

# Macalester Today

## From Liberal Arts to Healing Arts

Did someone mention health and wellness? Here are five alumni who have made careers out of putting mind and body together.

As baby boomers age and health care costs swell, many Americans are doing more to become or stay healthy. It's not just going to the gym a few times a week and eating oatmeal. Exercises and medical treatments that were once rare in the U.S. have moved into the mainstream. Kate Havelin '83 interviewed five alumni who have built innovative careers in health and wellness. You could say these alumni work to "mind the body."



Gayle Winegar '75

founder, SweatShop Health Club on Snelling Avenue in St. Paul, a few blocks from Macalester. Celebrating its 25th year in 2006, the SweatShop has some 1,500 clients and nearly a million dollars in annual revenues.

I thought I would be the next generation of Margaret Mead, working for Planned Parenthood in South America. The passion I had for anthropology and travel circuitously took me into fitness. [Professor David] McCurdy gave me credit—I lived on a sailboat studying boat culture, if you will, from Los Angeles to the Panama Canal and out the other side. It was a great, great adventure. You're really limited in terms of exercise [on a sailboat] so I would bring my Jane Fonda tape—God bless Jane Fonda—out on the deck and do aerobics. I had all these guys doing Jane Fonda with me. I thought, "This is easy, I can do this."

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The dang challenge about the fitness world is that you still have to live in the business world. Our strength [at the SweatShop] is in being right ahead of the crest of the wave, sometimes a little too far ahead of the wave. The first time we offered yoga 25 years ago, it was not well attended, I can tell you. We've cycled through on yoga three times. We started Pilates 12 years ago before people could even say it, let alone spell it.

Here you can have six women in menopause within eyeshot, within earshot [working out]. The conversations that happen every morning concern everything from what the solutions are, to all the symptoms, to childcare, to politics. I really think of the SweatShop as community. First and foremost, it's based on the values of health and wellness and it encompasses so much more than traditional physical health. There's emotional health; there's a sense of well-being. It's also about empowerment. If you were to nail me down to two words, the SweatShop is about community and empowerment.

We're focused on taking boomers through the aging process, and at the same time, I'm so concerned with kid fitness. Our job is to work with both of those groups. The challenge is to do it and still maintain a small business...it's an interesting balancing act. In the past four years, health insurance premiums for staff have increased annually up to 20 percent, while deductibles have quadrupled and services and coverage have become more limited.

One of the things that Macalester fostered was really creative thinking and problem-solving and testing the envelope a little bit. If there's a seed that got planted, it was you have to go change the world in some significant way. What I've come to be at peace with at this stage of life, is I'm doing that in one little significant way, five blocks from Macalester. It's not South America!