

Adventures abound

during Active Aging
Week 2015



Creative ideas and lots of new experiences highlighted the week, as hosts and participants set out to ‘try something new’

There are many reasons why Active Aging Week® benefits older adults, as well as the organizations and individuals who host events. For participants, trying something new and different (or experiencing a new twist on a regular activity) is not only good for the brain, but also the spirit. When Active Aging Week events are announced, people anticipate what will occur, and reach out to family and friends to join in. New acquaintances and social participation usually accompany the events provided. All of these benefits were reflected in the theme of Active Aging Week 2015: Live your adventure.

The adventurous nature of the week’s hosts brings them benefits, too. Presenting one or more special events is a great way to kick off new program offerings for autumn. Often, individuals who usually do not participate in wellness opportunities visit Active Aging Week events, and feel inspired to continue in regular activities. Many hosts pilot a new class or initiative during the week, then place the most requested activities onto a regular schedule. Because hosts reach out to other community organizations and businesses, and invite older adults outside of their usual participants, new connections widen the circle of potential participants and business partners.

As a reminder, Active Aging Week is the annual health promotion event led

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Residents of Highgate at Vancouver, Washington, visited the lake adorned in old-fashioned bathing suits, and warmed up for the water balloon contest during Active Aging Week



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by the International Council on Active Aging® (ICAA). Hosts organize local events, choosing the number and type of activities to offer. Active Aging Week is held each year in the last full week of September—in 2015, September 27–October 3—and hosts go out of their way to plan activities that are free or low cost, educational, and presented in a safe, fun and friendly atmosphere. One activity or many, big events or small, Active Aging Week hosts know how to create an adventure.

Each year, the number of organizations and individuals hosting events grows, and in 2015 more countries than ever were represented. Active Aging Week was held in Australia, Canada, Finland, India, Ireland and the United States; and adding it all together, an estimated 3,000-plus organizations joined in. That's a big reach to spread the message of living well at any age. The largest single event may be the one that took place in India, where more than 5,000 older adults celebrated the International Day of Older Persons (October 1) with

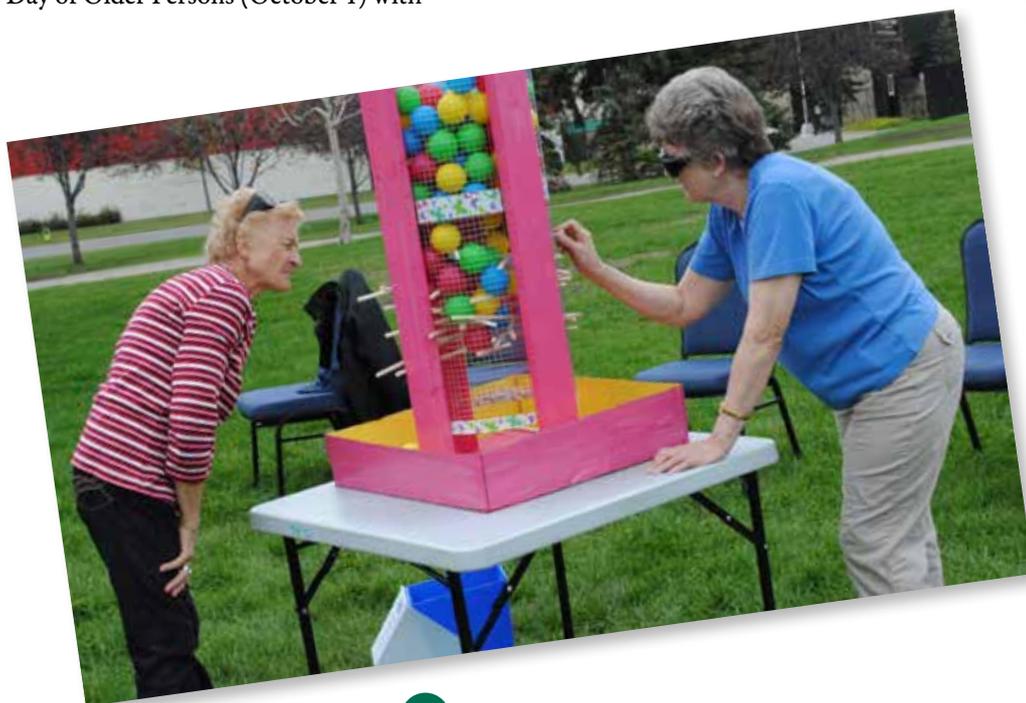
lectures, exercises and walks, reported Dr. Asha Vijai Rao, a freelance counselor, writer and soft-skills trainer with the Gharonda Trust, in Pune.

