



Residents from Covenant Village of the Great Lakes in Grand Rapids, Michigan, visited Fallsburg Park, which includes one of the state's few covered bridges



Voices of

Active Aging Week 2012

Active Aging Week 2013

Sunday, September 22–Saturday,

September 28

Website: www.icaa.cc/aaw.htm

Inspired by the theme of ‘Many journeys, many destinations,’ older adults found fun and opportunity

Active Aging Week®, the annual health promotion event promoted by the International Council on Active Aging®, is held every year during the last full week of September. This year’s theme, “Many journeys, many destinations,” recognized that older adults travel individual paths toward their personal destinations of well-being, health and on-going engagement in life. According to many of the hosts who conducted Active Aging Week® events, their success be-

gan with the theme, and they stirred in the activities, locations and people best suited to their local area. That recipe resulted in a week of health-promotion-plus-fun events.

Every year ICAA encourages host organizations to report on their events. In 2012, there were many first-time hosts, and Active Aging Week was organized by retirement communities, seniors and community centers, health clubs, area agencies on aging, and city and county recreation departments and seniors services divisions. Participants could be found in malls and parking lots, dining halls and parks, gyms and swimming pools.



Building on the theme

Hosts often feature the Active Aging Week theme on fliers, brochures and schedules promoting the event, but in 2012, this was especially noticeable. It is always intriguing to learn how hosts use the theme to plan their week's activities.

With the goal of celebrating active residents and promoting the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, Homestead Hills in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, allowed the theme "Many journeys, many destinations" to guide its offerings. Wellness Director Jenny Sylvester developed the theme with the directors in other Senior Living Communities locations, and then customized events to Homestead Hills. Each day featured a trip to a region of the world, followed by a snack and a take-home giveaway. For example, Destination Asia featured a guest tai chi master, an Asian tea party, and a Chinese takeout box filled with tea and a fortune cookie.

Sylvester reported that "the week brought out residents who have never participated in exercise or ever even

been to the Wellness Center." More than 10 of these residents started to attend wellness classes, she added. Because of Active Aging Week, "they had the opportunity to meet me, they were able to meet other residents who come to classes, and they learned how much fun [these residents have during sessions]."

At the Chesapeake Retirement Community in Newport News, Virginia, the theme was tied into an Alice in Wonderland-Disney theme, according to Meredith Macaluso, wellness manager, and Ashley Jordan, fitness specialist. One journey was to the Norfolk (Virginia) Zoo on Wednesday, a day when older adults get in free, followed by ice cream at the famous Doumar's, home of the waffle cone. The most popular event proved to be the Mad Hatter Tea Party. Many residents dressed up and wore the Mad Hatter hats they had decorated in preparation.

A cruise theme applied the principle of "Many journeys, many destinations" at Masonic Village at Elizabethtown in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania. Every day the "Captain" chose an activity to demonstrate a dimension of wellness. Pastoral Care Services, Nutritional and Food Services, Volunteer Services and a group of residents focused on the dimensions. "We got wonderful feedback on all of the Captain's activities," reported Jennifer Berlet. "However, our emotional wellness activity, Laughter Yoga (presented by Elaine Karl of the World Laughter Tour), took the cake! Every resident that attended Laughter Yoga could not stop talking or laughing about it for the rest of the week. [Karl] reminded us to lighten up and laugh more throughout our lives and gave us techniques on incorporating more laughter into our lives. Everyone had a hoot!"

At The Breakers at Edgewater Beach, a Senior Lifestyle Community in Chicago, a world map attached to a foam board was posted in the lobby, along with flag

pins and a travel journal. Residents were encouraged to "flag" some of their favorite journeys and destinations they had traveled to, and their names and destinations were logged in the Resident Travel Journal. "The response was incredible," said Wellness Director Lori Nuti, "with over 300 flag pins utilized."

