

Gym Jester Gymnastics Center
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PRESS RELEASE:

Penelope Slade-Sawyer, Acting Director of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, recently notified Helen J. Fry, founder, owner and director of Saginaw's Gym Jester Gymnastics and Fitness Center that she was one of just sixteen recipients in the United States of the 2009 PCPFS's Community Leadership Awards. Fry was the only recipient from Michigan.

Dr. Catherine Baase, Chief Medical Officer at the Dow Chemical Company, and who has served on the President's Council nominated Fry for the prestigious award. Nominations are thoroughly reviewed by teams and members of the President's Council. Only those with the highest scores are selected. The award is given to people who improve the lives of individuals within their communities by providing opportunities to engage in sports, physical activities and/or fitness related programs.

For the past 47 years, Helen has provided the endless drive and energy force behind Gym Jester Gymnastics. Approximately 700 students annually take part in a variety of programs including pre-school motor skill development, recreational gymnastics for elementary and middle school, and USAG competitive teams for boys and girls. Other activities include field trips, birthday parties and other specialty classes. Over the past 4 decades more than 25,000 have benefited.

Fry moved to Saginaw, Michigan in 1961 after graduation from Michigan State University for her first job teaching physical education in Saginaw Township Community Schools. She was filled with a dream and passion to do something truly special. In 1962 she pioneered a gymnastics program for middle school girls, building balance beams with her husband Tom, and holding fund raising to build a program. For several years parents and students unloaded three semi-truckloads of tree ripened citrus fruit from Florida.

Even while raising her own family and teaching, with her amazing drive and enthusiasm the program grew in size and diversity of offerings moving from school grounds to leased facilities and eventually to a permanent structure.

It is a great service to the community to have such high quality fitness and movement programs available. Helen truly exemplifies the characteristics of those honored by the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports as Community Leaders.