

The most popular names for newborns this year are Ashley and Michael.

Young people serve their country by volunteering under a new program called AmeriCorps, where 20,000 people aged 17 and up work with community-based organizations in exchange for \$7,500 plus money toward college tuition or loans.

One percent of the nation's 50 million school-age children learn at home as families seek alternatives to public schools. In a handful of high-tech experiments, kids submit homework by modem, download books and artwork from the Internet, and collaborate on academic projects with other children around the world.

A survey of college kids reveals their favorite sources of sugar and caffeine during all-night studying to be: powdered iced tea, peanut butter mixed with marshmallow cream, baby food, ramen noodles, raw cookie dough, and trail mix made from chocolate chips, graham cracker bits, and mini-marshmallows.

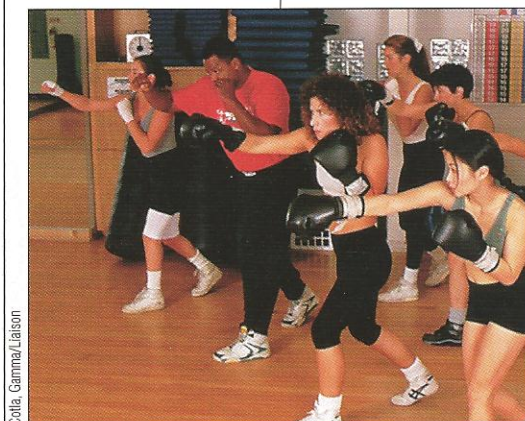


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A lively new cafe society centers around the 5,000 gourmet coffeeshops which spring up around the country. To the often young and trendy patrons, the social interaction is just as important as the espresso. Some cafes offer full-time Internet links so patrons can sip and chat with other Internet latte-drinkers.



Yoga, a Hindu system of stretching exercises for well-being, surges in popularity, mostly because the older generation seeks a technique for alleviating stress and finds yoga better than aerobics.



Colla, Gamma Liaison

Aerobic boxing, with boxing-style leg and arm work, turns out to be one of the year's hot exercise trends, showing up in workout studios and attracting those who want to work off their aggression by throwing a right and a few jabs.



Besides recycled clothing like license-plate bustiers, bottle-cap jewelry, trash-bag and duct-tape dresses, fashion trends include the schoolgirl look with thigh-highs, and the grunge-turned-beatnik look of long, straight hair and a goatee.

A new survey shows that over 12 million Americans are vegetarians, choosing the no-meat lifestyle because of concern about animal cruelty, cost-efficiency, eco-friendliness and/or improved health and fitness.



The hottest merchandise around is Mighty Morphin Power Rangers, so hot Cabbage Patch dolls pale in comparison. Parents criticize Fox's super-violent TV show, but their kids crave Dragon Daggers, Megazords, and the 4-foot, \$230 battery-powered car. "Go, go, Power Rangers!"

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