

Countdown to Active Aging Week 2009

Children from a learning center in Gainesville, Florida, joined residents of the Atrium at Gainesville in a Scavenger Hunt/Nature Walk. Image courtesy of Atrium at Gainesville

There's still time for you to organize activities for this year's health promotion event. Online resources from ICAA can help with last-minute planning

Active Aging Week fills the last full week of September with opportunities for older adults to get off the couch and into an atmosphere of fun and camaraderie. This welcoming environment encourages people to participate. By hosting events for them in your center or community, you can share new and proven ways to stay active and healthy with participants who are eager to learn.

If you and your team started planning earlier this year, congratulations! You are well on your way to producing an event that meets its goals. Even if you just decided to get involved, you can still host a productive event with some careful, last-minute planning.

Active Aging Week will take place this year from Monday, September 21, through Sunday, September 27. Over the past few years, the International Council on Active Aging®, which spearheads the annual health promotion campaign, has continually updated planning guides and promotional aids on its website. Use these resources to guide your planning.

And merge them with your own internal resources—your older-adult clients, fellow staff members and like-minded organizations. This celebration of healthy, active aging can remotivate everyone as they enter the autumn season.

Fast track one or more events

Since Active Aging Week is organized locally, you determine the type and number of activities you offer. ICAA's only guidelines are that events be educational, fun and free, and that they promote all areas of older adults' lives, including the physical, cognitive and social.

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Even at this late date, consider inviting community and advocacy organizations (such as your local Area Agency on Aging, Arthritis Association, and government agencies). These like-minded organizations are interested in outreach to older adults who can benefit from their services. Some organizations, such as the Alzheimer's Association and Arthritis Association, have programs that they may be able to present to your group. Most are available to staff a table and give away free literature.

Your powerful allies are your colleagues and your current participants, who can help with planning and volunteering. Great ideas and many pairs of hands come from these sources. Your role is to organize and motivate, stand back, and let them get to work.

For your planning, you could focus your attention on a single, large event, such as a group or community walk or a dance. Organizers of prior Active Aging Week events have often kicked off the week with a health fair and ended it with a dance. Or, you could create a special Active Aging Day. One way to do this is to add special classes/lectures/competitions to familiar activities already on the schedule. The advantage of the single-day approach is that everything happens at one time. The disadvantage is that everything happens at one time!

Another option is to schedule activities throughout the week, as many hosts have done in the past. You will find plenty of examples in the articles on the ICAA website.

ICAA resources for professionals and hosts

To start organizing Active Aging Week, visit the special campaign section on ICAA's website. You'll find support materials in the form of articles, profiles, checklists, marketing and media resources, and handouts.

Start by going to the Active Aging Week professional resources section at:

www.icaa.cc/aaw.htm

Scroll to the bottom of this webpage, then click on "FREE campaign support materials and tools" to connect to an index and links to the ever-growing library of materials.

Your first stop will be the "Host registration form" at the top of the page. Please complete this brief form and send it to ICAA (mail, fax and email contacts are provided). ICAA uses this form to compile a list of locations for consumers and media. In addition, your input on how the week unfolded and your advice for ICAA's resources are valuable for both you and your colleagues for planning next year's events. Most of the materials you'll find on the website were composed because hosts shared their stories.

See the "Guide to Active Aging Week Professional Resources" (also printed on the next page) for a tour through the planning tools. These include coverage of past year's campaigns with lots of examples of events, how they were planned and organized, and what hosts would do differently in the future.

Materials in the professional resources section also include the Active Aging Week logo and posters, fact sheets and press releases, and certificates for participants. Use these to promote your events.

ICAA resources for older adults and support services

Since Active Aging Week aims to introduce older adults to all that is available to them to lead a full and engaged life, there is a special campaign section for them on the ICAA website. It is found under "Consumer information." The direct link is:

www.icaa.cc/activeagingweek/aaw-public.htm

Here older adults, media, physicians and allied health professionals and senior services agencies can find a listing of the sites where Active Aging Week events are scheduled. They can refer the older adults in their spheres to the events, and older adults themselves can look in their areas. This list is compiled from the organizations that register as host sites.

In addition, there are lots of free resources targeted to older adults. These include ICAA's pamphlets on choosing age-friendly fitness centers and personal trainers, as well as sections filled with information about walking and fitness.

Prior to Active Aging Week, ICAA sends out press releases to a list of media suggesting that these outlets visit the consumer information section. You may want to refer older adults to this section as well, so they can access the resources listed above.

Sharing the active-aging story

The key messages of Active Aging Week are that older adults can and will change the way they age by being active 30 minutes a day. Staying active in all areas of life—physical, cognitive and social—is important. The bedrock is physical activity, which is the no-cost secret to increased energy, mental and physical health, and a feeling of well-being.

By planning and hosting an Active Aging Week event, you can introduce participants to fitness and wellness experiences in a friendly, welcoming atmosphere. Since every activity you offer will likely include multiple dimensions, you can achieve many goals for spreading the word about the active-aging lifestyle. ☺

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

Guide to Active Aging Week Professional Resources

ICAA Active Aging Week www.icaa.cc/activeagingweek/resourcesaaw.htm		
If you're looking for...	Go to this subhead...	And find...
Ideas for activities	Planning guides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of campaigns in 2006, 2007, 2008 • Fun activities from Active Aging Week
	Program profiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor walks of Active Aging Week • The Busy Bees of Active Aging Week
	Resources for activities, Walking theme, Balance training for fall prevention theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple handouts and resources
	Promotional materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing the Way We Age (PowerPoint presentation)
Partnering with individuals and organizations	Planning guides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The value of partnerships for Active Aging Week • How to solicit donations for Active Aging Week
Planning the activities	Planning guides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009 Set your goals for Active Aging Week • 2008 Plan for Active Aging Week • Launch your planning cycle for Active Aging Week 2007 • Develop your marketing plan for Active Aging Week • Active Aging Week: prepare your action plan
	Planning worksheets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning checklist for Active Aging Week hosts
Generating excitement and publicity	Planning guides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to request a proclamation or a letter from a public official to recognize Active Aging Week • Start the publicity machine for Active Aging Week
	Program profiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentives reward participation during Active Aging Week
Publicizing the week internally	Promotional materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009 Active Aging Week logo • 2009 Active Aging Week Posters • 2009 Calendar announcements
	Planning guides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start the publicity machine for Active Aging Week • Develop your marketing plan for Active Aging Week
	Planning worksheets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Aging Week marketing matrix
Customizing publicity to your location and activities	Promotional materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009 Customize Fact Sheet, general • 2009 Customize Fact Sheet, donors and sponsors • 2009 Host site press release
Branding your week as part of a national campaign	Promotional materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009 Active Aging Week logo • 2009 Active Aging Week Posters
Informing local media	Planning guides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to write a press release
	Promotional materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009 Active Aging Week logo • 2009 Calendar announcements • 2009 Host site press release • 2009 Fact sheet
Recognition for participants	Promotional materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009 Certificate of participation to give residents or members
	Rewards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The President's Challenge Awards program
Promoting your involvement in Active Aging Week	Planning guides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to get the most out of your involvement in Active Aging Week
	Promotional materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009 Certificate of participation for organization