After the week is over, ICAA sends out a request for hosts to share their adventures. Several trends emerged this year as emails and reports arrived:

- Outings—a trip to a fair or zoo or farmers market or cruise on the water, for example—were highly valued by older adults as they traveled outside their usual stomping grounds. Organizers were diligent in making these outings available to people with physical impairments.
- Virtual outings provided a sense of travel. Examples included travelogues of adventures in different countries, staff experiences while living abroad, ethnic clothing and meals featuring the cuisines of different countries. Individuals enjoyed these opportunities to learn about a different cul-

ture or country for a travel-in-place experience.

- Hosts included many visits to water, both by going to a lake or river. Fishing, scuba diving or snorkeling, paddling and similar water adventures were also frequent.
- *Free* was the word. Wellness centers and health clubs opened their doors for Active Aging Week, with no fee or membership needed. Discounts were offered for new members, and taken up.
- Outdoor activities were common, whether on a patio or in a parking lot or a local park. Hosts cancelled some outdoor events because of weather, but many took place—and the participants welcomed the contact with nature.



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- The dimensions of wellness were top of mind for organizers, who looked to combine multiple dimensions into activities or to represent each dimension during the week.
- Multiple organizations came together to produce an event. There were boating companies, scuba organizations, pharmacies, physicians, professors, social services, chefs, and more that volunteered their services, made donations, or made accommodations so that older adults with varying levels of ability could participate. This type of collaboration is a major benefit of Active Aging Week.

Using the theme

The overriding theme of Active Aging Week 2015 was “Live your adventure,” highlighted in promotional materials and announced by Shellie Pfohl, executive director of the US President’s Coun-

cil on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition. (You can watch Pfohl’s message on ICAA’s dedicated Active Aging Week website; see “Find out more” on page 76.)

Many organizations used the “Live your adventure” theme to anchor the experience. Two weeks in advance, staff at The Glebe wellness center hung a large poster board and invited residents of the continuing care community in Daleville, Virginia, to write a few sentences or words about a favorite past adventure, such as a travel or learning experience, special life event, and so on. The board became a powerful advertisement for the coming week.

“All of the activities were designed to demonstrate that wellness is more than exercise—it encompasses all aspects of healthy living such as keeping an active

mind, having new experiences, creatively expressing yourself, and staying physically active,” explained Rachel Carson, wellness coordinator for The Glebe. Among the community’s five events were a snorkeling lesson in the new salt-water pool and a “Taste of Scandinavia” with hors d’oeuvres, a line dancing demonstration and a film presentation. Because some activities were not exercise related, Glebe wellness staff spoke with residents they don’t typically interact with. They encouraged all residents to participate in regular wellness and fitness programming while contributing to their overall well-being through other life adventures.

The theme of “Live your adventure” was used for the entire month of September at Island Shores, a Senior Lifestyle community in Neenah, Wisconsin. In addition to horseback riding, decoupage and other crafts, zip-lining, and wheelchair races among staff, an outing to the Little Chute Windmill was a highlight, said Chelsey Neal, director of resident programming. The windmill is a local landmark operated by volunteers who occasionally grind grain for the local Little Chute beer. Along with word-of-mouth, the addition of lunch made the event a big success. (You can see a slide show of Island Shores’ activities at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4IicoUS-REETFROd1RBaDdJXzg/view?usp=sharing>)

Live your adventure was personal at two Oakmont communities. At Villa Capri in Santa Rosa, California, a 90-year-old man got his wish to be a cowboy. Attired in cowboy duds, which he wore around the community several days before his adventure, he traveled to a local ranch and rode a horse around the arena. Seven residents serenaded him with *Home on the Range* while he rode, a chorus he saluted with a wave of his cowboy hat. A

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September 25–October 1
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woman at another Oakmont community dressed as famed aviator Amelia Earhart to ride in a biplane. The biplane company was so impressed, they will use her in advertisements, related Karen Orlando, Oakmont's director of corporate communications & media relations.

