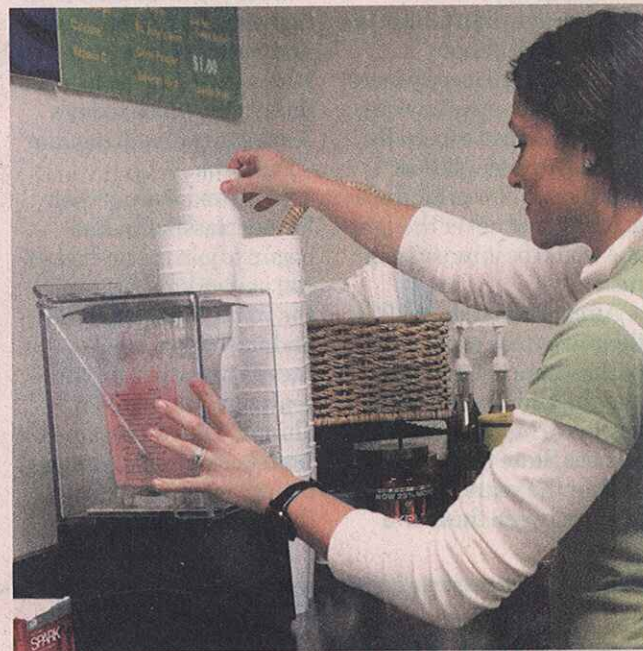
The gym's Web site was revamped over the summer, and she said the fitness club also sends out monthly newsletters to its members with updates of specials, general information and

healthy recipes that revolve around the time of year. If it's fall, recipes tend to include pumpkin-based dishes and all-around healthier foods.

One thing Seuferling said she has changed since the economic downturn is monthly specials. In the past, she said specials were only offered once about every four months, now there are several specials each month. Specials can range from any one of the services the fitness center provides, which include: smoothies that contain vitamin supplements, tanning, massage therapy, fitness classes and the sauna. The fitness center is accessible 24 hours for members and also includes a childcare service during daytime hours.

Membership fees have not changed since the opening of the facility nearly six years ago, she said, and it's rare to see a business do that.

"We've kept the membership prices the same and changed things a bit with the enrollment prices," she said. For example, if a new member signs up with the gym for a full year, they get



Olevia Stone, front desk receptionist at the Louisburg Athletic Club, begins to make a smoothie for a customer. The fitness center has several smoothie flavors to choose from, and new specials are now being offered to incorporate smoothies, massage therapy, tanning and fitness classes.

a better rate versus signing up for only a portion of the year, Seuferling said.

She said she saw a bit of a decline in members this past fall, but she said she's not worried and still considers herself and her business

very fortunate.

"I just wish everyone, or at least those who don't realize it, recognizes that working out is the best stress relief you can give yourself," she said.