



*The Montgomery Line Strollers demonstrated their technique at the Troy/Montgomery Senior Center in Troy, North Carolina.*

# Active Aging Week 2006

## **Older adults experience the wellness lifestyle**

Active aging means living life to the fullest extent possible within the dimensions of wellness. During Active Aging Week 2006, many organizations met the goal of giving older adults the chance to experience a wellness lifestyle.

ICAA host sites did a remarkable job of organizing dances and walks, lectures and exercise classes, health fairs and a fashion show as part of the weeklong campaign, which ran September 25–October 1. The free activities, themed for fun as well as knowledge, also included food, giveaways, and an ample supply of educational handouts.

The positive experience for the organizers and participants was summed up by Joan Goergen at Safari Island Community Center in Waconia, Minnesota: “We had a wonderful experience providing this program and

all who participated shared very positive feedback. We look forward to another fantastic week next year.”

ICAA asked the organizers of this year’s events to share their experiences. You’ll find many creative ideas for programming, organization and promotion that you can borrow to plan your 2007 Active Aging Week next September.

## **Variety of activities**

The diversity of activities offered during the annual ICAA campaign was impressive (see “Something for everyone at Active Aging Week 2006” on pages 52–53). Some host sites offered a single class, while others scheduled events throughout the week. Seminars and demonstrations were major offerings, followed by a smorgasbord of classes, walks, health fairs and music.

Many activities focused on social interaction, and relevance to daily lives. The fall prevention or balance workshops were well attended at all locations, as were multigenerational activities. Tai chi and yoga, water exercise and strength training seemed predominant for fitness, while lectures ranged from information on chronic health conditions to financial planning.

Highlights of only a few of the programs included:

Energy Exercises for Body, Mind and Spirit—A Fusion of Chi Gong, Tai Chi and Shiatsu was the best-attended class (about 20 people, 25% newcomers) offered at Workout Plus in Quakertown, Pennsylvania. “We had such good feedback,” said Donna Duckworth, “that we’ve scheduled this class on a weekly basis beginning in November.”

The Family Fitness class at Judson Park Retirement Community in Des Moines, Washington, “was a huge success,” reported Glenda Wood. Residents brought their grandkids/great-grandkids and staff members brought their children. “We danced to the ‘Hokey Pokey,’ ‘If You’re Happy and You Know It’ and other kid songs, and played beach ball volleyball style in chairs in a circle. We ended with milk and cookies for everyone.”

It’s All About Magical Music dinner-dance was organized by Wellness Works NW in Steilacoom, Washington. Soldiers from an active military installation spent the evening with residents at a retirement facility. Steven Behr, Sr., observed that the conga lines that “snaked through the audiences incorporated movement and laughter. The special connections that resulted from having young soldiers dance with older adults at the dinner-dance [sharing their war stories] resulted in bonding that will forever become part of each participant’s memory bank.”

At The Mulberry in Burnaby, British Columbia, there was “entertainment in our lobby and our multipurpose room. It was all fun! Very energetic and lively with music on both floors and goodies to eat, and demonstrations in all of our common rooms,” reported Carol Wittal. She used the ICAA Active Aging Week posters, handouts and PowerPoint along with newspaper advertising, and welcomed more than 100 visitors and about 125 residents.

### **Promotion and organization**

The one disappointment organizers expressed was that they wished more people had attended. Participation varied among the sites, with some attracting a handful and others hosting several hundred. Many of the sites reported 50/50 attendance of newcomers and regulars, and some reported that only regulars attended.

Since the only rule of Active Aging Week is that events are free, the word *free* was a major promotion point. As Cathy Wylie at the Jefferson City, Missouri, YMCA said, “I really believe the trick for seniors is something *free*.”

Among hosts with an ongoing fitness program, Active Aging Week participants were offered a free attendance at regularly scheduled classes, along with special classes created for the week.

The Safari Island Community Center invited all adults 55 years and older to visit the facility during the week, free of charge, and attend regularly scheduled fitness classes and special Active Aging Week fitness programs. “A staffed Information Table was the hub during the week,” said Goergen. “Here, guests signed waivers (before they participated in any programs), signed up for programs, picked up schedules for the week, picked up or completed Active Aging Week feedback forms and had additional questions answered regarding the facility, staff and memberships.” She



*Activity went low-tech at the “Fitness Fun with Free and Homemade Equipment” demonstration presented at WellBound Health & Fitness in Omaha, Nebraska.*

added, “On an average, one-third to one-half of the participants were members, so we saw many new faces during the week.”

