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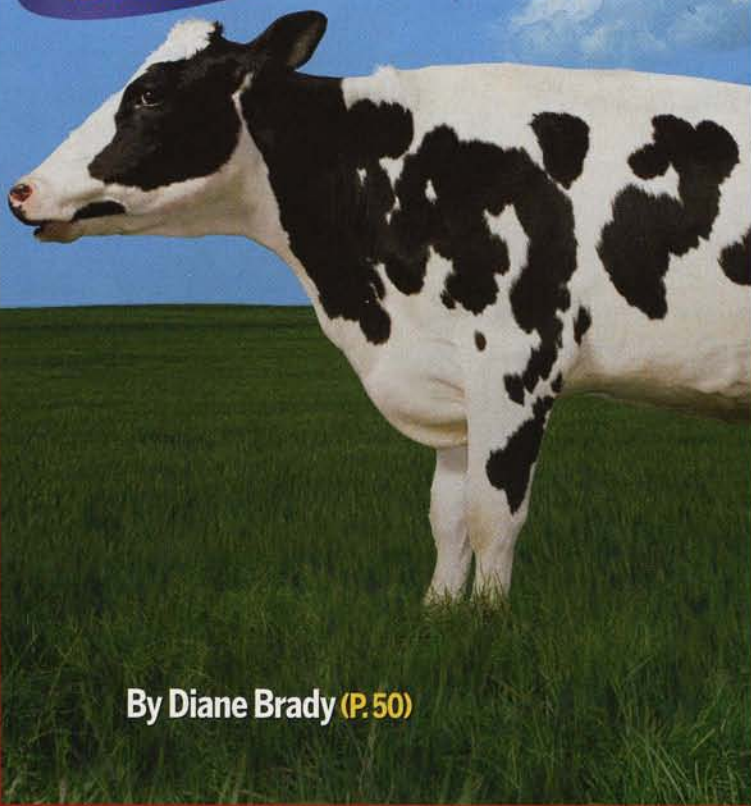
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## The ORGANIC Myth

As it goes mass market, the organic food business is failing to stay true to its ideals



By Diane Brady (P.50)

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**VIRTUAL BIKING** from VCycling lets riders see the scenery and feel the road as they pump up hills and down—on good days or bad

rections of big arrows on a screen in a game called *Dance Dance Revolution*. Others play video games on exercise bicycles. Still others throw balls against a “Sport-wall,” trying to hit lights as they blink.

There’s no mystery about why America’s youth are getting fatter and less fit, says the Iowa-born Lawler, a cancer survivor and tireless advocate for physical fitness: “Blame screen time—TVs, computers, video games. But the best way to destroy your enemy is to make him your friend. So we are making this interactive exercise our friend, and boy, are the kids hooked on it.” While he has no historical data for comparison, in the 21 schools that Lawler oversees, 3% of children are overweight, vs. a national rate near 20%. “Every school should be offering what we are doing,” he says.

Flash back six years. The president of Wilson Sporting Goods, Jim Baugh, is contemplating the decline in Americans’ participation, almost across the board, in sports and physical activities. Tennis, down 22% between 1987 and 2000. Baseball, down 28%. Aerobics, off 60%. The future looked bleak for the sporting goods industry, Baugh realized. More important, the nation itself was in a growing health crisis, with rising rates of obesity and related diseases such as diabetes. “I

saw the trends and said: ‘Oh my God, America is forgetting that we need active bodies for active minds,’” Baugh recalls.

He jawboned the industry into creating an organization to reform phys ed, called PE4Life. The goal: to create new generations of fitter Americans—who would buy more tennis rackets, baseball bats, and other gear. The group has turned gym classes in hundreds of schools into hotbeds of experimentation. One of its gurus is Phil Lawler, who trains other teachers in a PE4Life academy.

But that’s just one part of a larger effort by the industry to turn back the tide. The main weapon: technology. Kids are already hooked on computers and video games. “But we can trick them into

exercising,” says Richard Kentopp, CEO of Source Distributors Inc., distributors for Japanese bicycle accessory maker CatEye Co. Kentopp started selling \$1,169 or \$1,699 GameBikes, which act as controllers for PlayStation or other games, in 2004. “It is truly a huge market and huge opportunity,” says Cathi Lamberti, CEO of Sportwall International, which is jumping in with a competing product and envisions such “game” bikes becoming fixtures in health clubs, schools, and medical centers.

When Icon Health & Fitness Inc., with a 55% share of the \$3 billion-a-year treadmill market, added TVs to its products this spring, the TV machines outsold the old kind 2 to 1. The treadmills come with programs that enable homebound walkers to trek through California’s redwoods or across Hawaii’s beaches.

Companies big and small are jumping on the technology bandwagon, trying to grab part of the \$5.2 billion fitness products market. You can steer through the Alps on VCycling’s new virtual reality trainer, created by Buzz Gardner, a retired financial planner turned entrepreneur. You can insert yourself in video games with Sony Corp.’s EyeToy, where your

**GLOVES ON** Boxing with Jackie Chan at XRtainment Zone in Redlands, Calif.

