

# ECO-FITNESS

In the world of running, “Character Builders” are those runs that are very intense or performed in extreme heat or cold. Unfortunately, some residents of West Michigan may look at doing anything outside in our winter weather as character building, even a short walk across a parking lot. This year, I am choosing to view winter as an opportunity to do the same things I do in the summer, simply dressed in a different outfit.

According to Cari Draft, the Owner/Creator of EcoTrek Fitness, classes take place in every kind of weather and are only cancelled due to lightning. “While we have EcoTrekkers who only come in the warmer months, most people attend year ‘round, and comment that they enjoy the seasons so much more. My clients are no longer LOOKING outside, they are out there ENJOYING the outside”, says Cari.



Lake Harbor Park in Norton Shores along Mona Lake

This past December on a cold dark night, I participated in an outdoor EcoTrek Fitness class. EcoTrek utilizes our beautiful parks and natural areas for their classes that are held throughout West Michigan all year ‘round in every type of weather. The 75 minute class I joined took place at Saugatuck Dunes State Park. My group of 8 participants and instructor, Amy Miller, hiked briskly along the trails, stopping every 5 minutes to perform shoulder presses, squats, chest flies and other strength training moves with our exercise bands. We eventually ended up on the shore of Lake Michigan where we performed inch worms on the beach. As we were holding our Downward Dog in the snow during the cool-down phase, I asked Amy Miller and the other participants “Why?”. Oddly, they knew what I was asking with my “why” and responded with “it gets me outside, it gets me into parks I never knew existed, it helps me appreciate the seasons, and it’s FUN”.

Let’s get outside and enjoy all of our seasons this year!

Information about EcoTrek can be found at [www.ecotrekfitness.com](http://www.ecotrekfitness.com).

#### Glossary of terms:

inch worm = an exercise move that involves bending over while keeping knees straight, then walking arms out into a plank position, and finally baby-stepping your feet forward to meet your hands.

exercise bands = stretchy bands with handles that can be used for dozens of strength training moves and are easily tied around your waste while hiking

Downward Dog = yoga move

*Amy Alderink*