

Triathlete keeps students' running on track

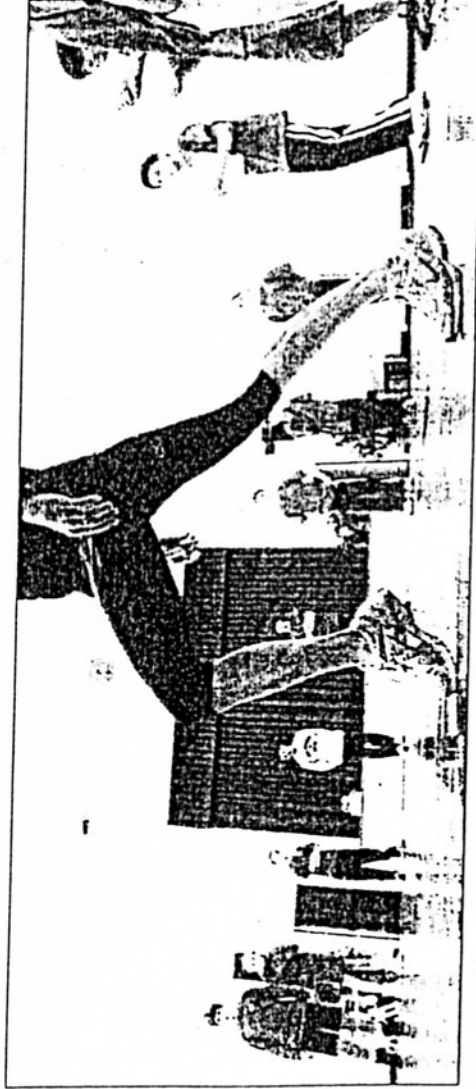
■ **Champion athlete demonstrates efficient, injury-reducing methods at Siena School**

BY MIKE MENO
STAFF WRITER

Margie Shapiro is on a quest to keep area runners on their toes.

The world-class athlete brought that advice when she visited the Siena School in Silver Spring on Thursday and showed students a few tricks to help them run better without working harder or longer.

Shapiro, a running coach and world champion triathlete, taught middle and high school students at the Georgia Avenue school a crash course in "Evolution Running," a system that teaches efficient and injury-reducing techniques pio-



J. ADAM FENSTER/THE GAZETTE
Running coach and world champion triathlete Margie Shapiro demonstrates some running techniques Thursday for middle and high school students at the Siena School in Silver Spring during a crash course in "Evolution Running."

MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about Margie Shapiro, visit www.margieshapiro.com. To learn more about evolution running, visit <http://evolutionrunning.org>. To learn more about the Siena School, visit www.thesienaschool.org.

circle in a multipurpose room at Montgomery Hills Baptist Church, where the school is located.

By having the students balance on their toes and heels, she showed them that it's easier for people to balance, and therefore run, on their toes.

When running, Shapiro told See **RUNNING**, Page A-20

neered by Ken Mierke, Shapiro's former coach and mentor.

"It's not just running harder or

faster," Shapiro told the students. "There's actually a skill element."

Fourteen seventh- and eighth-

RUNNING

■ Continued from Page A-13

the students, their heels should ideally never touch the ground. They shouldn't bend their legs much and their backs should be straight but angled slightly forward, she said.

If they follow those rules, she told the students, they'll put less strain on their muscles.

Before she had the students test the new practices, Shapiro took out a metronome and made the students hop up and down to a very specific tempo — 180 beats per minute.

"When people run at this amount of steps or higher per minute, they're much less likely to open their legs too far," Shapiro said.

The Siena School is a private

school established in 2006 for students with language-based learning disabilities, such as dyslexia. It provides an individualized learning environment for emotionally healthy, college bound students for students in grades four through 10. It plans to add 11th and 12th grades by 2009.

Shapiro was invited to the school by executive director Erik Fleyer, one of her former students.

"She really helped me understand how important running form and technique were," Fleyer said.

Grier Freedman, 12, said Shapiro's instruction made him think differently about the way he runs.

"I actually do run by putting my heels down first," he said. "I used to go running with my dad, and that's exactly what I did."

Ali Martin, 13, who was a member of Siena's after-school cross country club, said she'd apply Shapiro's lessons to her future running.

Shapiro said the techniques she taught can work for people of any age who want to improve their running time without more practice.

Thursday's class was Shapiro's first experience teaching at a school. She said she changed her approach for the younger crowd.

"I try to make it a little more interactive and a lot less theoretical," she said.

Shapiro, 30, is ranked among the top eight American triathletes and plans to try out for next year's Olympics.

"That's pretty much a long shot, but that's what I'm after myself," she said.