

Parc
Knitting
Club



Active Aging Week 2009

By making blankets, members of the knitting club at Parc Communities in Atlanta gave back to others during Active Aging Week

Active Aging Week 2010

Dates: September 19–25, 2010

Theme: Be Active Your Way

Plenty of movement, lots of fun and clever delivery of education hallmark the 2009 health promotion campaign spearheaded by the International Council on Active Aging®

With twin goals of education and fun, Active Aging Week 2009 swept through the last week of September. Organizations large and small hosted events that allowed older adults to enjoy their favorite activities and to try something new.

As the ICAA's annual health promotion event, Active Aging Week puts the power of planning into the hands of the individuals and teams who host events. This philosophy allows organizers to determine the number and nature of activities

for a customized program appropriate to the intended audiences.

Before the week began, press releases, announcements and newspaper articles started appearing on the Internet, representing the many printed stories, flyers and brochures heralding the activities. This year many hosts noted that they planned activities to represent all the dimensions of wellness. Several types of activities made regular appearances:

- health fairs, with booths, drawings and door prizes
- dances, with line dancing popular along with dinner-dances
- music, created by older adults, bands and guest performers
- falls prevention programs, with exercises and balance training
- tai chi and yoga classes
- tournaments, games and challenges

- presentations on cognitive health and mental health, often on Monday, September 21, which was World Alzheimer's Day
- walks in parks and other outdoor areas
- water games and classes
- craft shows
- screenings for blood pressure, diabetes, cholesterol and other chronic conditions

As Active Aging Week hosts began sending reports of their activities to the ICAA office, and posts appeared on the week's Facebook page, it was clear that hosts maintained participants' interest by offering new twists on favorite activities.

Spreading the message of active aging

Organizations with many locations embraced Active Aging Week this year. While a large organization can encourage many sites to participate and may present a companywide program, individuals at each site customized the week according to their specific population's preferences and capabilities.

To celebrate the week, Aegis Therapies launched its first Walk Your Age event, where people walked the number of steps equivalent to the year in which they were born—or more! For example, a person born in 1928 was encouraged to walk 1,928 steps. Those who could not walk did other exercises, which were converted to an approximate number of steps. Among 550 locations, older adults, their families and staff logged an outstanding 50 million steps, or 23,816 miles.

All 50 Senior Lifestyle communities hosted Active Aging Week events. Using the template from the ICAA website, many of the community marketing coordinators requested proclamations from local officials and most received them. In Cincinnati, Mayor Mark Mallory personally presented his proclamation to the residents of Evergreen Wellspring.

"Each day of the week our communities focused on a different dimension of wellness from our Wellness Everyday™ program," reported Lindsey Cherner, Corporate Marketing Coordinator. "Some of the highlights included laughter yoga, spiritual balloon release, meditation/relaxation day with Reiki and aromatherapy, drum circles and monthlong walking competitions measured by pedometers. The events were free and well attended."

Active Aging Week events were hosted by CRSA-managed communities, Masterpiece Living sites, and all of Touchmark's 11 retirement communities in the United States and Canada.

Once again, Millennium Development took over New York City and the boroughs with a host of events. As a non-profit that operates youth and older-adult programs, Millennium faced funding challenges, according to Joseph Bernardo, Active Adult Programs Coordinator. Millennium's strategy was to partner with other organizations and use free spaces. It worked. The week's activities took place in 10 city parks, seven branches of the Brooklyn Public Library, six churches and Brooklyn's major shopping center. Plus, Millennium distributed more than 200 free exercise bands during the week.

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Find Active Aging Week on Facebook

Great photos and interesting stories from 2009 are posted on Facebook. Visit www.facebook.com and log in. Search for Active Aging Week. You'll find more camaraderie, photos and ideas.

Special themes and events

Within the space of this article, it's impossible to relay all the great ideas, fun activities and unifying themes. The following is a selection reported by registered hosts.

Taking to heart the theme of Get Up and Go—Seven Continents in Seven Days, the residents of Brandermill Woods Retirement Community in Midlothian, Virginia, grabbed their passports and bandanas before traveling from Asia to Antarctica during the week. They walked the Great Wall of China with the Alzheimer's Association, viewed an ice sculpting demonstration on Antarctica Day and enjoyed the Exotic Animal Show on Australia Day.

