

Active Aging Week 2010



Active Aging Week included a walk-a-thon and T-shirts for participants from Gold's Gym in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Active Aging Week on Facebook

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Opportunities abounded for older adults to explore the dimensions of wellness and their own boundaries during this annual health promotion event spearheaded by ICAA

It all began in 2003 with an idea: If people had a chance to try out or learn about wellness activities, maybe they would discover an approach that suited their lifestyles and interests. Active Aging Week was launched.

Today, in 2010, Active Aging Week is a special occasion that many hosts and older adults look forward to. Hosts say they gain new participants and reinspire their regulars. Participants discover that many activities contribute to their enjoyment and participation in life. And, since they often help plan and run the week's events, they become ambassadors to their friends and neighbors.

This year the organizers who host Active Aging Week and the participants took to heart the theme: Be Active Your Way.

As the hosts sent in their reports to the International Council on Active Aging® (ICAA), it was clear that the dimensions of wellness were well represented.

Following is a sampling of the activities offered during the week. Many thanks to all the hosts who registered for the week and sent their stories to ICAA, and to everyone who posted on ICAA's Active Aging Week Facebook pages.

Themes infused the week

Have you ever dreamed of going on safari? Africa was one of the stops—along with the Ancient Ruins of Greece, the Forbidden Palace, and an evening tour of Paris—during Active Aging Week 2010 at Capstone Village in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. With passports in hand, the intrepid trekkers earned a stamp for each activity they attended, explained Rene Katsinas, Director of Residential Services. Taking advantage of Capstone's location on the University of Alabama campus, many activities were developed and led by student groups. Activities included Italian bocce ball, Greek belly dancing,

Polish dance, African games, the International Documenting Justice Films of Africa and a presentation on the United Nations. Interwoven were an International Fashion Show and the Rite Aid Bingo Bonanza.

Game shows were the theme for Castle Pointe at Baywinde in Webster, New York. At the kickoff, residents learned about the theme and the sister community in Florida where they would (figuratively) travel. Their goal was “to get to Florida by accumulating mileage through actively participating in the ... programs in the days ahead,” explained Cindy Caprio, Programming Director. With pedometers and enthusiasm, day one began with *The Gong Show* theme, featuring resident talent from knitting through humor, singing and a performance by the Humdingers kazoo band. The next day echoed *The Amazing Race* show. In partnership with the local YMCA, a wide variety of physical activities were offered, including Nordic pole walking, line dancing, water exercise and Drums Alive. “By the end of the week, I think staff at Baywinde started to get a bit concerned about me,” admitted Caprio. “Every day I could be found watching my computer, studying different game shows and playing their theme songs to get me into the mood.”

At Montclair Estates in Garland, Texas, the competition was stiff, observed Executive Director Kimberly Brawley. That’s because in true *Survivor* style, the Tribe Typhoon and Tribe Tsunami matched wits all week. Each day began with exercise classes, such as Safari Stretches, Amphibious Aquatics (water aerobics), Island Pilates, Tribal Vitality and a daily walking event dubbed *Survivor Trek*. Participants received a bead for each activity to add to their necklaces. These beads were tallied at the end of the week and points awarded to the teams for participation. Every day featured “a scavenger hunt with clues that ultimately led [participants] to find their ‘idol,’” said Brawley.

“The tribes who found their idol brought them to Tribal Council each evening for a whopping 100 points.” The council included cocktails, hors d’oeuvres and entertainment.

Each day of the week was themed around a wellness dimension (emotional, vocational, physical, social, spiritual, intellectual) at Villa de San Antonio in San Antonio, Texas. On most days, a discussion of the theme was followed by an activity. “Most notable was the quality of group discussion during emotional wellness and spiritual wellness,” said Darryl Greer, Wellness Director. Staff served as group facilitators, and they observed that many participants “opened up to discuss topics in a nonjudgmental manner. In some discussions, residents aired internal stressors, current challenges ... and items in their life that keep them motivated,” Greer explained. An example of activities was the social hour that followed the discussion on social wellness.

Boot camp may be a unique theme for Active Aging Week, but the interpretation at Heritage Legacy (Sun City West, Arizona) brought cheer to the new “recruits.” After a Bootcamp Briefing, recruits received their dog tags/uniforms (bandanas courtesy of a local hospice), orders and a ditty bag (filled with goodies from another hospice). They also heard about successful aging from Jane Zimmerman, who arrived on the tricycle she rides 10 miles a day. In keeping with the military theme, the Dining Services team presented Mess Hall; R&R day featured a pop-up store for shopping; and the final USO show featured Mail Call. Staff had reached out to families and friends of residents, asking them to send letters saying how residents impacted their lives, and the community’s chaplain delivered the mail. “We have a soldier who has just enlisted in the Army,” said Penelope Weber, Director of Resident Programs. “He, his wife and three daughters were our guests, as we are adopting him, and his family. He is *our* ‘Army of One.’ We had

music, refreshments, and a tender ending to a week of events,” added Weber—“active aging ... our way.”