The brand new Wellness Center was the destination at White Oak Estates in Spartanburg, South Carolina. "The journey began with residents, families, friends, community leaders, staff and invited guests celebrating a ribbon-cutting ceremony," reported Marketing Director Andrea Hines. "Our destinations throughout the week consisted of Social Wellness, Healthy Heart, Sweet Success (diabetes) and Framework (bones and balance). Activities included educational presentations, outdoor games, daily campus walks, sunset devotion, brain games, wine and cheese social, and exercise class demonstrations. The final destination was a Wellness Fair held on our beautifully landscaped campus grounds," Hines revealed, "with the Wellness Center the feature of the day."

First-time hosts seize the day

Living the spirit of active aging's philosophy, Cheryl Gillette organized a week of events at the Bartlesville Senior Citizens Apartments in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. Residents of the Department of Housing and Urban Development-subsidized apartments use a variety of low-income services, so Gillette, the property's service coordinator, realized their incomes could prevent them from taking part in community activities. Instead, she brought the community to residents by producing an activity for every day of the week through her outreach to services agencies and sponsors. Each activity was followed by a door prize (donated by the local agency presenting the activity), snacks and drinks.

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Bartlesville residents learned about falling hazards; had a balance screening and exercise demonstrations; heard presentations on the value of physical therapy and having a living will; and were screened for blood pressure and blood sugar. The big event of the week was a “Walk for Life” around the property led by a resident riding her bike. Gillette felt the walk was “a huge success,” since even those who did not participate cheered on the walkers and members of the property management company joined in. Also, a walking club was formed—a long-term result. To end the week, a sponsored dinner was served by Boy Scouts, with entertainment by a high school choir and orchestra.

At Aberdeen Heights, a new community in Kirkwood, Missouri, the theme “Experiencing New Heights” seemed to work well, according to Fitness Coordinator Zoe Taylor. Planning a full week of activities was an effective strategy: There were 653 total attendances during the week, in a population of 250 residents. Activities included exercise demonstrations every day, lectures, an evening dance with live music, volunteer work with the local elementary school, and a large vendor fair. In addition, raffle prizes were given at the end of each program to encourage residents to take part. For every event people participated in, they had an opportunity to earn miles toward a gift certificate from an airline, and the

person with the most miles earned the certificate.

Although Active Aging Week was off to a good start, staff at Aberdeen Heights encountered a major challenge. “We never could have predicted or been prepared for the two-day power outage that occurred in the middle of our week,” observed Taylor. “We didn’t let it slow us down, though. We went ahead and hosted the morning exercise class by lamplight.” The vendor fair, aqua kickboxing class and dance with live music were rescheduled, and events later in the week went on as planned.

A highlight was the water walk. Some residents could not participate in the “Walk to End Alzheimer’s” because they were unable to walk one mile in the city’s downtown, Taylor explained. “To give those residents an opportunity to walk for the cause, Aberdeen Heights hosted a first-ever ‘Water Walk to End Alzheimer’s.’ There was a great turnout, with 22 residents walking a combined 18 miles in the pool.” She observed that “\$500 was raised that day, which brought our donations for the Alzheimer’s Association up to a total of \$2,700.”



More Active Aging Week highlights

Inspired by Active Aging Week hosts' stories and ideas? Check out the November/December issue of *ICAA Functional U*® for more highlights. *Functional U* is an online magazine delivered to ICAA members and subscribers. For more information, call toll-free 866-355-9777.

Since this was the first year that Active Aging Week was hosted at Kerby Centre in Calgary, Alberta, the Active Aging Committee members decided to concentrate on a single day—but a very full one. “Our team interpreted the theme of ‘Many journeys, many destinations’ to mean that there are many ways and means to incorporate the idea of active aging into the life of an older adult,” explained Chad Geiger, committee chair.

The Kerby Cup Challenge included badminton and pickleball tournaments in the morning and an Ultimate Frisbee

Game in the afternoon. “We introduced radical new sports to our senior population,” continued Geiger, “many of whom had never played these exciting games before. We felt that this promoted the idea to older adults that they could improvise with activities in their life and try new things to improve their fitness and overall well-being.”