"Residents and their families came to the animal show—we even had a kangaroo here!" reported Mary Carmichael, Communications Coordinator. "The entire facility was decorated with maps, pictures and flags from all over the world. Photos of mystery landmarks were shown on the in-house television station all week." The staff created travel-related puzzle books, trivia and word games, and adapted favorite activities, such as creating International Bingo by substituting names of cities for the numbers.

In Germantown, Tennessee, The Village at Germantown delivered a whopping 40 new events this year, all of which attracted new participants. The most memorable activity was probably the paintball art. "We used paint guns and a large can-

vas and had the residents lined up to shoot the gun," explained Michelle Webb, Resident Services Coordinator. "You would have never expected the excitement and fire in [people's] eyes to get to shoot a 'gun.' Of course, ... we made a masterpiece." With the paintball art event, Webb added, it didn't matter if participants were ambulatory or in wheelchairs. "It was fun for all!"

Baseball was the theme in the Memory Support Unit of Chesapeake Retirement Community in Newport News, Virginia. "For Active Aging Week, our goal was to get the residents to try something new," said Meredith T. Macaluso, CTRS Wellness Manager. "To set the mood, we brought in baseball caps, peanuts in the shell, and sang ball game songs. We did a seventh inning stretch, and cheered for each other," Macaluso continued. By composing teams of residents and staff, everyone was able to participate. And "the peanuts were also a big hit!" she reported. "This was a fun way to introduce a new game, and we were very excited at how well this event went over."

At Parc Communities, with four locations in the Atlanta area, the whole week was named Passport to Active Aging. Angela Butler-Hackett, Corporate Wellness Director, explained that each passport had a place for the participant's name and contact information—which also identified guests for the marketing department. After each activity, individuals had their passports signed.

"Even the Health Fair participants were given passports that they would get signed by certain vendors or seminar speakers of their choosing," said Butler-Hackett. "At the end of the Health Fair, they could turn the completed/signed passport in for a prize drawing." A formal Passport Ball ended the week. Continuing the theme, the ball was set as if attendees were going aboard a ship, and the menu featured food from distant lands of Greece, Italy and China.

By combining Active Aging Week with a popular local event, residents of Touchmark at Meadow Lake Village in Meridian, Idaho, received congratulations for their walking prowess. Touchmark's team of residents and staff participated in the 2009 St. Luke's Women's Fitness Celebration, where—cheered on by tuxedo-clad men—more than 10,000 women ran, walked or strolled in the one-mile or 5K event. All participants over age 70 were honored with a special medal of recognition.

In New Orleans, five Miss Daisies shared the stage in the Lambeth House Little Theatre production of *Driving Miss Daisy*, said Kasey S. Bealer, LifeStyle Director, so everyone had a turn. Bealer put together a contest "to encourage residents to participate in events/classes that they've never tried—and, boy, was that popular!" For the afternoon performance, residents and outside guests packed the theater.

Fun and falls risk? Surrounded by a "fun group atmosphere," residents of Grand Lake Gardens in Oakland, California,



participated in three days of balance, gait, aerobic and flexibility testing. Afterwards, they saw their personal results compared against national norms for their age and gender, and used these numbers to establish goals and strategies for improvement. As a result of the Active Aging Week program, more residents are now participating in Grand Lake's fitness classes.

For its third year as an Active Aging Week host site, Gold's Gym in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, added additional classes and activities to the weekly schedule, observed Jan Capen, SilverSneakers Senior Advisor. By popular demand, the week ended with the three-mile Capital Area Greenbelt Walk-A-Thon. Walkers could donate to the Greenbelt Association fund to maintain

the 20-mile recreational trail that loops around Pennsylvania's capital city. "We were proud to wear our Active Aging 2009 T-shirts supplied by Gold's Gym," commented Capen.

Among the benefits of Active Aging Week, program managers have the

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opportunity to provide samples of activities and use participant reaction to judge if these activities belong on the regular schedule. Several different activities made the grade this year.