Media adventure

Noteworthy in 2015 was the expanded use of media—videos, Facebook announcements and tweets—to spotlight events, in addition to press releases, posters and printed schedules. Many examples of events and a series of tweets appear on Active Aging Week's official Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/ActiveAgingWeek>).

To publicize the week at Highgate at Yakima, Washington, Life Enhancement Coordinator Angie Larrabee took advantage of social media by announcing activities on Facebook, Twitter and Google+. In response, many positive comments were added about the community providing these events. The local news outlet covered Highgate's ATV rides, and after a visit to the fair, a resident who went for a camel ride made the front page of the local paper. Larrabee added that the 95-year-old "was busy all week, loved the pool, loved the ATV rides with her daughter, and enjoyed the scavenger hunt at the elementary school."

Video and technology were the focus of a special session in Finland of the life-long learning program AHEAD (Training High Tech Seniors for Discovery), which teaches older adults how to use tablet computers to capture their travel experiences as digital stories. More than 80 older adults and organizations attended the seminar, "Co-creating learning adventures in the digital world." Thirty people from Italy and Finland traveled to the Haltia nature center to visit a virtual nature exhibit and then walk into the forest—a trip that participants will make into a story shared on a blog or video. (Photos of the storytelling

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trip are available online at <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1078291092182304.1073741852.807437685934314&type=3>

“We were able to combine people from different backgrounds—seniors, educators, tourism, digital storytelling, technology developers, public authorities, associations—to share their experiences related to [using] mobile devices in the context of traveling,” said Project Manager Hanna Jaakola from the Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Espoo, Finland.

Hosts captured special events on video throughout Active Aging Week, which indicates how they are using media to promote wellness. Before the week began, an ICAA webinar featured GlynnDevins publicity experts who

provided a practical approach to use in publicizing the week’s events. (The webinar recording is available on the campaign’s website. You can prepare for future events by watching the broadcast at <http://activeagingweek.com/resources-organization/webinars.php>)

A few media examples follow:

- Scuba diving in the pool at Lake Barrington Woods gave Agnes (91 years old) and Lyn (89 years old) an adventure. Led by experts at DiveHeart, the pair took the plunge with the executive director of the Senior Lifestyle community in Lake Barrington, Illinois. Mirka Biegunska, director of resident programs, shared the video on YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOM_ADXJeDM).
- Heritage of Peachtree (Peachtree, Georgia) celebrated Grandparent’s Day with a special luncheon, bringing residents and their grandchildren together for an afternoon of reconnecting. Meghan Lowry, activities program coordinator, shared some of the love in a slide show (<http://play.smilebox.com/SpreadMoreHappy/4e444d784d4449354e44633d0d0a>).

Theme days focused events

As any organizer of a special event knows, it’s useful to have an overall theme to inspire marketing and events, as well as areas of focus. Many Active Aging Week hosts turned to free resources and program ideas provided by the week’s national sponsors, who chose the days and themes below to focus their offerings:

- Sunday, the first day of Active Aging Week, concentrated on foot health, with resources from the Institute for Preventive Foot Health (IPFH).
- Monday emphasized walking with the 7th annual “WALK! with Aegis Therapies” event.
- Tuesday encouraged hearing health by “Saying Hello!” with CaptionCall.
- Wednesday advanced water exercise with SwimEx.
- Thursday promoted eating vegetables and fruit with “Good Things Thursday” from Sysco.
- Friday featured “Get Skin Health Smart” with Nestlé Skin Health.

Using the theme for each day, event organizers took the concept and interpreted it for their own population and resources. Hosts commented that they used the materials provided by sponsors during the week, and also planned to use them throughout the year. (You can, too! These resources are still housed on the Active Aging Week website.)

