

Women's group aids hospital with crunches

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Moments before an hour-long session of abdominal crunches, Susan Smidt said she's proud of the members of the north Phoenix Ladies Workout Express.

On Saturday a dozen women participated in an Ab Crunch Challenge to raise \$1,800 for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital based in Memphis, Tenn. More than 200 women's-only fitness centers across the country participated.

Resting on an exercise ball, Terri Allen of Phoenix said her goal was 5,000 crunches.

"Betty is going to have a sore thumb," Allen joked, about the volunteer counter.

Smidt, manager of the fitness center, said Allen completed 5,512 crunches.

"Nobody stopped or took a break to stretch," said Smidt, who also crunched on an exercise ball.

Smidt said the women began training 10 weeks ago to build up strength and endurance. The first week the women did ab crunches for a minute.

"Every week we added more minutes," Smidt said. "The gals were a little hesitant at first, but it was a gradual work-up."

The women on exercise mats raised money to benefit children facing cancer and other health challenges.

"I'm doing it for the kids," Lara Drullinger of Phoenix said between crunches. "My goal is to complete the hour."



Lara Drullinger (foreground) and Mary Lawler trained for 10 weeks to perform abdominal crunches for one hour straight.