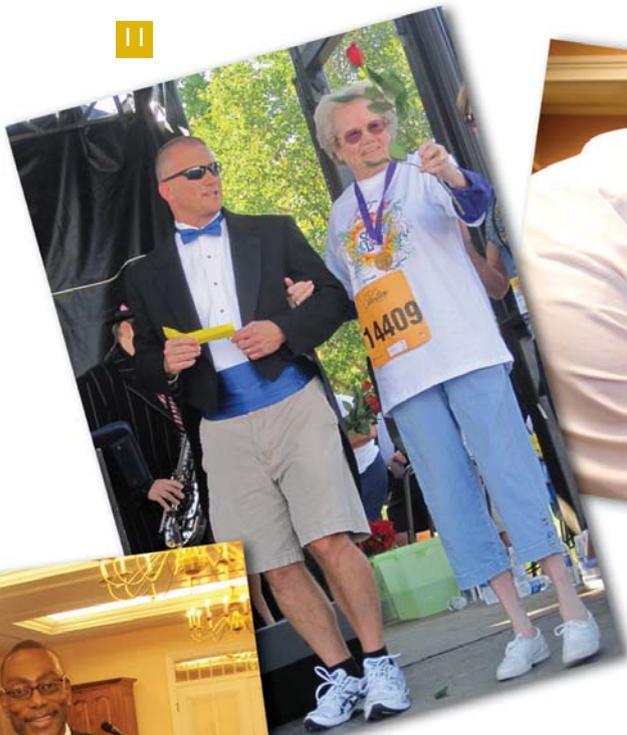
After debuting during Active Aging Week, yoga is now on the regular calendar at Brandermill Woods in Virginia, according to Mary Carmichael.

“Residents are also requesting, and the staff will be planning, more cooking demonstrations,” Carmichael said. And at Atria Assisted Living in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, Zumba was the week’s highlight, reported Tammy Marie Davis, Engage Life Director. “We had so much energy, laughing and dancing going on that the instructor has volunteered to come in and offer a class once a month.”

Sports highlights

The Olympic Games inspired the residents of Fountain Square in Lombard, Illinois, who made their Olympic Flag for the opening ceremony, reported Kimberly White. Morning games included dart throwing, a beanbag toss and a race around the community. Following a barbecue lunch, the games continued, including a knowledge bowl, Wii bowl-

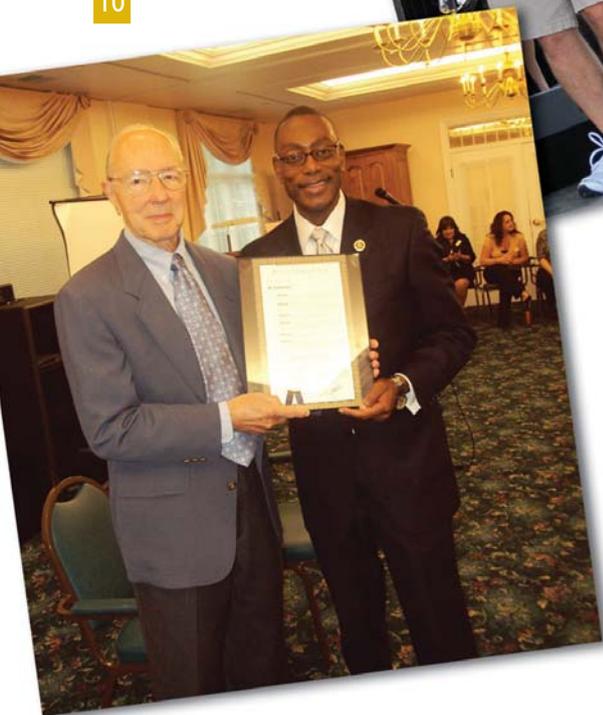
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ing and golf putting. At the end of the day, every participant was awarded a medal.

The Royal Estates Bowling Maniacs, the Wii bowling team from Royal Estates of Wichita Falls, Texas, graciously challenged the local 50+ Senior Zone “townies.” The two teams of 16 faced off, with the Royal Estates Bowling Maniacs identified by their matching T-shirts. Although Royal Estate’s team lost the tournament, “everyone said it was the most fun ever,” proclaimed Angel Sheets, Marketing Director.

To say that college football is a pastime at Capstone Village would be an understatement, observed Rene Katsinas, Director of Residential Services. The community is located on the campus of the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, and residents are passionate about their home team. At the Backyard Quarterback Game during Active Aging Week, players tossed the ball at 48”-high inflatable football players, then followed the game with a hog roast—an unobtrusive statement about a rival college team.

Capstone Village did not forget track events, however, with residents, staff and family members clipping on pedometers. When the total number of steps was counted, this group had logged over 2,786 miles during the week.

Strong participation also marked the week’s fitness classes and fitness assessments at the Fort Wayne Park and Recreation Department Community Center, according to Kathie Kiker, Older Adult Specialist. For the more competitive spirits, Monday featured a Wii bowling tournament, with \$10 gift cards for the top scorers; Tuesday included a singles double-elimination tournament Corn Hole Tournament; and Wednesday presented a doubles single-elimination

Lessons learned

After Active Aging Week, it’s instructive to sit down with the team that helped organize and run things and review the events. What worked really well? What went wrong? What could be improved for next year?

