

centre opens at 5AM and stays open until 12:30 or 1AM. A fitness instructor holds aerobics classes twice a week for two groups of people. Rocke says the average attendance for an in-company fitness centre is about 25 percent. Waterloo is up to one-third, about 75 employees, but the committee is aiming for 50 percent participation. More and more people are talking about signing up, Rocke notes, and he's optimistic.

Schwan has a goal of making the fitness

centre more like a healthy lifestyle centre. "We're looking at having people come in to give talks," he says. "And the Ministry of Tourism has excellent movies on lifestyle. I've got my name on the list to get some. Those of us on the committee have been pointing out to the plant the tie-in between fitness routines and jobs. People who constantly pack bottles, for instance, should know what they can do to build up their wrists. Men who roll those 500-lb. barrels could be doing exercise to

strengthen their backs. I'm convinced that the fitness centre will not only get people feeling better, it will help them perform better on the job."

Ours was the first industrial company in the K-W area to build a fitness centre. "It's something we're really proud of," Schwan added. "We're urging everyone to contribute ideas by joining the fitness committee and having a say in the running of their facility."

Last May it was Amherstburg's turn. After many moons spent thinking about it and talking about it, their fitness centre finally got the go-ahead. The needs and circumstances were somewhat different from Waterloo's, yet their approach had much in common. First came a questionnaire sent around to all employees. Would you be interested in a fitness centre on the plant grounds? What sorts of programs and activities would you like to see? Do you have any equipment preferences? When the response was tallied, the result surprised more than a few people. A full 30 percent of employees said they would participate if a fitness facility were built.

A committee was set up consisting of maintenance store clerk Leo Deslippe, Larry Amlin in Quality, Bob Sinasc Jr. from Maturing and special assignment department head Al Pontini. Casting around for the best possible site, they zeroed in on Amherstburg's old bottling area, which had been closed for a number of years, and chose a

room 40' x 60' in size that was being used to store bottling supplies. In one way they got off easy: no major demolition was required, no need to hammer down walls, tear up floors or hunt for pipes. "Actually, the only heavy construction work that had to be done was to build

a wall," Pontini explained. That separated the room completely from the rest of the bottling area. Changing rooms were built, some electrical changes made and chipped terrazzo repaired, but most of the work involved cleaning, painting and freshening up. Amherstburg's lucky break extended even to the showers.

the four committee members, at least a dozen volunteers from the plant contributed evenings and Saturdays priming the walls, stripping the floor, vacuuming the dust off the beams and scraping the windows. "When it came to scrubbing the floor, we were all there," remarked Leo Deslippe, rubbing an imaginary stiff shoulder.

By February almost all was ready. A Wintario grant was pending, some equipment still hadn't arrived, but no one wanted to wait any longer.

The centre was declared open. Fitness buffs can choose from aerobics or a wide assortment of body-building equipment, including a universal gym, two bicycles, a

AMHERSTBURG

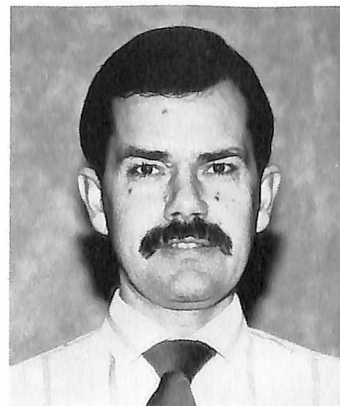
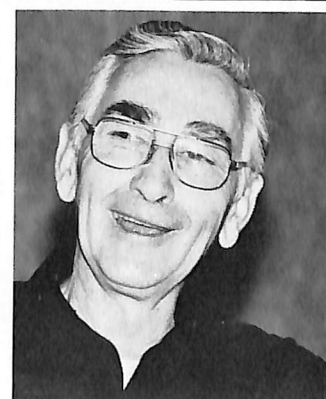
As the project grew, so did the interest

Two were installed in the women's changing room, but those for men were already there.

Which is not to say the plant got its



Amherstburg's fitness centre committee (clockwise from top right): Leo Deslippe, Al Pontini, Larry Amlin, Bob Sinasc Jr. Above: the fitness centre in its original state.



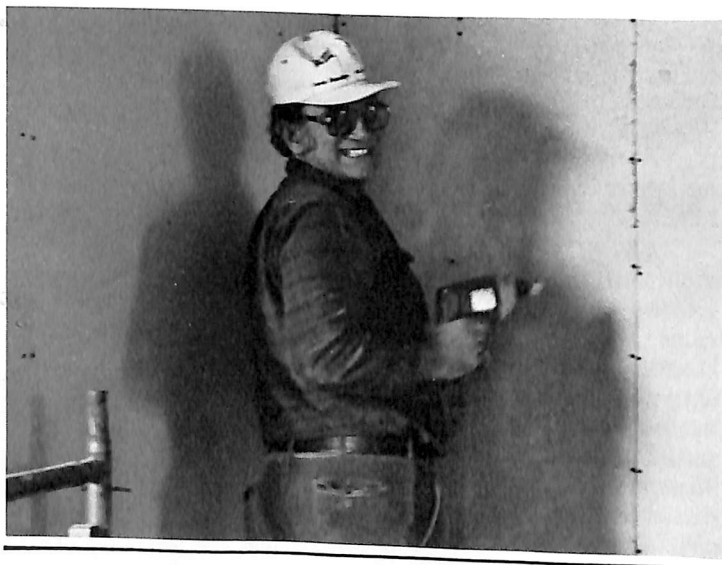
fitness centre without effort. The engineering department worked out the floor plan of the room; the plant tradesmen took on the wall construction and the painting. In addition to the hours put in by

bench press and two sets of weights. Wayne Brush, an employee skilled in circuit weight training, is volunteering his time to teach people how to use the machines. When the mood turns to sports there's a basketball net and backboard. The ceiling isn't really high enough for a serious game of volleyball or badminton, but a net can be strung up for a just-for-fun workout. Future plans call for the purchase of a punching bag, a ping pong table and a Nordic track machine that simulates cross-country skiing. The centre is open during the employees' preferred hours: 6AM-7:25AM, 11:30AM-1:10PM & 4PM-9PM. "If the need arises, we'll add additional times," Pontini says. The facility is also available to retirees and those on layoff.

Deslippe, 62, began running 10 years ago when he joined a fitness class and failed the stress test. How times change! He placed fifth in his age group in the last Detroit marathon and was one of the first Amherstburg employees to promote the benefits of building a fitness centre. He found it interesting to watch the excitement grow as the project progressed. "I do believe the idea of fitness is finally taking hold here. When people saw the centre freshly painted, they began asking, 'What time will it open? I'd really like to get in a workout before the day begins.' No question in my mind, our fitness centre is going to fit in great."

Like Waterloo, those closest to planning and building the centre regard it not only as a place to work out, but a means of

developing a healthier lifestyle, cutting down on absenteeism and accidents, and helping employees feel better at the end of a working day. In fact, the centre ties right in with the "wellness program", an all-embracing live-healthy concept now being promoted by plant social worker Ruth Ann Schnarr. If only the 30 percent of employees who originally expressed interest in the centre do, in fact, use it, that should put the plant well over the national average of participation in similar company facilities, which, contrary to Terry Roche's information, was quoted to Pontini as a mere six percent. The hope is that Amherstburg's wait will prove worthwhile. ♦



Clockwise from top right: Ron Woelfle putting up drywall panelling; Gerry Russell, part of the demolition crew; Peter Labelle on the universal gym; Leo Deslippe adjusts a bench press.