Lifelong learning continues

Brandermill University (BU) was the theme of Active Aging Week at Brandermill Woods Retirement Community in Midlothian, Virginia. “We decorated our facility with different banners and signs that welcomed back our BU seniors,” reported Mary Carmichael, Communications Coordinator. “We started our week by passing out Resident Report Cards, an Acceptance Letter to BU, BU buttons/pencils and a quiz booklet full of fun trivia, science, math and geography questions. Each day we had a variety of activities that covered different college subjects and the different components of active aging,” Carmichael noted. “During our Pep Rally, our mascot—the BU Buck—made an appearance, and we passed out megaphones and pompoms.”

A highlight was the science project. For this contest, residents created a container to protect their raw eggs during a two-story drop (for a program description, go to the November/December 2010 issue of *ICAA Functional U*[®], available in the members only section at www.icaa.cc). Friday found many BU graduates receiving their diplomas, in step with the class song written by the resident chorus. To wrap up the week, a class reunion was held. “Once again, another very successful and *fun* Active Aging Week,” said Carmichael. “We look forward to next year.”

The 17 different events offered during the week at Seasons in Cincinnati, Ohio, were launched with a procession and opening ceremony. At the ceremony, Tom Weidman, President of the Sycamore Township Trustees, presented Seasons’ Executive Director Tom Rotz with a proclamation declaring September 19–25, 2010, Active Aging Week in the

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township. For Activities Director Petrina Gantzer, the week's favorite event was the introduction of Seasons University. "We began classes in history (the most intriguing couples in history), Spanish for Fun, and Art (a painting class introducing water colors, pastels or oils instructed by one of our residents, Sam Skurow)," said Gantzer. "These classes will continue once a week for six weeks."

Walking rules the week

Sporting brightly colored T-shirts with the slogan "Get Active" on the front, over 100 walkers joined the Active Aging Celebration Walk at Active Generations, a community service provider in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Area retirement communities were invited to join the walk, and the location bringing the most

people (23) was given an award. "After the walk, we held a reception and gave away great healthy food and door prizes," recalled Lisa Howard, Program Director. Local businesses donated the door prizes and a local drug store sponsored the week, including the refreshments at the walk. Additional activities included fitness/nutrition and healthy living presentations, a Healthy Living Health Fair and balance/falls screening.

In 2009, Aegis Therapies (a Golden Living company) piloted a one-day walking program during Active Aging Week. Satisfied with the results, the organization went all out in 2010, with five days of programs and the signature "WALK! with Aegis Therapies" in 600 locations. Everyone participating in the initiative

received an activity card for the week, and walked 15–30 minutes on each of the five days. They listened to upbeat songs on a CD narrated by national fitness expert Chris Freytag, which was custom-made for these activities. "WALK! with Aegis Therapies served not only as a highly worthwhile educational tool at each location, but also as a terrific morale booster for residents and staff alike," said Sofia Kosmetatos, Public Relations Specialist at Golden Living. "The excitement was palpable for weeks leading up to the event as participants planned for and looked forward to the various activities."

During Active Aging Week, each participant's activity card was stamped to mark days they completed both the daily walking exercise and the planned wellness



activity. Participating sites calculated the number of miles walked and reported this information on a special website created for the celebration. (Look for more details on WALK! with Aegis Therapies in an upcoming profile in the *Journal on Active Aging*[®]. As a winner of a 2010 Innovators Award, the walking program will also be highlighted in an article introducing these ICAA trailblazers in the *Journal's* January/February 2011 issue.)

Urban walking poles are used in Origin Power Stride, a program offered by Canadian company Origin Active Lifestyle Communities. At Cedarwood Station Retirement Residence, an Origin community in Airdrie, Alberta, Active Aging Week featured a workshop to teach participants how to power stride. The workshop “definitely attracted new people and participants within the community,” commented Bonnie Whitney, Life Enrichment Coordinator. In response to a Golden Sneaker Challenge from a sister community (one point per every 100 steps, two points per every Power Stride step, and additional points for program length), many people joined in—even walking inside to gain points on rainy days. The result? Cedarwood Station was the proud recipient of the first annual Golden Sneaker, having accumulated 6,475 points.