Pat Vida at the Doylestown (Pennsylvania) Hospital Health & Wellness Center offered one-week passes to the fitness center and discounts on spa services. Vida reported that “over 200 people attended the week’s full schedule of activities, with about one-half new to the center.”

As part of the incentives at Doylestown, 2 raffles took place. Staff were gratified that a woman who really wanted to join, but could not afford to, won a 3-month pass. The second raffle featured an Active Aging Makeover (3-month membership with personal training, hair styling, make-up application and a facial with microdermabrasion).

Incentives went hand in hand with promotion in the upper peninsula of Michigan. Rachelle Bachran created a flier of Active Aging Week events that was distributed throughout the Houghton/Hancock community. “The flier was inserted into 300 goody bags

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*A tai chi demonstration showed residents at the Rockwood Retirement Community in Spokane, Washington, how they could benefit from qi gong and tai chi.*

filled with donated items given to seniors boarding an afternoon cruise and distributed during Senior Day shopping at local grocery stores and ShopKo [department stores] throughout the month of September.”

As part of a health fair to kick off the week's events, Michele Skeele at the Henderson County Council on Aging in Hendersonville, North Carolina, gave door prizes, including T-shirts and 3-month memberships to some of the county's active-living centers. “Everyone who attended, including the vendors, had a really good time,” said Skeele, although she was disappointed at the turnout (50 participants).

Wittal at The Mulberry built attendance throughout the month by “paying Mulberry Bucks for every activity attended that was on the calendars. On October 1<sup>st</sup> we ended our Open Doors with an auction where they could spend their hard-earned bucks on all sorts of goodies, which were donated from local retailers and merchants.” She noted that

the event “was a huge success and loads of fun, but also a lot of leg work.”

To promote The LifeLine senior exercise program at the YMCA, Wylie produced complimentary coupons and attached them to an ICAA poster hung at 5 locations and encouraged current class members to distribute the coupons. The YMCA gave coupons to anyone who signed-up for membership in September. Three churches put a notice in their bulletins and a press release went to the local newspaper.

“We have approximately 65 people enrolled at 4 different sites,” said Wylie, “and we had 14 *new* individuals try out the classes at no charge. I believe 8 out of the 14 will sign up for our program. I knew once we got them into the classes we could keep the majority of them, because everyone is very friendly and the program is great.”

The week ended for participants at Judson Park Retirement Community with the Achievement Celebration on

Friday night. There was food and recognition of participants, according to Wood, for about 30 attendees. Her advice for building participation is “talk, talk, talk, about the events. We used [ICAA's] great posters to advertise. Offer healthy goodies at break or end of class—food is always a great incentive, and brings a very social aspect to an event.”

### Lessons learned

Start early! Consistent among the advice for planning next year was to start early. “More planning, more time to plan, more team participation from staff and other departments,” counseled Danielle Celdran at Collington Life Care in Mitchellville, Maryland.

Consider the scale of the activities you offer. Some locations offered multiple events on every day of the week. This approach may be successful; it may also be successful to offer one or a few activities on one or 3 days a week, which allows more focused planning and marketing of the events. Bite off what you can chew.

Partnerships work. A number of organizations brought in guest speakers by accessing local resources. For example, WellBound Health & Fitness in Omaha, Nebraska, partnered with speakers from the Diabetes Education Center and the Arthritis Foundation. College professors and representatives from cooperative extension and the Alzheimer's Association were other sources of presenters.

A 3-way partnership proved central to a lecture on arthritis provided by the Arthritis Research Institute of America (ARIA) in Clearwater, Florida, explained Matt Rogers. Speakers from ARIA and Premier Physical Therapy provided the educational content. TVC, Inc., cosponsored the event by providing meeting facilities and door prizes. Lunch

was provided by ARIA for 17 older adults.

Rogers said that media coverage brought in the attendees. “We sent out press releases to all the major and local newspapers, TV and radio. The press release was picked up by the *St. Petersburg Times* and placed on the front page of the local sections (Clearwater and Pinellas Park) the day before the seminar.”

“Our focus was to keep events simple and very meaningful for participants, with minimal challenges of transportation,” commented Behr at Wellness Works, who noted that a local coalition helped the events succeed.

Several people said they sent fliers to local retirement communities, but very few or no adults attended from these facilities. This could be because the fliers were never posted and/or no one at these communities encouraged the residents to attend. Perhaps a telephone call to the wellness department and even partnering with another community would be more successful.

