

# Promote Active Aging Week through public officials

## **Participating in an Active Aging Week event is valuable for public officials and an excellent way to recognize your organization**

As you prepare your list of Active Aging Week events, consider kicking off the action by reaching out to elected officials. Community outreach is likely already one of your organization's goals. By extending that reach to elected officials, you can bring a local celebrity to your event, recognize your clients and organization, and garner additional publicity.

For an elected official, meeting your participants is a wise idea. After all, older adults vote. According to the US Census Bureau, people ages 45 years and more had the highest turnout of any age group in the 2008 presidential elections.<sup>1</sup> In the 2006 congressional elections, 63% of people ages 65-plus said they voted.<sup>2</sup> And, in Canada, people 65 years and older are more likely to vote than younger age groups in all levels of government: federal, provincial and municipal.<sup>3</sup>

When a public official recognizes Active Aging Week, it's a good way to create awareness about the events you are hosting. In addition, it is rewarding to hang a letter or proclamation on the wall, to read the text during your events, and to commend your participants.

Which officials may recognize the week? Hosts of previous Active Aging week events cite officials at the local and state

*In Cincinnati, Mayor Mark Mallory (right) issued an Active Aging Week 2009 proclamation and delivered it personally to the head of the resident council at Evergreen/Wellspring Retirement Community*

level. For example, during Active Aging Week 2008, the mayor helped residents kick off the week during opening day at Spring Harbor at Green Island, a continuing care retirement community in Columbus, Georgia, and at Bethel Park, a Holiday Retirement community in Bethel Park, Pennsylvania.

In Baltimore, Maryland, Mayor Sheila Dixon and the Baltimore City Commission on Aging and Retirement Education (CARE) urged everyone in the city to participate in Active Aging Week. In the press release issued by CARE, Mayor Dixon said, "We as a City want to take time during Active Aging Week to motivate our older adults to become more active in their everyday lives, and live up to the motto that, 'An active senior is a healthy senior.'" A press release issued by a government agency can extend the reach and authority of your publicity.

In Powhatan, Pennsylvania, the board of supervisors passed a resolution to name Active Aging Week, a "national annual health promotion event for older adults." And, in 2009 a candidate running in a state election joined residents at the Bellingham Retirement Community in West Chester, Pennsylvania, to present a proclamation, reported Lindsey Cherner, Corporate Marketing Coordinator at Senior Lifestyle Corporation. Cherner noted that "many of the community marketing coordinators requested proclamations from local officials and most received them." They approached public officials in the beginning of August and followed up regularly.

The following information is a general guide to the types of recognition public officials could provide, and how you can approach them.

### Who to contact

Contact officials in your local area who have jurisdiction over the area where you will be holding Active Aging Week events. These officials are most likely to be interested in the activities of their constituents. For example:

- Mayor
- Councilperson
- County supervisor
- Congressperson
- Member of parliament
- State senator or assemblyperson

Telephone or email the official's office and ask about the steps for requesting a proclamation or letter. You may immediately be speaking with the proper person or be referred to an office of protocols or public affairs.

Once you are at the proper office, the staff person can provide you with specific guidelines of what to include in your request, the turnaround time and the presentation options.

### What you can request

The following items may differ depending on which official you contact (for example, a local mayor versus a state senator or member of parliament):

**Letter of greeting.** This letter might welcome people to Active Aging Week events, congratulate the host sites for providing quality-of-life events for older adults or express support for the philosophy and events of the week.

**Letter of commendation.** This type of letter recognizes good deeds. It might be appropriate for older adults who significantly contributed to the week—for example, as a volunteer. Please note that the accomplishment must be significant to merit a commendation letter.

**Proclamation.** In this document, an official proclaims the entire week or a day as Active Aging Week (Day) to honor the purpose of the event. A proclamation is the document that has "Whereas ..." throughout.

How these documents are presented may vary. For example, a letter may arrive in the mail or be picked up. A proclamation may be presented by the mayor or another official to a representative group. This presentation may take place in the council chambers during a regular meeting, or on-site by an official who is willing to travel to the Active Aging Week event.