The Mayor Pro Tem of Los Altos, California, joined the walk around The Terraces at Los Altos campus, reinforcing the proclamation of Active Aging Week, reported Cathy Jensen, Director, Residential Activities and Lifestyle. Jensen contacted the local newspaper, which covered the event. A first-time demonstration of cooking and nutrition facts was so successful that The Terraces will now schedule a demonstration once a month. “I really enjoyed planning the variety of events for the week,” said Jensen, who considers active aging “very important” for senior living. “The ICAA website was extremely helpful,” she noted, “because I

could decide how much or how little to be involved.”

A triathlon isn't strictly walking, but steps were certainly featured at Pennsylvania-based Country Meadows. Three communities participated, according to Emily Gernier, Fitness Director at the company's Hershey campus. “During this event, each resident was challenged to climb six flights of stairs, ride a recumbent bike for 15 minutes, and walk outside for half-a-mile.” Gernier added that “the event turned out to be very successful due to the fact that 23 residents (especially the 15 who were new participants) accomplished something challenging in a safe and fun way. To see them grin ear-to-ear and raise their arms upon finishing is a rewarding moment as a fitness professional.”

Raising awareness

At Gold's Gym in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, “we utilized this special week to bring awareness to outdoor community

projects and volunteer opportunities available to our active older adults within and around the Harrisburg area,” observed Jan Capen, SilverSneakers Senior Advisor. Building on past Active Aging Week experiences, Capen offered two guided tours of the Five Senses Garden, which is maintained and staffed by volunteers, and ended the week with a three-mile Capital Area Greenbelt Walk-A-Thon, where participants could donate to charity. Throughout the week, there were special and regular classes and a healthy buffet luncheon. Undeterred by being on crutches because of an accident the week before, Capen served as organizer, cheerleader and scorekeeper during a miniature golf outing.

Only a few weeks into a reorganization that created the formal wellness program at Mission Ridge/The Vista, in Billings, Montana, Wellness Director Stephanie

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Gushwa and her two wellness colleagues hosted Active Aging Week with the “goal of expanding resident, staff, and community involvement in wellness.” Monday’s kickoff event was very full, with free health screenings, Wii Fit demonstrations, a strength and stretch exercise class, an outdoor walk around the campus that included wellness stations, an Arthritis Foundation Aquatic Program, a circuit-training class, and a presentation by a local orthopedic surgeon who spoke on “The Benefits of Exercise for Seniors.” “We had drawings for prizes, and the more activities people attended, the more chances they had to sign up for the draw-

ings,” commented Gushwa. “We enjoyed seeing our residents get involved in the activities,” she continued, mentioning that “our guest speakers promoted activity so much that we had more people sign up for our regular classes and [they] have continued to attend.”

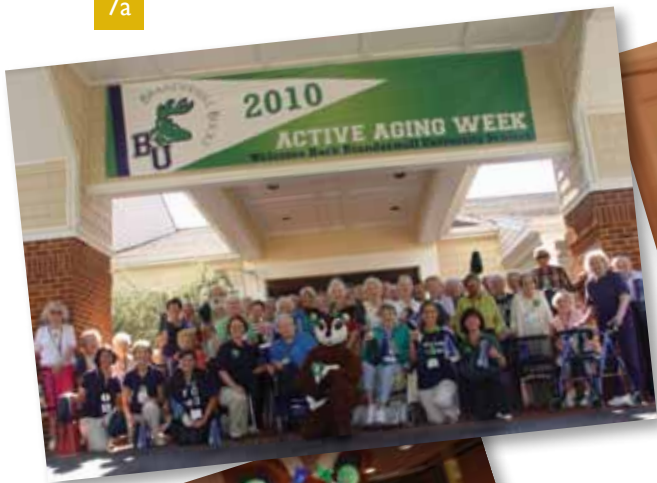
At the San Gabriel Adult Recreation Center in San Gabriel, California, outreach to local service providers expanded program opportunities. “The week’s activities included blood pressure checks provided by Dreamweaver Medical Group, a fitness demonstration by Curves and cholesterol screening by Alhambra

Hospital,” noted Theresa Johnson, Recreation Coordinator. “All of the activities were enjoyed by our seniors, and we also saw a couple of new faces come in to see the fitness demonstration presented by Curves.”