One thing that Eleanor Lorenzi at Plant Recreation Centre (City of Ottawa, Ontario) found was that “each person had learned of [the Active Aging Week event] from a different source. That suggested to me that my efforts to get out the news of the event in several different ways and in various locations had borne fruit.”

Lorenzi advised those “planning to participate in Active Aging Week ... to use every means available to get the word out to people: free community calendars in community papers, bulletin boards in health clinics, community centers, senior residences or apartment buildings, grocery stores (those that will allow such notices to be posted), handouts to existing participants, local broadcast stations.”

During facility tours, Lorenzi asked older participants to volunteer to work out in the weight room “to show that people in this age group can and do strength train. I also asked for volunteers from the senior aquafit group to help during the facility tours—to meet and greet new arrivals while I was showing earlier arrivals around the Centre. Each volunteer was presented with the ICAA Certificate of Volunteer Recognition.”

### Planning ahead for 2007

Active Aging Week is held every year in the last week of September (September 24–October 1, 2007). Activities during the week:

- are free to older adults
- emphasize fun and education
- are held as a single session, or as multiple activities on a single day or multiple days during the week

The posters referred to by the host sites are provided free by ICAA. Visit the organization’s website for these resources, as well as press release formats, a planning guide, handouts, theme ideas, certificates and other materials. This year, host sites could post their locations on ICAA’s Active Aging Week website, which was referred to in ICAA’s national press releases. (See “Resources” on this page for website details.)

In the next issues of the *Journal on Active Aging*, you will find articles to help you develop aspects of the weeklong event, including information on planning, soliciting donations, and marketing the events. Updated materials will also be posted.

You can make the difference in the lives of older adults. Hosting Active Aging Week events requires planning, but the rewards are great for you, your organization, and the people who participate. ☺

*The International Council on Active Aging® thanks all Active Aging Week 2006 host sites for their participation and congratulates them on their efforts to help older adults experience the wellness lifestyle.*

A sidebar of activity ideas follows on pages 52–53.



*Stretches surrounded the walks featured at the Rockwood Retirement Community in Spokane, Washington. A Mystery Trip included an active walking discovery, and the Walk for Life and Health combined guest speakers, exhibits and a walking gait analysis.*

## Resources

Active Aging Week

Professional Resources

[www.icaa.cc/aaw.htm](http://www.icaa.cc/aaw.htm)

# Something for everyone at Active Aging



*Lectures on healthy lifestyles and nutrition were featured as part of the week's activities at the Troy/Montgomery Senior Center (North Carolina).*

## Activities

- Active Aging Scavenger Hunt (bring the grandkids!)
- Art show (program participant's artwork)
- Bowling lane provided a free game w/shoe rental
- Bridge a la Mode
- Chair massage
- Fashion Show and High Tea
- Fitness bingo throughout the week
- Golf practice driving and putting
- Manicures and pedicures
- Pet therapy booth
- Pool party
- Radio show
- Roundtable discussion on older adults' issues, including Alzheimer's disease, long-term care insurance, Medicare/Medicaid, and funeral expenses
- Shuffleboard

## Assessments and screenings

- Blood pressure screening
- Fitness assessments: get up and go, biceps curl, dribbling the ball, sit and reach
- Memory Care Screening
- Wellness on Wheels (WOW) van

- screenings for PSA (prostate specific antigen), bone density checks, cholesterol, blood pressure, glucose
- Your Spine as You Age

## Demonstrations

- Chair exercise
- Facility tours
- Fitness Fun with Free and Homemade Equipment
- Line dancing
- Orientations to exercise equipment
- Water exercise
- Yoga; tai chi; qi (or chi) gong

## Health fairs

- Active Aging Week Kick-off: displays, demonstrations every 20–30 minutes, door prizes
- Fall Prevention Health Fair addressed home safety, medications, hearing and vision challenges, strength training
- Health fair displays and vendors: local fitness centers, merchants, professional services, medical/health products and services
- Health fair services: free balance assessment, class demonstrations, speakers, educational handouts, answers to questions
- Party in the Park: health screenings, fitness presentations and lunch

## Music

- Intergenerational Dinner Dance, It's All About Magical Music (a retirement facility and soldiers from an active military installation)
- New Horizon's Band concert
- The Harvest Dance, with music by the Bruce Pennell Quintet
- Nostalgia—A Fun Evening of Dancing & Oldies Music

