Cardio Drumming: Beating out good exercise

By DAVID GREEN

A small group of area residents made plans to start a cardio drumming program Feb. 2 at the Morenci Fire Hall, but it quickly went from a small group to 75 people before the first session got underway.

"One post on Facebook and it went crazy," said Rebecca Berger, who serves as a leader of the group. There wasn't room at the fire hall, so an inquiry at the Church of the Nazarene gave the class a new home. That was good because an additional 15 drummers arrived the next night and 23 more for the follow-up session.

"It's gotten very popular in a very short time," Rebecca said. "We now have 139 people involved."

Not everyone shows up for every night, but there are always at least 70 people beating on giant exercise balls with drum sticks.

Rebecca said she was involved in a weight loss challenge at the fire hall when she and Farra Ryan talked about a cardio drumming class. She initially ordered 20 sets of equipment—an exercise ball, a bucket to hold the ball in place and a set of sticks—and she's reimbursed $25 for the equipment, although some people bring their own. There's no cost to attend, but participants are encouraged to leave a dollar for the church or to bring an item for Morenci Ministerial Association's food bank housed at the church.

Rebecca was familiar with cardio drumming from an Herbalife club and she attended sessions in Wauseon, Adrian and Tecumseh to learn more. She shares the leader position with John and Angie Rettle, as well as "guest leaders" Tiffany Spurgeon and Delaina Mees, so far.

"It's a lot more difficult to lead than to be a participant," she said.

It's a giant game of follow the leader. All the action is accompanied by music, and Rebecca says she's been spending a lot of time on iTunes shopping for songs. Her library now covers a huge range, from pop to country, from rap to Christian—whatever it takes for a good workout.

"I try to get a little of everything," she says, something to appeal to every member of the group.

Good workout

As the name implies, cardio drumming is designed to provide exercise for the cardiovascular system, but there's so much more. There are squats and twists, jumps and lunges. Drummers beat on their exercise ball, but sometimes they turn to strike a neighbor's ball. Sometimes they bend to strike the floor or reach up to cross sticks above their heads. It's a full-body workout, but it doesn't take a physical toll on the body.

"It's definitely low-impact," Rebecca said. "Jumping jacks are about as high impact as it gets."

It's enough of a workout that people awake the next morning feeling some pain in muscles they didn't know they had, and it can be active enough to burn off 500 to 800 calories in each hour session. But it doesn't have to be that intense. That's the beauty of the program, Rebecca said, anybody can take part.

"You do what you can do, and that’s what makes it wonderful," she said. "You make it as intense as you want. Not everybody can do jumping jacks, but it's a good workout for any physical condition."

The woman who developed the program a decade ago thought it up when she was confined to a wheelchair. She was looking for some exercise when she wasn't able to stand.

Morenci's cross-generational group has members ranging in age from four years old to a pair in their 80s. Rebecca sees a lot of Facebook posts where participants are telling how much they enjoy the sessions.

"People are saying that they're so happy to have something right here in town," she said.

She knows cardio drumming is "the next big thing" in Morenci and eventually the popularity will wear off, but for now, this is it. Great exercise. An excellent stress relief.

An hour out with friends.

Keep the beat going, because it surely beats sitting on the couch.