

With Dr. Seuss hats firmly in place, the residents of Longhorn Village in Austin, Texas, were featured on Good Morning America's "Three Little Words" segment for Active Aging Week



Expanding the experience

of Active Aging Week



The hosts of Active Aging Week® 2011 events generated awareness and opportunity for older adults

The philosophy behind active aging is that every person can live fully, regardless of age, and be involved in life. For some older adults, that is a new concept. For others, the concept is attractive, but they are not sure how to go about it. That's where Active Aging Week® comes in.

Active Aging Week is the annual health promotion observance of the International Council on Active Aging® (ICAA), held each year during the last week of September. What is unique about the week is that individuals and organizations decide how many events to offer and what type of activities will be available.

Their knowledge of the local population as well as their own capacities enable hosts to develop an Active Aging Week observance that raises awareness, lets people know the options they have to become more active, or increases the engagement of older adults who already are involved.

Taking to heart the principle that people can be active within the dimensions of wellness—physical, social, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, vocational and environmental—by adjusting around limitations in health or environment, hosts of Active Aging Week 2011 built on the theme “Expand your experience.”

Within this theme were two key messages:

- Engage in activities you value; and
- Spend 30 minutes each day in physical activity.

As the reports from hosts flooded into the ICAA office, it was uplifting to read about the value that participants found in an active lifestyle. So many organizations host Active Aging Week events that it is impossible to mention them all here. This sample tells a story of fun and education.

Expanding the theme

At Baywinde, Castle Pointe and Sage Harbor in Webster, New York, Active Aging Week began with a presentation of the theme “Expand Your Experiences Through the Arts.” The presentation featured large posters with descriptions of all the activities for each day, apple cider and homemade donuts, reported Cindy Caprio, Program Director at Baywinde.

Monday was dedicated to movement, with four classes led by staff at the YMCA; Tuesday to art; Wednesday to theater, with puppet-making and improv; Thursday to food art (including a play-with-your-food segment and ending with dining for wellness), and Friday to music. Caprio noted that there were many new faces throughout the week.

“Expand Your Experience—Oh, the Places You’ll Go” was the expanded theme at Longhorn Village in Austin, Texas. Based on Dr. Seuss’s *Oh, the Places You’ll Go*, every Active Aging Week event was based on a book by the popular author, explained E. Dawn Lindsey, Communications and Event Manager. On the schedule 26 books appeared along with daily subthemes, such as walking while wearing an Active Aging Week T-shirt and a cute hat, a talk by a NASA astronaut, hearing tests (*Horton Hears a WHO!*), scrapbooking, secrets of a good sleep, a heart health presentation and, of course, a breakfast featuring green eggs and ham.

Judson Park in Des Moines, Washington, offered “Enhance your medieval experience.” Four teams created a coat of arms for banners that flowed at a renaissance fair, augmented by a Medieval Feast Challenge (à la Iron Chef), Shakespeare trivia and a medieval word spelling bee. Participants at each event were awarded a button, which teams gathered and hoarded. The team with the most buttons was declared the winner.

Active Aging Week

2012

September 23–29

Website:

www.icaa.cc/aaw.htm

Diverse locations expand the options

Among the host sites registered for Active Aging Week 2011 were seniors centers, JCCs and Ys, active adult and independent living communities, continuing care retirement communities, and fitness centers that welcome older adults. Medical fitness centers and nursing homes likewise joined the week, showing that functional ability is no barrier to staying engaged in life.

Reaching deep into the community, the Eastern Idaho Public Health District launched its free series of Fit and Fall Proof™ exercise classes in nine apartment buildings, seniors centers and churches as part of the week.

First-time host CPW Rehab, a physical therapy practice in Toledo, Ohio, offered an interesting variety of activities, including Bates-method eye exercises, health screening, and Rebus puzzles, visual illusions and brain teasers posted in the hallway. Said Suzette Book, Medical Fitness Coordinator, “The activities for that week were a hit! It was something different for the clients, patients and guests to get educated and sharpen the mind.” She added, “This week would not have been a success without all of the help I had from the staff at CPW Rehab. We have a great group of staff.”

The first Active Aging Week at Sandhill Cove in Palm City, Florida, started with

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a brisk one-mile walk and ended with a presentation on reading food labels and healthy eating. In between, Social Director Phyllis Leclercq listed a couples croquet competition, aqua golf and water tai chi at the pool, classes on stability/stretching and yoga, and a clubhouse resounding with the sound of ping pong and billiards balls.

