

# Active Aging Week 2010: kicking off the planning stage



*Wearing T-shirts supplied by Gold's Gym in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Active Aging Week participants completed a three-mile Greenbelt Walk-A-Thon. The group also showed its support for the Greenbelt, a 20-mile recreational trail, by making a monetary donation. Image courtesy of Jan Capen, SilverSneakers senior advisor at Gold's Gym*

## **This event in September promotes an active, healthy lifestyle for adults ages 50 and older. Plan now to make the most of this opportunity**

Older adults living life as fully as possible within the dimensions of wellness—that is the concept of aging promoted by Active Aging Week, the annual health promotion event spearheaded by the International Council on Active Aging® (ICAA).

Because wellness is a multidimensional model—one that encompasses physical, spiritual, vocational, intellectual, social, emotional and environmental wellness—

a myriad of activities can enhance health and well-being. The key is to find the right activities for an individual. By offering everything from health fairs to lectures, brain games to concerts, dances to walks, and painting to canoeing, professionals in the ICAA community help older adults discover how to “be active your way”—the theme of Active Aging Week 2010.

Now in its eighth year, Active Aging Week is held the last full week of September to promote the benefits of active, healthy lifestyles for adults over 50. During that time, host sites across the United States and Canada invite older adults in their local communities to

experience free wellness activities and exercise in a safe, friendly and fun atmosphere.

Active Aging Week hosts run the gamut from seniors centers, retirement communities and age-restricted apartment complexes, to aging services groups, parks and recreation centers, and health clubs. These hosts sponsor activities at their locations, in parks and malls, and in venues such as churches and community halls. With events planned locally, host sites have great flexibility in how they participate in Active Aging Week. Some organizations may present a single event—such as an outdoor walk, nutrition talk or Wii bowling. Others may offer an abundance of activities. For example, in Wenham, Massachusetts, Gordon College’s Center for Balance, Mobility and Wellness organized more than 20 activities during the week, with each day’s offerings dedicated to a different dimension of wellness. And in 50 communities throughout the US, Senior Lifestyle Corporation staff juggled full schedules of activities throughout a lively week. Ultimately, host sites shape their Active Aging Week involvement with the amount and type of activities they plan.

This year’s Active Aging Week event takes place September 20–26. Now is the time to start your planning, so you can make the most of this opportunity.

### Planning for success

Organizers at host sites expand their vision for Active Aging Week each year—and with it their knowledge of what works, what doesn’t, and what they would do differently. Veteran organizers have shared their insights with ICAA over the years. Some of their advice, along with general planning tips, appear below:

**Save the dates.** Tell residents/clients and colleagues right away when Active Aging Week will take place and ask them to mark those dates on their calendar. By giving people plenty of notice, you can help them avoid scheduling conflicts with the week’s activities.

**Initiate planning early.** Begin your planning cycle as early as possible to have time to develop a vision for Active Aging Week and create support materials. An early start will allow you to establish early marketing deadlines as well. Experienced

hosts suggest having marketing deadlines as much as four or five months in advance of events.

**Target the audience.** Consider the target audience for your Active Aging Week activities. For example, do you primarily want to attract active or inactive older adults? Individuals with specific health issues? Individuals at a particular level of function or care, or across these levels? Participants from a particular market segment? The identity of your target audience will influence the goals you set, the partnerships you seek, and both the activities and approaches you use.

**Decide on goals.** Consider the specific goals you want to achieve through your Active Aging Week activities, and let those goals guide your planning. For example, goals might focus on participants (e.g., behavior change) and/or on programming (e.g., a specific number of new participants). Your objectives will focus your decisions through the planning stages. Plus, by identifying what results you want to accomplish, you can determine ahead of time how to measure the success of your efforts.

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### Active Aging Week five-month plan

Planning stages	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Contact people to plan events.					
Form vision of what your week will look like.					
Choose target audiences, activities.					
Reserve speakers, space, equipment.					
Plan marketing campaign, produce materials.					
Register as host site on <a href="http://www.icaa.cc">www.icaa.cc</a> .					
Launch marketing program.					
Finalize work that allies, volunteers and others will perform.					
Post posters and other displays.					
Welcome your participants.					

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**Seek out partnerships.** Determine the resources you will need for Active Aging Week and approach other organizations about forming alliances. These resources might include staff, facilities, expertise, contacts and funding, for example. Strong partnerships multiply your resources, enhance your outreach to the target audience, and synchronize local efforts to avoid duplication. Others to contact include those organizations that might provide speakers and/or volunteers for your events, sponsor your activities, or offer cash or in-kind donations. Remember that local contacts may need time to process requests through a corporate headquarters.

**Have a checklist.** Make sure you know what you need to do, and when, in the

months leading up to Active Aging Week. To help organizers, ICAA provides a general “five-month plan” listing the major planning stages (see page 85), as well as a planning checklist of more detailed tasks (available on page 87). You can also download Microsoft Word versions from the ICAA website (see “Use ICAA resources” below for more information). With these lists, you can form a picture of the various skills needed to plan your Active Aging Week participation.