The Brooks Family YMCA in Jacksonville, Florida, used the theme days for many of the week’s activities, relayed Sheri Nash, senior experience coordinator. The week kicked off with a fun short walk and a visit from a local business’s mobile shoe clinic to learn about proper shoe fit and how different types of shoes meet different needs. On hearing health day, a local company led a seminar on hearing loss in relation to dementia and diabetes. Participants had hearing screenings—and lunch! With no swimming pool available, Wednesday became Staying Hydrated Day, featuring free bottles of water; meanwhile the YMCA’s dietitian, Michele Manzie, prepared a healthy recipe and informative handouts

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The US Surgeon General tweeted support for Active Aging Week and all those participating

to distribute. For Skin Health Day, a medical spa provided breakfast with a presentation.

Whether it took place in a recreation area or a parking lot or on a treadmill, a community walk was a popular event at many locations. Several hosts mentioned that they participated in the Walk to End Alzheimer's fundraiser. Open to everyone, the "WALK! with Aegis

Therapies" included a free activity tracker on the event's website and program ideas for each dimension of wellness. More than 44,000 participants in 795 organizations took part. With individuals and community groups included, walkers achieved a combined total of 66,000 miles.

The Senior Center at Frisco Square, in Frisco, Texas, promoted the Star Week

Fitness Challenge. Participants earned points for the steps and fitness activities they logged during the week, whether performed at the center or at home. The challenge resulted in 85 hours logged by 20 participants, reported Alissa McBurney, senior adult recreation programmer, who awarded T-shirts, visors and fitness assessments to participants depending on points earned. During the week, center participants were joined by those from two other locations and took the plunge, learning that water exercise is a safe, easy way for people of all ages and abilities to improve strength, balance, fitness and overall health. They also got Skin Health Smart, with 100 people in attendance.

The communities within Highgate Senior Living went all out for Active Aging Week, and leveraged the overall theme and the theme days. Their activities are an example of taking advantage of local resources. To Say Hello! on Tuesday, almost every community showed residents

Find out more

Active Aging Week 2015 partners

National Institute on Aging Go4Life®
<https://go4life.nia.nih.gov>

**President's Council on Fitness,
Sports & Nutrition**
www.fitness.gov

Active Aging Week 2015 sponsors

Aegis Therapies/EnerG® by Aegis
www.aegistherapies.com/wellness.aspx

CaptionCall
www.captioncall.com

**Institute for Preventive Foot
Health (IPFH)**
www.ipfh.org

Nestlé Skin Health
www.nestleskinhealth.com

SwimEx
www.swimex.com

Sysco
www.sysco.com

Active Aging Week resources

**Active Aging Week Official
Facebook page**
www.facebook.com/activeagingweek

Active Aging Week website
<http://activeagingweek.com>

Educational Theme Day resources
Free downloads and videos

[http://activeagingweek.com/
themedays.php](http://activeagingweek.com/themedays.php)

Webinars

Publicizing your event
Using free materials for subtheme days
[http://activeagingweek.com/
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organization/
webinars.php](http://activeagingweek.com/resources-organization/webinars.php)

Planning tools

Worksheets and examples
[http://activeagingweek.com/
resources-
organization/
planning.php](http://activeagingweek.com/resources-organization/planning.php)

Note: All links were live in December 2015; these links may not be active at later dates.

how to Skype and then skyped with a sister community or family members. Take the Plunge day included an aquatic exercise class, pool-noodle exercises on land, and residents of Highgate Yakima learning about the fish who make their home in the community.

Good Things Thursday filled the Highgate communities with chef competitions. The Iron Chef Competition at Highgate at Vancouver featured exotic fruit from other countries (dragon fruit and strawberry papaya were a hit, said Rose Zamudio-Mora, life enhancement coordinator). And the Chili Cook-off was filled to capacity, with team members cooking and residents, family members and a cook judging the results. Other communities added food trivia and crosswords.