“The most effective thing I did to make the week successful was early planning, getting the whole house involved and really being excited about the whole week,” said Kimberly White at Fountain Square in Lombard, Illinois. “I talked up the events and planned fun activities for all to enjoy. I also had backup plans. The day of [our] Olympics, it rained, but I had a plan in place just in case. I also let the residents get involved in planning some of the events. We just had fun and enjoyed every day.”

At Gold’s Gym in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, “designating a space (table or bulletin board) well in advance with a calendar of the upcoming events for Active Aging Week was important to the success of our week,” reported SilverSneakers Senior Advisor Jan Capen. “Our table was set up by early August. Also, having sign-up sheets for each activity in advance fostered a commitment for ... participation. This year Gold’s Gym and SilverSneakers provided us with door prizes (workout towels, T-shirts, free smoothie drinks, etc.) for each 50+ class.” Added Capen, “Our members and guests did enjoy that!”

For the first time, Rene Katsinas, Director of Residential Services at Capstone Village in Tuscaloosa, recruited University of Alabama students to run activities. The baseball team and student business organizations helped out. Katsinas contacted the campus

advisor for all student organizations, and six student organizations contacted her, she said. The students were very helpful, and she will definitely contact them again.

Partnerships for prizes were successful for Shellie Laird, Health and Conditioning Coordinator at the West Vancouver Aquatic Center in British Columbia, Canada. The partners donated prizes for a contest to reward people who attended one of the four 45-minute demo classes (cha cha, line dancing and basic strength/stretch fitness class). The prizes included physiotherapy sessions, massage, full orthotic foot examination, laser therapy and memberships.

“It’s amazing what people will do if you just ask,” commented Kris Carne from Village Cooperative of Wausau, Wisconsin. Carne recruited “very generous companies and sponsors” who provided drinks for participants at the events; a \$70 gift certificate to one of the attendees at the “Proper Shoe Fit” event; and veggie wraps for the “Eating Healthy while eating out” presentation. In addition, the local Aging and Disability Resource Center sponsored a tai chi instructor.

Finally, Angela Butler-Hackett, Corporate Wellness Director at Parc Communities in Atlanta, said the organization will simplify health fairs in future years. “The residents stated that there is just too much to do at once,” Butler-Hackett noted. “It may be best to have the flu shots and vendors on one day and then the seminars on different days. They just couldn’t do all the screenings they wanted and missed some of the seminars that they wanted to see.”

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table tennis tournament. Ten-dollar gift cards were awarded to tournament winners.

Music and dance cross the dimensions

It could be argued that virtually everything a person does crosses multiple wellness dimensions, and people planning Active Aging Week events try to take advantage of that synergy. Music and dancing are always favorite activities, and they encompass emotional, physical, intellectual, social and perhaps spiritual domains. For the musicians and dance teachers, vocational wellness also enters the picture.

This year there were big bands and chamber music ensembles, bell choirs (often with children) and individual pianist-singers.

The Harvest Festival at San Joaquin Gardens in Fresno, California, featured activities for residents in all levels of care as well as their family members and staff. Along with the carnival games (ring toss, dart throw or ball toss) and food, the Sierra Riders cowboy band performed country western favorites, playing songs that many residents grew up with.

After kicking off the week with a health fair, Atria Assisted Living in Elizabethtown welcomed The Boot Scootin' Grannies. "This group of line dancers has women from the ages of 60 to 85," remarked the community's Tammy Marie Davis. "It is very inspirational for our clients, as they see that they can still be as active as they want and they can still enjoy dancing in their Golden Years." She concluded, "All in all, Active Aging Week was a huge success at Atria Elizabethtown, and our seniors were very active and joined in all the awesome activities."

Wednesday was a big day for the arts at Sterling Glen of Roslyn, in Roslyn, New York. A morning lecture looked at the

experiences of Jewish immigrants through literature, while an evening presentation on New York's Art Deco architecture drew nearly 100 people. (This presentation was a joint venture with the New York Council on the Humanities.) In between, music and dance filled the halls.

Nina Gordon, Sterling Glen's Engage Life Director, enthused about the entertainment provided by performers with the Ms. New York Senior America Talent Showcase. Gordon explained that the group "sang songs from country western to opera, told jokes, danced ballet and tapped. At the end of this inspiring one-hour presentation, they all introduced themselves and told their ages—from 60 to 88—and it was really a perfect example of active aging."