## Physical activity classes

- Balance Class
- Ballroom dancing
- Chair yoga; gentle yoga; Yoga and Strength Training for Seniors; Revive Yoga; Alternative Yoga; Yo-Wei (yoga with small weighted balls)

- Family Fitness (residents brought grandkids/great-grandkids)
- Land classes: chair fitness; low-impact aerobics; strength training; Spin Off; Get Started; NIA; body sculpting; Jazzercise; Active Flow Exercise Class; Strength for Daily Living; Feeling Fit at 50; Ball and Outdoor Fitness
- Meditation
- Tai chi; Energy Exercises for Body, Mind and Spirit—A Fusion of Chi Gong, Tai Chi and Shiatsu
- Water exercise: general classes; gentle aquafitness; aqua tai chi

## Seminars

- Adult health and development; healthy lifestyles
- Beautiful hair after 50; aging & changing; microdermabrasion
- Benefits of Strength Training; never too late for exercise
- Health conditions: diabetes management (nutrition and exercise); arthritis education; rotator cuff injuries; multiple sclerosis; exercise safety, injury prevention and staying active for older adults with and without arthritis
- Exercising at Home: What to know to age successfully! (in-home exercise machines and top 10 exercises for functional fitness); Secrets to Being Active Without Ever Leaving Home; Home Modifications as We Age
- Falls and Recovery; fall prevention workshop with a food break of fresh fruit and cheese
- Games to Train your Brain; Maintain Your Brain; Memory Loss and Dementia
- How to plan for retirement; Medicare plan changes, Internet phishing fraud prevention
- Laughter is the best medicine; writing your memoirs
- Nutrition: general; weight loss; how to eat with diabetes and arthritis; how to read nutrition labels; Eating Well as We Age Gracefully; vitamins, herbs and all-natural remedies; cooking

demonstration; fish oils and healthy aging

- Posture training; balance
- Preview of the SilverSneakers® Fitness Program
- Recreational Activities for Active Agers
- Safe walking; Senior Safety
- Spiritual eldering and life transitions
- Therapeutic massage
- Walking: posture, strength, flexibility and endurance to walk more safely; Staying Well in Order to Enjoy Our Beautiful Environment (Nordic walking demonstration and outdoor walk)

## **Trips**

- Tour a new YMCA
- Trip to the bowling alley

## **Walks**

- Alzheimer's Memory Walk
- Breakfast Club (registered walkers meet every week and have monthly breakfast centered around a health-related topic)
- Fitness Trail (stations include walking a straight line, sit-to-stand, stepping stones, ball toss, agility drills)
- Local walks with partner organizations: Walk Across North Carolina; Stroll around the ponds on the Jackson Park Nature Trail; Lunchtime Apple Route Walk (incentives provided), Walk up to the house for a "Visit with Lincoln" (Carl Sandberg National Historic Site); Five-mile Downtown Walk; Hunger Coalition Walk
- Mystery Trip (walk along the Spokane River hunting for moose)
- Step Into Action—Walking with Pedometers (34 participants tracked their steps for the week and all received donated prizes)
- Walk for Life and Health!!! (guest speakers, exhibits and a walking gait analysis, choosing shoes, stretching, shoe and walking gear display)
- Walk for Wellness (all levels of care walked around retirement community campus)

# Building on success

*"Overall our events were wonderful! We had 250 participants throughout the week. Some were regulars, but most were new to our programming. This was our first year hosting and we are pleased with our results. We are looking forward to next year and hope to double our numbers."*

## Cherie Jackson

Johnson County Park & Recreation District  
Olathe, Kansas

*"This was our first year participating in Active Aging Week, and it was a huge success! We had 4 events during the week and then we ended the week with the Alzheimer's Memory Walk. We had great participation, with about 60 residents participating in at least one of each of our events."*

## Renee Harlow

Country Meadows of West Shore  
Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania

*"Although we only sold a few new members, we felt we had achieved success due to all the positive feedback."*

## Donna Duckworth

Workout Plus  
Quakertown, Pennsylvania

*"Overall, it was a positive success with new members acquired. Response from attendees and vendors was very positive."*

## William Macy

Waterford at Three Fountains  
Medford, Oregon

*"The facility at which I work was very pleased with the success of this week, and we plan to participate in it again next year, and hope to make it an even greater success."*

## Eleanor Lorenzi

Plant Recreation Centre  
Ottawa, Canada