The Blakeford community in Nashville, Tennessee, launched the week with a walk about campus. Recognizing that the social dimension is a foundational reason for hearing health, Wellness Coordinator Brittany Bishop teamed with the lifestyle director to give notecard stationery to residents attending a social hour, so they could write notes to Say Hello! to one another. At the time residents did not engage in the activity. But they took the stationery home, and the next day Bishop saw a lot of the stationery in mailboxes “so it ended up being a successful idea.” On Thursday, a guest speaker offered information and advice about healthy eating. Blakeford residents then traveled to a local farmers market to put their knowledge of healthy foods to the test.

Outdoor adventures

In Calgary, Alberta, Canada, the Kerby Centre took the celebrations outdoors with Kerby’s Back Yard Bash, a picnic party in a park located a short distance away. There was a giant checkerboard, with humans as checker pieces; a giant Jenga game, with 2x4 blocks of wood for stacking; and a giant Kerplunk game, with participants challenged to pull wooden “straws” from among balls without disturbing them. More games and lots of food made for an active day.

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ACTIVE AGING WEEK’S IMPACT IN 2015

Held each year during the last week of September, Active Aging Week helps spread the International Council on Active Aging® message that adults ages 50 and older are fully participating members of society, while promoting the benefits of leading an active, healthier lifestyle.

Participating countries

United States, Canada, Australia, India, Finland & Ireland



Participating organizations



3,000+

organizations hosted events to promote the benefits of leading an active, healthier lifestyle.

Types of organizations

Active adult/community centers, retirement, assisted living, and long-term care communities, medical practices and wellness centers, libraries, universities, and government departments or senior services agencies, to name a few.



Visibility



151+ million

media impressions, according to a media tracking service.

Media coverage

180 broadcasts



483

articles in print and online

appeared in the press in the United States and Canada.



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Participants had a “terrific amount of fun not only building the games, but also playing them,” reported Chad Geiger, senior manager, Facilities. Perfect weather added to everyone’s high spirits.

In Prescott, Arizona, the week’s highlight was an outdoor adventure, as staff and residents of Highgate Prescott traveled to Sedona for a Pink Jeep Tour of scenic points that cannot be seen from the road. After seeing the sights, the group headed to Red Rock State Park for a picnic lunch. Weeks later, “the residents are still talking about this wonderful adventure and many have asked to go back with their families,” said Carly Pruitt, life enhancement specialist. The week was rounded out by a carnival and an art and talent show.

A new light rail train system had the potential to connect two housing complexes to the main campus of Episcopal Homes of Minnesota, but would people use it? Showing the effectiveness of partnerships, a representative from Metro

Transit visited the campus for Active Aging Week to explain the system and hand out “Go To cards” (value USD\$5). Life+ Director Julie Niewald explained that 25 residents rode the rails for a scavenger hunt during the week. They stopped at local businesses along the line, and restaurants near train stops catered lunch to introduce residents to their cooking. Episcopal Homes purchased \$10 gift certificates to the restaurants, which were distributed in a drawing. “What a great way to promote the restaurant owners and try new foods,” said Niewald, “It was a blast.

New year equals new opportunities

Active Aging Week is full of big ideas and small victories. There are too many stories to share in a single article, and every host will likely have many more. The key thing is that a small event can have an impact on a single individual, which makes these smaller offerings just as important as the larger reach of many events.

It’s never too early to start thinking about the next Active Aging Week, which will be held September 25–October 1, 2016. As in prior years, 2015 hosts recommend the following:

- Engage team members in different departments to be active in planning.
- Get feedback from participants on what went well and what didn’t.
- Solicit ideas from participants on what to offer, especially “bucket list”-types of activities.
- Organize more volunteers and staff to assist with events.

The lessons of Active Aging Week can inform and inspire opportunities for older adults throughout the year. Experiences during the week may point the way to new directions and fresh ideas to enhance wellness, plus offerings that help older adults live their adventure of wellness in daily life. 🌀

Local hosts share their thoughts

Did local hosts feel that Active Aging Week 2015 was successful?

“Yes, it brought many of us together for the first time, and the excitement was immense. We also had extended community folks joining us, so that was really fun.”