The spirit of giving

A core philosophy of Active Aging Week is that events are free, so money is not a barrier to participation. Over the years, organizations have used the week as a time to give back to the community. On a voluntary basis, participants have donated their time, efforts and sometimes money to a worthy cause.

For example, Touchmark at Wedgewood in Edmonton, Alberta, held a charity walk in support of CNIB, a charity in Canada that aids people with vision loss. Touchmark residents were joined by grade four students from Good Shepherd School and residents from Caleb Manor Retirement Community.

Fingers do the work at Parc Knitting Club, whose members made blankets for Hospital Hospice. In addition, Parc Communities' Passport Ball included a raffle to benefit the Beauty Becomes You Foundation, noted Angela Butler-Hackett. This new charity "focuses on providing a positive experience for older adults and their families by fulfilling the common everyday grooming needs of seniors with limited access, opportunity

and means to esthetic care programs," she explained.

Community outreach was also a focus at Harbour Village in Greendale, Wisconsin. Knowing that the local American Legion Post hosts a morning bingo session, the community's marketing and dining services teams along with residents visited the post, where they made and delivered more than 100 blueberry smoothies, plus the recipe. But the Harbour Village gang didn't stop there. Along with the smoothies, they delivered a flyer announcing Active Aging Week events.

Worth the effort

Active aging means living life to the fullest. Health promotion means encouraging people to adopt healthy behaviors. Active Aging Week combines these concepts by introducing people to all the options they have to live a full and engaged life, enhanced by choosing healthy behaviors.

Hosting events takes work, but it's worth it. The week reinvigorates regulars and motivates those new to an active-aging lifestyle. For example, new members joined the WellStar Health Place, a medically based fitness/wellness center in Marietta, Georgia, according to Rickie Ernst, Fitness Coordinator. And at The Village at Germantown, "residents absolutely love Active Aging Week," confirmed Michelle Webb. "They know what is involved and can't wait to take part and see all the new events we have planned."

With that kind of interest, good health and well-being can't be far behind. ☺



In 2009, Active Aging Week was sponsored by Aegis Therapies, the Institute for Preventive Foot Health and Thor•Lo.

Key to Active Aging Week photos

Picture 1

The hallways were packed when older adults walked their age with Aegis Therapies

Picture 2

At Brandermill Woods Retirement Community, Mrs. Vaughan created an expert sushi roll during Asia Day

Picture 3

The lure of Tuesday morning quarter-backing drew Capstone Village football fans outside to toss the ball (in this case, beanbags) to the team

Picture 4

The rain kept away from the Chesapeake Retirement Community Fitness Fun Walk at a local park, where everyone walked at least one mile. Along the route, other older adults shared their ages and fitness routines

Picture 5

A local grocery store in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, hosted the Nutritional Grocery Shopping Tour for Meth-Wick Community, and registered dietitian Judy Fitzgibbons led the healthy hunt

Picture 6

The big hit at Atria Assisted Living in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, was a Zumba Gold class led by a local instructor

Picture 7

In between the steel drum experience, water pilates and walk around the harbor, people at Mercy Ridge Retirement Community in Timonium, Maryland, found time to learn how to dip and decorate with melted chocolate

Picture 8

Participants knew where to go when Millennium Development's official site signs appeared around New York City. The banners were everywhere, including Amersfort Park

Picture 9

Millennium Development took advantage of free space in local parks for exercise and activities. This class took place at Tribute Park in Queens, New York

Picture 10

Not only did Cincinnati Mayor Mark Mallory issue an Active Aging Week proclamation to the residents of Evergreen Wellspring, but he personally delivered the message to the head of the resident council

Picture 11

On race day, it's good to be a resident at Meadow Lake Village in Meridian, Idaho, where tuxedos and roses recognized women over 70

Picture 12

At Parc Communities in Atlanta, multiple health screenings were well attended during the kickoff health fair

Picture 13

Even bingo got active at Lambeth House in New Orleans during the Farmers Market Bingo fitness break

Picture 14

Balloon ride, anyone? Field Day at Sunnyside in Harrisonburg, Virginia, featured tethered rides, a display of race cars, a scavenger hunt and other fun activities

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For information about the ICAA Career Center, call toll-free 866-335-9777 or 604-734-4466. Or go to www.icaa.cc/careercenter.htm