Two games were particularly eventful. Although participants complained that the water balloon toss was rigged, they were wet and laughing after catching five tosses. According to Leclercq, “contestants in the much-anticipated game of Wine Toss showed their skills of eye and hand coordination and successfully ringed 10 bottles of wine—which brought a lot of joy to the winners!”

Parc Communities in Atlanta, Georgia, celebrated Active Aging Week in 2011 as Champions of ICAA’s Changing The Way We Age® Campaign, pointed out Angela Butler-Hackett, Fitness and Wellness Director. Both Parc at Piedmont and Parc at Duluth residents enjoyed an intergenerational outing to a local school as one event in a schedule filled with physical, intellectual and social activities. Residents visited second and third graders and performed Ageless Grace® class exercises with them before sharing stories. The students sent colorful thank-you letters, with one student commenting that a resident was “the coolest old person that he had ever met!”

Many locations for many experiences

Particularly in wellness centers and fitness clubs, older adults are enticed with free classes during Active Aging Week. For example, at over 400 locations of 24 Hour Fitness, guests who were 50 years or older were welcomed to free group-fitness classes, including Silver&Fit®, SilverSneakers®, Zumba®, 24Cycle® and yoga. In addition, Karen Fox, a consultant for the clubs, reported that the

guests received a free seven-day pass to the club they visited.

Kisco Senior Living hosted Active Aging Week at many of its communities, including Valencia Terrace in Corona, California. The excitement mounted for a chair volleyball tournament that attracted 65 participants, reported Maria Connelly, Wellness Team Leader and Project Manager at Kisco. Teams were greeted by cheerleaders from the local high school; a pep rally featured an abundance of college fight songs; a resident read a poem about chair volleyball; and everyone warmed up as the games began. Early planners, take note. Connelly has already set a schedule for 2012 Active Aging Week events.

After piloting a single day’s walk in 2009, Aegis Therapies held its “WALK! with Aegis Therapies” at over 640 locations in 2011 and offered five days of events focused on different dimensions of wellness. The week, sponsored by EnerG™ by Aegis, reinforced the importance of nourishing emotional and intellectual health in addition to maintaining physical well-being, explained National Director of Wellness Brian Boekhout.

With all 46 Senior Lifestyle Corporation communities participating in Active Aging Week, there was a lot of activity since directors wisely customized their programs to fit local interests. Of special note was the week at Tudor Heights in Pikesville, Maryland. Because Active Aging Week coincided with the Jewish holiday of Rosh Hashanah, Resident Programming Director Miriam Levinger invited two rabbis to the community who created an interactive “shofar factory,” helping residents build these instruments from scratch. (A shofar is a traditional horn blown on Rosh Hashanah to mark the holiday.)

After inviting grandparents and families from the local Jewish community to attend the event, Tudor Heights was

packed from wall to wall and residents dove right into the laborious work of shofar-making. The week continued with discussion about the health benefits of the different items on a traditional Rosh Hashanah menu and the importance of spirituality for the body, mind and soul.

Partnerships expand programs

Active Aging Week host sites are increasingly expanding their ability to add variety, plus reach out to new participants, by partnering with other organizations. These partnerships might include finding sponsors for T-shirts, meals or special events; exchanging locations and staff members to lead activities; or accessing programming resources.

For example, the six locations of Gen-Care Lifestyle participated by launching an eight-weight Walking Partners program in partnership with the Institute for Preventive Foot Health and Thor•Lo, which attracted over 40 participants, according to Tracey Harvey, Corporate Director of Vitality. Following the program, three people reported that their doctors adjusted medications because the physical activity had improved their health.

Partnering with the Arthritis Foundation resulted in programming and promotion, said Linda Schmidt, Lifestyle Fitness Coordinator at La Loma Village, part of Sun Health Senior Living in Litchfield Park, Arizona. In addition to a health fair, mountain hike, volleyball and dinner dance, the partnership opened the door for two physicians to be guest speakers at a presentation attended by Sun Health residents and members of the larger community. The Arthritis Foundation publicized the presentation, while Schmidt used posters and an-

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Thoughts from the organizers

"Each day I saw new faces of residents who aren't usually as active as others, so for me this was a success."