### Submitting your request

The type of document requested requires different background. Be thoughtful and complete in your statements. The official's staff will use this information

## Active Aging Week September 20–26, 2010 Theme: Be active your way

The International Council on Active Aging's annual health promotion event is held in the last full week of September. Active Aging Week events are:

- representative of all the dimensions of wellness, with a focus on physical activity
- delivered in a fun, no-pressure atmosphere
- educational
- free to participants, so cost is not a barrier

The organizers at each host site decide what they wish to do. At some locations, it may be a single activity, such as a health fair or a walk. Other hosts plan an activity every day, or on several days during the week. The number and type of activities is up to each host. For more information about Active Aging Week, visit [www.icaa.cc/aaw.htm](http://www.icaa.cc/aaw.htm).



to determine if they will issue a letter or proclamation. Make sure you show how Active Aging Week or the individuals receiving a letter have a direct impact on the city or area the official oversees.

Generally three to six weeks notice is required by a public official. Because they are likely to receive many requests, officials with a large population of constituents may need more notice. Requests for proclamations are also likely to take a longer period of time as they will receive more scrutiny.

A public official will provide only so many documents to any organization in a given year. Check the guidelines to be aware of limitations.

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## Example of a letter of greeting

*What's needed:*

- Name of event being recognized
- Why the event is significant to the community
- Event date(s)
- Due date
- Contact information, including mailing address, telephone and email
- Two paragraphs that state what the participants are doing that is valuable

*For example:*

Active Aging Week is an annual health promotion event for older adults in the last week of September. Older adults, their families and friends have the opportunity to experience a variety of free activities, such as classes, educational seminars, health fairs and community walks, in a safe, friendly and fun atmosphere.

Older adults who participate are learning how to stay mentally and physically healthy. They are finding out how they can stay productive and engaged in life through all their years, which enables them to be leaders in their communities and in their families. By participating in Active Aging Week, older adults are taking the steps to stay healthy, be independent and able to live in their homes.

I [public official] congratulate all of you for attending this week's events, and for being leaders in our community.

## Example of a letter of commendation

*What's needed:*

- Name of person being recognized
- Event date(s)
- Due date

- Contact information, including mailing address, telephone and email
- Two paragraphs on the individual's accomplishment, which details the deeds and contribution to the Week

*For example:*

During Active Aging Week, [volunteer] provided exceptional services to improve the quality of life for older adults. Active Aging Week is an annual health promotion event for older adults in the last week of September. Older adults, their families and friends have the opportunity to experience a variety of free activities, such as classes, educational seminars, health fairs and community walks, in a safe, friendly and fun atmosphere.

[Volunteer] was the leader of the planning committee that worked for six months preparing events that would encourage physical and arts activity. At 84 years, she showed enthusiasm and purpose by contributing over 96 volunteer hours. During the week, she led group stretching, taught two classes on watercolor painting (one for grandkids and grandparents), and joined the group that walked along the river for two miles. [Volunteer] was resourceful, capable, cheerful and a role model for all of us.

## Example of a proclamation

*What's needed:*

- Name of event
- Event date(s)
- Due date
- Contact information, including mailing address, telephone and email
- Five to eight short paragraphs on why Active Aging Week is significant and should be proclaimed as a special event

Write a letter of request for a proclamation to accompany your draft of the proclamation. An example of a draft

proclamation appears on page 78. In your request letter, make the case by outlining:

- How Active Aging Week (now in its eighth year) is the annual health promotion spearheaded by the International Council on Active Aging® that contributes to the community by introducing older adults (and their families) to the options for increasing their independence and quality of life.
- Facts, such as the number of older adults in the service area, and projections of that number increasing. The area agency on aging or library reference desk will know how to find the number of older adults in the area, as well as projections for future growth. Some cities or counties post this information on their websites.
- How the week's activities support the (city, district, province, county) mission to keep older citizens healthy and independent. Encouraging older adults to be healthy, independent and live at home (thus reducing healthcare costs and usage) is a goal of federal, state and provincial governments, local health departments and area agencies on aging. Some states are emphasizing preventive care. Visit the website of the local government's senior services or area agency on aging to find its statement of purpose.
- The positive effects of being active, such as reducing the risk of obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes, osteoporosis, stroke, depression, Alzheimer's disease, colon cancer, and premature death. The evidence on how physical, social and intellectual activity prevents and controls chronic disease is found on the websites for:
  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([www.cdc.gov/aging/](http://www.cdc.gov/aging/))
  - Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics ([www.fedforum.org/](http://www.fedforum.org/))

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[agingstats.gov/agingstatsdotnet/main\\_site/default.aspx](http://agingstats.gov/agingstatsdotnet/main_site/default.aspx)

- Active Aging Week's availability for all older adults, regardless of income level, age or background. The activities are free to older adults and allow them to participate as much or as little as they wish. The week is fun and educational.
- Why your organization is hosting Active Aging Week events (because of X years of serving older adults and belief in the philosophy of the week).