Julie Niewald

Life+ Director, Episcopal Homes of Minnesota

“We had so many new faces in our community volunteering, we doubled our volunteer program for our week. Our week was successful because of the teamwork and dedication from our team members, family members and various volunteers. The memora-

ble moment was when our winning residents at the Golden Chef Competition were awarded their trophies and hugged by the mayor (who judged the competition). They exclaimed, ‘We’ve never done anything like this before; it was so much fun! I can’t believe we won!’”

Jacob Sherman

Life Enhancement Coordinator, Highgate Senior Living, Great Falls, Montana

“Very successful for us and our partners. Participants were happy, engaged, and grateful for the events. We tried to plan events around different components of wellness; physical, social, spiritual, intellectual, etc. We were very successful at creating a well-rounded schedule.”

Laura Beyer

Community Relations Coordinator, Clark-Lindsey, Urbana, Illinois

“It was a learning experience for me as the coordinator to see what people enjoyed as well as what instructors were good at. Many people got active in new creative ways. Seeing our healthcare clients just beaming as they tapped their feet and clapped their hands during the seated line dancing was so memorable. You should have seen their faces light up when they saw that they were truly doing the Charleston and cha-cha.”

Joy Crahen

Aquatics and Fitness Coordinator, Well-Spring Retirement Community, Greensboro, North Carolina

Thank you to hosts, partners and sponsors

Active Aging Week® succeeds due to the enthusiastic participation of local hosts and the active support of partners and sponsors. Thanks to all host organizations, event organizers and local sponsors for their efforts. Thanks also go to Active Aging Week's campaign partners, the President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition (PCFSN) and the US National Institute on Aging's Go4Life® Campaign; as well as 2015 sponsors: Aegis Therapies/EnerG® by Aegis, CaptionCall, Institute for Preventive Foot Health (IPFH), Nestlé Skin Health, SwimEx, and Sysco.



Nestlé Skin Health



Key to Active Aging Week photos

Picture 1

For the Kerby Centre picnic in the park, located in Calgary, Alberta, participants first built an adult variation of a Ker-Plunk game, and then concentrated on pulling wooden 'straws' from among balls without disturbing them.

Picture 2

At the Brooks YMCA in Jacksonville, Florida, participants sampled the healthy recipe prepared by the Y's dietitian for Nutrition Day, and received handouts to encourage good eating.

Picture 3

The antique car show was popular at Bartlesville Senior Apartments in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. Residents, staff and members of the community all attended, even getting behind the wheel of one of the 10 cars that filled the parking lot.

Picture 4

Members of the sewing club at the Fountains at Greenbriar in Independence, Missouri, made teddy bears to attach to mobility devices for children with disabilities, as well as kids at the local children's hospital.

Picture 5

A scavenger hunt on the new light rail line in St. Paul, Minnesota, was an adventure for Episcopal Homes of Minnesota residents, who learned about restaurants, businesses and sister communities along the route.

Picture 6

Residents took the tai chi lesson seriously at Heron Point in Chestertown, Maryland. Acting Aging Week events included activities for spirit, body and

mind at all 23 communities in the ACTS Retirement-Life Communities family.

Picture 7

Check off one item on the bucket list for the Villa Capri resident who fulfilled his lifelong wish to be a cowboy. The 90-year-old hit the trail at Cloverleaf Ranch in Santa Rosa, California, as residents of his Oakmont community sang Home on the Range.

Picture 8

Snorkeling in a pool? Yes, if it is the new salt-water pool at The Glebe in Daleville, Virginia. Residents enjoyed swimming with fins and searching for diving toys distributed around the bottom of the pool.

Picture 9

Off-road adventure beckoned the intrepid who journeyed for a Pink Jeep Tour in colorful and mystical Sedona, Arizona. Highgate of Prescott, Arizona, organized the adventure, with participants anxious to go again.

Picture 10

People revealed artistic talents as they adventured into the craft of decoupage at Island Shores in Neenah, Wisconsin. Wine bottles were transformed by gluing paper cutouts and flowers, then varnishing the decoration.

Picture 11

Movement, lectures, learned discourses and motivational addresses filled the International Day of Older Persons in Mumbai, India, as the day unfolded from early morning until the evening during Active Aging Week, according to the Gharonda Trust