All three events went well and were preceded by plenty of practice time leading up to challenge day. Community clubs helped with organizing the sports challenges, while sponsors provided refreshments and giveaways for the clos-

ing party. “Kerby Centre has already started planning bigger and better for next year,” Geiger mentioned. “We are hoping to fulfill a weeklong calendar of events for next year, expanding the available activities. We are looking for more sponsorship, more participants, and more buzz!”

Exploring the dimensions of wellness

Free day passes for a variety of physical activity classes invited older adults to the City of Sunnyvale Senior Center in Sunnyvale, California, reported Gerard Manuel, community services manager. There was a choice of eight classes, from back care conditioning to Zumba Gold and line dancing. In addition, five health lectures during the week were particularly popular, averaging 45 people per

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presentation on balance, a healthy brain and health risk factors. The highest attendance was for the lecture titled “Creating Wellness.” The center also offered a fitness assessment and a demonstration of the new Enhance Fitness program, rounding out a week where a total of more than 200 people attended a lecture or used their free passes. Once again, partnerships with community organizations helped produce the week’s offerings.

Since health and wellness fairs highlight so many resources in the physical dimension, they are an important Active Aging Week event. A twist on the fair was offered at Good Shepherd Village at Endwell (Endwell, New York), said Wellness Director Thomasita Reynolds. In addition to the health screenings and information, the Wellness Fair featured a farmer’s market and promotion of fruit and veggie month.

“The most popular activity,” according to Reynolds, “was the FUNctionally Fit class led by a guest physical therapist. The most fun would have been the Drums Alive Class.” Another highlight was time spent outdoors at the Tuscarora Scout Reservation Hike & Lunch. “Throughout the week I got many thank-yous and comments on how good activities/events were or how much fun residents had.” Added Reynolds, “As a director, I look forward to this event and all the planning that goes into it. It’s a good week to change up the normal schedule, have fun, try something new, plus provide activities/events that focus on wellness to promote a better quality of life.”

The wellness dimensions were highlighted throughout the week at BridgePoint at Los Altos, a Kisco Senior Living Community in Los Altos, California. Both residents and their guests participated in yoga, a Wii bowling tournament, chair massage, falls prevention and nutrition for healthy aging lectures, and other ac-

tivities. “The most popular event was the car wash fundraiser for a local volunteer concert band, with residents and staff washing cars,” explained Alex Gerasimov, wellness director. “Some residents sat next to the working group and gave advice on how to properly clean the cars ... but it was all in good fun.”

One of the most creative reports of Active Aging Week came from BridgePoint resident Mary Nell Venable, who recapped nine of the community’s activities in poems decorated with photos from these events. You can read one of her poem-reports in the sidebar on page 62.

At Bonsor Recreation Complex in Burnaby, British Columbia, it was member Phil Horton who proposed to staff that the center host Active Aging Week. Hor-

ton joined Bonsor’s 55+ Services staff members Cassie Gibeau and Michelle StJean in brainstorming ideas. They invited three other centers in the City of Burnaby to participate, and the result was a wide range of free activities offered at multiple locations. Carpet bowling, line dancing, mall walking, Zumba Gold and other activities filled the week. The most attended event was a presentation by local physician and media personality Dr. Art Hister, which filled 300 seats. Another success was outdoor Taikofit Drumming, with 20 drums in use by energetic drummers.

“The feedback was fantastic and the benefits to the participants were many,” concluded Gibeau, the 55+ Services



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program coordinator. "People were able to try something new, have a laugh, get active and have fun. We saw lots of new faces, existing members in new places, and many of our regulars out and about enjoying the events." Added Gibeau, "We can't wait to do it again in 2013!"