Ashley Armstrong

Wellness Director, Heritage Woods, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

"Overall, it was a very successful week in that it encouraged people to try activities that they may not have otherwise considered. We had several different residents who do not regularly use the fitness center or attend classes but participated in activities. Next year, we may plan on opening some activities to the community."

Sherry Harrill

Wellness Coordinator, Kendal at Lexington, Lexington, Virginia

"I love Active Aging Week—we always have participants who do not usually come to other activities. I think it is the competitive nature in them! It helps to make the week a competitive one [and] we have a lot more participation that way. It is an enjoyable week all around."

Rene Walls

Director of Resident Programs, Montclair Estates, Garland, Texas

"As staff, we love celebrating Active Aging Week as much as the residents do!"

Mary E. Carmichael

Communications Coordinator, Brandermill Woods Retirement Community, Midlothian, Virginia

outdoor events, a game show, a breakfast bingo, a yoga class in which children participated (and taught older adults), and a comedy magic show to stimulate brainpower while tickling people's funny bones. Attendance at all the activities totaled 200 people.

To add adventure to Active Aging Week, Rhonda Cap, Director of Wellness at the Oasis Health Spa in Leisure World, Arizona, partnered with a local dive center to offer a "Try Scuba" course in Leisure World's pool. The dive course was one of many activities offered, including 20-minute demonstrations of group-exercise classes and new fitness equip-

nouncements to generate excitement on the three Sun Health campuses.

A new partnership was formed between New Balance stores in the Salt Lake Valley area and host site Ballroom-Utah Dance Studio in Salt Lake City. Christine Schnitzer of Christine Rose Enterprises hopes to continue the collaboration that began during Active Aging Week with New Balance Pro Fit foot scanning. Also featured were dance lessons, a fencing demonstration and an introduction to wearing a weighted vest.

The goal of expanding the experiences of residents led Rappahannock Westminster-Canterbury (RWC) in Irvington, Virginia, to partner with five organizations, explained media spokesperson Larry Mazzeno. Community service was one of the experiences. Residents contributed 84 backpacks to the local Interfaith Service Council's "backpack" drive for local schoolchildren, and 105 pairs of shoes (plus postage) to Soles4Souls, an international organization that collects footwear to distribute to needy people worldwide.

One of RWC's highlight events was a nature walk with children from the Northern Neck Montessori School, and the community plans to interact with the school on a quarterly basis. Also offered during the week were a variety of group-fitness classes, several interactive talks, activities led by RWC's chaplain,



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ment. Health education rounded out the week, with classes on Medicare, artificial sweeteners and plantar fasciitis. A total of 66 residents participated, according to Cap, which is a reasonable number since so many residents were still out of town on vacation.

Veteran hosts expand their experiences

Each year veteran hosts seek to build on the successes of prior years by diversifying their offerings to keep events interesting for returning participants and to attract new people.

Events during Active Aging Week span several counties in western North Carolina's Land-of-Sky Regional Council territory. A veteran organizer, Rebecca Chaplin introduced a website for the week in 2011, with a listing of main and local events, links to sponsors, and event brochures. This site was still available at the beginning of February 2012 at www.activeagingweekwnc.org. After the event, photos were posted online along with an evaluation form. Chaplin, the council's Aging Program Specialist, Health Promotion, said that the week received a lot of media attention, and she expected up to 800 participants.

Touchmark at Meadow Lake Village in Boise-Meridian, Idaho, offered another example of using the Web for a powerful presentation. The community's Active Aging Week 2011 site showcased a week of activities, including a couples country dance, stress management, yoga, Zumba, tai chi, and a special presentation on brain training by Rob Winningham, PhD (an ICAA Conference presenter). The site was also available at the start of February at <http://meadowlakevillage.com/life-enrichment-active-aging-2011>.

A movie theme was pervasive at Capstone Village in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, according to Rene Katsinas, Director of Residential Services. Every day during Active Aging Week, the community featured a movie and special activities. For example, along with the classic film *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (in which Audrey Hepburn gazes through the window of the iconic jewelry store), residents enjoyed a lecture by a jeweler on documenting and valuing jewelry, and a workshop on repairing jewelry. Another highlight was a private jewelry show presented by many local jewelers.

At the Spectrum Generations Coastal Community Center in Damariscotta, Maine, the headline "So You Think You Can't Dance" was followed by, "Yes, you can!" With no prior dance experience required and a guarantee of simple choreography, participants could experience hip hop, country line dancing, jazz, movement, yoga, swing, jitterbug, salsa, hooping, Zumba, drumming, squares, rounds or belly dancing. Organized by Marianne Pinkham, there were a multitude of dance forms to try each day along with a series of health education workshops.