### *For example:*

This organization has served age 55-plus adults for over 20 years, providing housing, recreation and wellness services to maintain our clients' health and quality of life. We support Active Aging Week and are hosting [name the activities] because we believe in providing opportunities for older adults to stay engaged in life as fully

as possible. We agree with the week's philosophy of providing activities that are educational, free of cost to older adults and set in a fun and friendly atmosphere.

Include the websites of ICAA ([www.icaa.cc](http://www.icaa.cc)) and your organization in the letter, so the person receiving the request can immediately find more information if required.

### *Example of a draft proclamation:*

Name of event: Active Aging Week  
Event date(s): September 20–26, 2010  
Due date: September 15, 2010  
Contact information, including mailing address, telephone and email

WHEREAS, Active Aging Week is an annual health promotion event for older adults, their families and friends and allows the participants to experience activities and exercise in a safe, friendly and fun atmosphere; and

WHEREAS, the key messages of Active Aging Week encourage seniors to choose an active life to stay mentally and physically healthy as they age; and

WHEREAS, there are [number of older adults 60 years] and older living in the city, and it is in the best interest of each individual and of the city to help all seniors stay as healthy and independent as possible; and

WHEREAS, the [city] has committed to providing quality services to seniors, including health and leisure services, and Active Aging Week events, including [community walks, health fairs and health lectures], support the city's efforts; and

WHEREAS, older adults who are physically and mentally healthy contribute to the city as volunteers, mentors and role models; and

WHEREAS, Active Aging Week supports the city's aging population, which is our



**a.** At Fountain Square in Lombard, Illinois, residents of the independent living community showed off their moves at an Active Aging Week sock hop



**b.** Participants were all smiles after a lively Zumba Gold class at Atria Assisted Living in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, during Active Aging Week



**c.** Older New Yorkers posed with medals they won in a Wii bowling tournament at one of Millennium Development's Active Aging Week sites

fastest-growing population segment, and activities are hosted at multiple sites across the city by private and government organizations working together for the mutual goal of improving the health and well-being of the city's older citizens; now

BE IT SO RESOLVED that [public official, city or state] proclaims the last week of September as Active Aging Week, and we encourage all citizens to recognize the value of active aging for older adults and participate in the week's events.

### Public recognition for your participants

Public recognition is an honor for your participants and reinforces the value of their actions. This is a complement to your planning efforts as well as a stepping stone for more publicity about the events you plan during Active Aging Week.

Spend the time to decide on which public official to contact, then be sure to telephone in advance to find out what documents are available from that official, and what information and format the office requires.

Active Aging Week benefits the older adults who attend and the community at large. The week's activities promote healthy, active lifestyles among older adults, all the events are free, and often many community organizations and groups participate. It is an advantage to a public official to recognize a worthy cause. 

*For a one-page fact sheet on Active Aging Week, along with other materials to publicize and plan the week's events, visit the ICAA website at [www.icaa.cc/aaw.htm](http://www.icaa.cc/aaw.htm)*

### References

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2. US Census Bureau. (2009, March 3). Older Americans Month: May 2009. Facts for Features. Retrieved June 7, 2010, from [http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts\\_for\\_features\\_special\\_editions/cb09-ff07.html](http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/cb09-ff07.html).
3. Statistics Canada. (2007, February 27). A Portrait of Seniors in Canada. Chapter 4. Supporting and caring in the community. Retrieved June 7, 2010, from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-519-x/2006001/4122096-eng.htm#5>.

# ICAA 2020

## Creating a vision for the future



**No idea is too big or too small to be a catalyst for transformation. Think big! Think out-of-the-box. In fact, why not create a new box?**

The International Council on Active Aging® encourages you to gather your staff for internal brainstorming sessions about what your area of the active-aging industry may look like in 2020. Then go online to ICAA on Facebook and share your ideas with other visionaries.

For more information about ICAA 2020, visit [www.icaa.cc](http://www.icaa.cc)

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