Gold's Gym, Linglestown, in Pennsylvania welcomed the 50+ Boomers & Beyond Program under the direction of a veteran Active Aging Week host, Jan Capen. Capen planned a week with a full schedule, launched by a venue-wide Fall Festival Open House of vendors, exercises classes and a Chili Cook-Off competition (a SilverSneakers member came second, receiving a gift card from the gym). Piquing visitors' interest were an interactive lecture on healthy aging, a

trip to a miniature golf course, a healthy luncheon buffet, and special classes showcasing different types of fitness equipment.

The final event was a three-mile Active Aging Walk-A-Thon at Wildwood Park. Walkers could donate \$5 for an Active Aging Week T-shirt (provided by Gold's Gym, Linglestown), while additional donations for The Friends of Wildwood raised almost \$400 to help maintain the park.

"I received a lot of positive feedback as a result of Active Aging Week," remarked Capen. "Of particular interest to me was when a member made a comment about how she and her husband never thought they could physically participate in many of the activities/classes we offer. To their surprise, they found success!"

Serving two counties in New York State, the Boxwood Alliance is a free membership collaborative aimed at helping older adults age in place and remain in their homes. The recently formed Alliance offered Active Aging Week events in a variety of locations within their service area. These included such things as seminars, presentations at libraries, arts, needlework, movies, and a mix of regular and special events. "I always look at these events as opportunities for marketing all the great services provided for older adults in our community," observed Catherine Wynkoop, who chairs the Alliance. "Unfortunately, many older adults and town officials don't always know about the quality of local programming."

Expanding the reach

By the end of August and early September, upcoming Active Aging Week events were being announced through websites, newspapers, television stations, and social media sites. Marketing on a local level was complemented by fliers, posters and calendar listings in local media, internal newsletters, and encouragement to tell friends and family.

Among organizations with multiple locations, efforts to coordinate Active Aging Week activities from a corporate office centralized planning and allowed

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An Active Aging Week poem

Car Wash Fundraiser

BridgePoint's car wash and fundraising,
Brings out hallelujahs and a lot of praising!
Hope you went out and did your part,
To help the car wash get a good start.

If you were not up to washing a car,
Your donation has made you a star!
Actually the work turned into fun,
As the workers were spraying one on one.

Yearly we lend a helping hand,
To the "Ye Olde Towne Band"
Volunteers were rewarded with a healthy smoothie,
And all were smiling and acting groovy.

Even the dogs were sipping from straws.
"Beni" and "Nikki" were licking their jaws!
Donations totaled \$370 dollars,
But we will squeeze more 'til the pig hollers.

A check will be presented to the Band.
And all who participated deserve a big hand!!!

– *Mary Nell Venable, 09/25/2012*

them to take advantage of economies of scale. For example, Senior Living Communities (SLC) provided wellness directors at their 12 communities with cards designed with maps depicting four continents and created the Asia/tai chi, South America/Zumba, the American South/line dancing, and Australia/aquatic exercise themes. SLC also increased budgets for September to aid in delivering the event.

At nine retirement communities where the fitness function is managed by the National Institute for Fitness and Sport (NIFS), the destination theme was interpreted in the "NIFS around the World in Five Days" competition. "This was our first attempt at a multiclient initiative and we couldn't be more pleased with the resident engagement seen at each community," said Director of Fitness Management Bethany Garrity. NIFS managers reported a grand total of over 2,000 participants, or roughly 80% of residents.

On a larger scale, EnerG™ by Aegis hosted a "WALK! with Aegis Therapies" event in more than 670 locations. The initiative featured two Olympic Gold Medalists, Jessica Hardy and Steven Holcomb, and nationally recognized fitness expert, Chris Freytag. Throughout the week, each location offered 15- to 30-minute daily walking sessions and an activity that supported one of the dimensions of wellness, reported Brian D. Boekhout, PT, national director of wellness.