According to residents of The Village at Germantown (Germantown, Tennessee), "this was the best year ever," reported Michelle Webb, Resident Services Co-

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ordinator, who added that the most popular events—the health fair and entertainment—drew about 150 people. The theme “Active thru the Ages” was chosen by a group of staff members, who followed up by planning the activities for the week. Each day of the week moved residents through the decades of the 1920s to the 1970s. Participants received T-shirts and a punch card to track their attendances at a wide range of activities, including a performance by the Navy Band; walks, tai chi, Zumba and stretching classes; painting, contests and lectures on health; reminiscences with World War II veterans, and movies.

Piedmont Gardens in Oakland, California, a veteran of five Active Aging Week campaigns, welcomed 80–100 people throughout the 2011 event, according to Shelley Tsao, Director of Resident Services. This American Baptist Homes

of the West community hosted, among other events, book art, qigong, acupuncture, and a tango class that encouraged people with less mobility to dance. Also featured was a presentation by Roger Landry, MD, president of Masterpiece Living, and everyone who attended was entered into a raffle for prizes. Tsao added that a first at the community, a presentation on intimacy and relationships later in life, captured the most attention during the week.

Focus on the future

True to the theme of Active Aging Week 2011, hosts provided plenty of options for older adults to expand their experiences. The multiple dimensions of wellness were readily apparent throughout, giving substance to the key message to “Engage in activities you value.”

For organizations and individuals who expect to participate in Active Aging

Week 2012, now is the time to start planning. The last week of September may seem a long way away, but every year hosts advise that it pays to:

- Outline a year of special events, with Active Aging Week the autumn promotion.
- Start planning in the spring to have plenty of time to find sponsors and schedule speakers.
- Form a committee of older adults and staff to plan and implement the week.

The first step is to visit the Active Aging Week section on ICAA’s website and review the ideas and planning guides (see the box on page 31 for website information). You can also find examples at “Active Aging Week” on the social media site Facebook. Next, look for more articles on the hosts in upcoming issues of the *Journal on Active Aging*® and ICAA’s *Functional U*®. You’ll find great ideas,

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planning tips and best-practice sharing. Planning guides, promotional materials and media outreach are all available at no cost to host sites.

When you host Active Aging Week events, you are helping to change attitudes about the way people age. You're also giving older adults the tools to do so. 

ICAA thanks all the hosts of Active Aging Week 2011 for their enthusiastic commitment to providing older adults with opportunities to experience the benefits of wellness. Many thanks also to sponsors Aegis Therapies, Matrix Fitness, New Balance Athletic Shoe, and 24 Hour Fitness for their support of this event.



Key to Active Aging Week photos

Picture 1

Age was no barrier when 100-year-old Phylis Ryti took to the dance floor with Vitality Trainer Tom Reemstma at The Carillons in Sun City, Arizona

Picture 2

Check your vision? This do-it-yourself chart with instructions (on the left) caught the attention of patients at the CPW Rehab practice in Toledo, Ohio

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Picture 3

Completing a masterpiece in the Mandala art class was the goal of people in the assisted living and memory care residences at Harbour Village of Monroeville in Monroeville, Pennsylvania

Picture 4

No Red Carpet opening to a week of movie-themed activities would be complete without a visit from Marilyn Monroe, who dropped in at Capstone Village in Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Picture 5

In Lexington, Virginia, the trail walks at Kendal at Lexington had good participation, perhaps because the week also included a presentation on medical and therapeutic massage

Picture 6

New Orleans was the first stop for the virtual cruise that left Lewisville Estates Retirement Community in Lewisville, Texas. After spending the day making masks, the tourists sipped New Orleans cocktails while listening to the jazz concert The Na'wlns Boys

Pictures 7-8

At Montclair Estates in Garland, Texas, the Buccaneers and the Swashbucklers fought to the finish as they competed in a variety of activities all week. The most well-received activity was the Dress Like a Pirate contest

Picture 9

When visiting a local school, a resident of Parc at Piedmont in Marietta, Georgia, explained what second grade was like when he went to school

Picture 10

Bobby socks and milkshakes ruled during the 1950s day at Brandermill Woods Retirement Community in Midlothian, Virginia