Expanding the reach

Throughout the week, hosts invited members of the community to join them. At Seasons’ Senior Block Party Day, about 60 people from area seniors centers visited to compete at shuffleboard, chair volleyball and Wii bowling, reported Petrina Gantzer. She credited the marketing department for helping to bring in so

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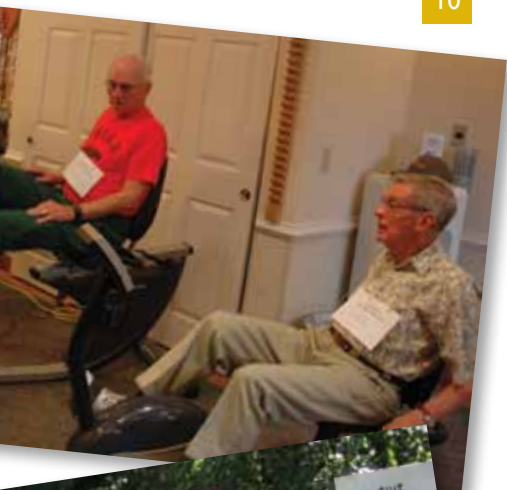


many people by planning a day of games and sending invitations.

Over 200 people from the community at large participated in the 55+ Wellness Health Fair, titled “More to Life,” according to Angela Butler-Hackett, Parc Corporate Wellness Director (Atlanta, Georgia). Sponsored by a local hospital, “area independent and assisted living communities, senior centers, and other vendors offered health screenings, exercise and dance classes, brain fitness, and other wellness information,” said Butler-Hackett. “Parc offered the brain fitness and Zumba classes.”

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Key to Active Aging Week photos

Picture 1

Piper/bagpipe player Alexander Watt from the Hamilton County Sheriff's department led the opening ceremony procession at Seasons in Cincinnati, Ohio, followed by the community's executive director and township trustee

Picture 2

In Billings, Montana, residents of Mission Ridge/The Vista were active 'their way' in the pool

Picture 3

The Enormous Jigsaw Expedition challenged Survivor tribes at Montclair Estates Retirement Community in Garland, Texas. Which tribe would be first to complete the puzzle, made of 25 packing boxes?

Picture 4

Each day, tribe members seeking to increase their points walked in the Survivor Trek at Montclair Estates in Garland, Texas

Picture 5

The first annual Golden Sneaker award found a home at Cedarwood Station Retirement Residence, in Airdrie, Alberta, as residents teamed up to 'out-step' a sister community

Picture 6

In addition to T-shirts, all the walkers at Aegis Therapies locations received a plastic holder with a booklet describing the week's activities. Many walkers have kept their badges, displaying them on their walls and furniture

Pictures 7 a & b

School started with a welcome banner and pep rally featuring the Brandermill University mascot at Brandermill Woods Retirement Community in Midlothian, Virginia

Picture 8

There's no obstacle to participation at Aegis Therapies locations, as staff and clients worked together to stay active

Picture 9

There's nothing like a T-shirt to showcase participation. At the 'Climb, Ride, Walk Triathlon Challenge,' Country Meadows participants displayed their haute design

Picture 10

Starting times were staggered at the Country Meadows Triathlon because there were more participants than recumbent bikes

Picture 11

When Active Aging Week participants from Gold's Gym arrived at the Five Senses Garden in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, many were not aware of the garden. By the time they left, they considered volunteering

Picture 12

A beautiful day greeted people taking advantage of the walking trail and workout stations. The wellness walk was sponsored by Spectrum Generations Coastal Community Center in Damariscotta, Maine

Picture 13

Participants proudly wore their vibrant 'Get Active' T-shirts for the Active Aging Celebration Walk in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, organized by Active Generations

Picture 14

At Mission Ridge/The Vista in Billings, Montana, the activity of choice for some individuals was a strength and stretch class

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As part of the first Active Aging Week at Harbor Place in Corpus Christi, Texas, Enrichment Coordinator Martha Medina hosted 36 people from two local seniors centers who joined in the seated volleyball games. “All had a great time,” commented Medina, who said that in the past, volleyball games were not well attended. “After Active Aging Week, I am positive we will have no trouble with participation.” The week was launched with a group walk, and featured a sing-along, live music and dance, Zumba and a “Balance for Life” presentation.

Among the hosts who reported their activities, it was clear that organizations with many locations encouraged their sites to host Active Aging Week. Of those registered with ICAA, hosts with numerous participating locations included Aegis Therapies, Holiday Retirement, Kisco Senior Living, and Senior Lifestyle.

Sending the message

Beyond the social marketing message that purposeful activity leads to better health and well-being, Active Aging Week reminds older adults that they can do many

things—and enjoy them. Active aging is successful aging: being engaged in life. Functional limitations don’t really matter.

In 2011, Active Aging Week will be held from Sunday, September 25, through Saturday, October 1. The final day is also the International Day of Older Persons and ICAA’s 10th Anniversary. Please consider hosting an event. You can choose the type and number of activities to offer. As the images show, these activities definitely support older-adult wellness and our shared mission of Changing the way we age®. 



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Active Aging Week 2010 was sponsored by Aegis Therapies, the Institute for Preventive Foot Health, Thor•Lo, and MATRIX Fitness Systems.