Central coordination of Active Aging Week is also possible outside of a single company. Guided by a planning committee, 18 partners in western North Carolina hosted events across counties, agencies and locations, resulting in 1,135 participants for the fifth annual regional Active Aging Week. Public-private partnerships were a key, explained Rebecca Chaplin, aging program specialist for the Area Agency on Aging, Land of Sky

Regional Council, in Asheville. The kick-off Wellness Expo had over 80 vendors, organized into categories of physical activity, fall prevention, diabetes education, volunteerism, community services, and nutrition. Each county featured destinations unique to their culture and topography, working with more partners and benefitting from newspaper publicity.

Finally, with over 400 locations, 24 Hour Fitness had the ability to spread the active-aging message on a large scale. For Active Aging Week, the organization invited adults ages 50 years and older to enjoy free workouts at the gym, and encouraged members to take advantage of all the classes and equipment at their facilities.

A toast to the hosts

The hosts of Active Aging Week are leaders in promoting the concept that

every person of every age benefits from—and is entitled to—an active and engaged life. There is not enough space in this article to share the stories of all the hosts. But each is valued by ICAA, and you will hear more about their efforts in upcoming issues of the *Journal on Active Aging*[®] and *ICAA Functional U*[®].

Over the years that ICAA has promoted Active Aging Week, hosts have increasingly used the dimensions of wellness to plan purposeful events (as opposed to simply offering a few fun activities). Planning that recognizes that the dimensions interlace is likewise more predominant.

Collaboration is another well-defined thread. Hosts are taking advantage of the ideas and resources that partners bring, whether it is among departments in the same organization or among like-

minded people in public and private sectors. Just like the intertwining of the dimensions of wellness, the greater goal is realized by working with others.

We cheerfully give a thumbs-up to all the hosts of Active Aging Week. Thank you for the work that you do. And thanks to the sponsors of Active Aging Week 2012: 24 Hour Fitness, Aegis Therapies, Institute for Preventive Foot Health, Matrix Fitness and Thor•Lo, Inc. 

Sponsors



Key to Active Aging Week photos

Picture 1

Stuffing the Sweet Dreams Pillows was a popular activity at Castle Pointe at Baywinde in Webster, New York. Pillow casings donated by the Women's League of Webster were stuffed with fluff and a lavender sachet

Picture 2

Fitness Coordinator Zoe Taylor tallied laps during the 'Water Walk to End Alzheimer's' at Aberdeen Heights in Kirkwood, Missouri. Together, the 22 participants walked 18 miles, raising \$500 for the cause

Picture 3

The Mad Hatter Tea Party was a hit at the Chesapeake Retirement Community in Newport News, Virginia. The week before, residents got together to decorate their hats

Picture 4

A high school choir serenaded during dinner at the Bartlesville Senior Citizens Apartments in Bartlesville, Oklahoma

Picture 5

At Hillcrest Senior Living in Bozeman, Montana, a group of residents walked the labyrinth, a meditative exercise that enhances spiritual well-being

Picture 6

Two walks and lunch at the Tuscarora Scout Reservation meant that residents of Good Shepherd Village in Endwell in New York needed teamwork to finish up the dishes

Picture 7

A Guided Nature Hike for residents of Covenant Village of the Great Lakes focused on exploring the five senses at the Pierce Cedar Creek Institute in Hastings, Michigan

Picture 8

Tasting the lives of the rich and famous, residents of Galloway Ridge boarded a helicopter to view the area around Pittsboro, North Carolina. The helicopter

rides were a favorite since many people had not ridden in one before

Picture 9

Tai chi and yoga were incorporated into a Flow class that was popular at Brightwater in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Participants enjoyed the relaxation exercises at the end of class

Picture 10

Sporting their new T-shirts ("Changing the Way I Age"), participants from Gold's Gym, Linglestown, in Pennsylvania tried out the miniature golf course

Picture 11

A demonstration of painting china plates shared the skills of 20-year veterans of this craft at Prince Lake Woods in Suffolk, Virginia