**Work with colleagues.** Bring colleagues into the planning process for Active Aging Week, as they can help in selecting goals, promoting the week, and supporting or leading activities. Also, seek out colleagues who have the skills to help with specific planning tasks, such as writ-

ing press releases or creating marketing approaches. Veteran hosts emphasize time and again the benefits of creating a planning team. Another piece of advice? Collaborate with colleagues in other departments to create activities. Dining staff, for example, may offer healthy cooking classes, while a community chaplain may add to the spiritual component of a walk.

**Call in volunteers.** Start a volunteer team of residents/clients and involve this group in creating a vision for the week, spreading the word about activities, and carrying out plans. These volunteers can be the source of valuable ideas and skills—as well

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**1 & 2** *Millennium Development, a not-for-profit community service organization in Brooklyn, New York, delivered 101 Active Aging Week activities, ranging from gardening to canoeing to brain aerobics. Images courtesy of Millennium Development*

**3** *Fitness expert Chris Freytag led Active Aging Week events for Aégis in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Image courtesy of Aégis Therapies*

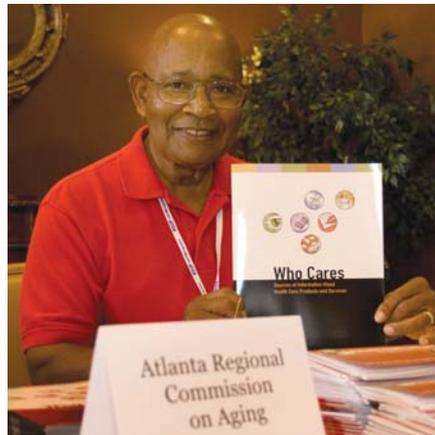
## Active Aging Week planning checklist

Due dates	Planning actions	Additional action items
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize a planning committee.</li> <li>Form your vision for the week.</li> <li>Establish budget.</li> <li>Inform key people in the organization about Active Aging Week.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify target audience: who will attend the event(s)?</li> <li>Finalize list of potential events.</li> <li>Invite speakers or organizations to participate.</li> <li>Reserve rooms and check for schedule conflicts.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inform managers and staff of the event activities.</li> <li>Check on due dates to advertise the events in the organization's newsletters and other outside sources.</li> <li>Visit ICAA website for promotional and educational materials.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalize negotiations with speakers or organizations that will present.</li> <li>Determine marketing pieces needed.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Register as host site on <a href="http://www.icaa.cc">www.icaa.cc</a></li> <li>Draft the flyers and notices for the website and newsletters.</li> <li>Mail press release to local papers, television and radio stations.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give notices to Webmaster for posting.</li> <li>Finalize flyers.</li> <li>Confirm work schedules and tasks for allies, volunteers and staff who will help during the event.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Print out ICAA Active Aging Week posters.</li> <li>Organize the people who will hang posters and distribute flyers.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirm Active Aging Week activities with other departments.</li> <li>Inform maintenance and housekeeping staff.</li> <li>Send e-mail about events.</li> <li>Prepare talking points for exercise instructors, personal trainers and activities staff to announce the Week's activities.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Display the events on the bulletin board.</li> <li>Prepare posters and signs.</li> <li>Double check that events information is in newsletter.</li> <li>Double check room and space reservations.</li> <li>Confirm all speakers and room arrangements.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update voice mail blurbs to remind callers of the events.</li> <li>Send out a second e-mail.</li> <li>Check that posters and flyers are in place; hang them in dining areas, multipurpose rooms and other nonfitness locations.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Print out certificates of participation from the ICAA website to distribute to participants.</li> <li>Review week's events with team.</li> <li>Answer questions.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare and duplicate feedback forms to distribute to participants.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tabulate feedback forms.</li> <li>Conduct a follow-up with the planning committee to discuss what worked well and what didn't for next year's events.</li> <li>Mail a thank you to your volunteer staff.</li> <li>Submit the results of your activities to ICAA.</li> </ul>	

You can download this checklist as a Microsoft Word document at ICAA's website ([www.icaa.cc](http://www.icaa.cc)). Look for "Active Aging Week" under the "Wellness programs" heading on ICAA's homepage, then navigate to free campaign support materials.

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*In senior living communities across North America, Active Aging Week was celebrated with a wide array of activities, with dances and health fairs among the most popular. Examples include, (l to r), a Senior Lifestyle harvest ball in West Chester, Pennsylvania, and a health fair on the Parc at Duluth campus in Atlanta, Georgia. Images courtesy of Senior Lifestyle Corporation and Parc Communities*

as insight into how their peers will respond to messages and programming.

**Use ICAA resources.** Visit the ICAA website for numerous Active Aging Week resources. Each year ICAA both adds to its library of articles and updates free support materials to help hosts plan and implement this event. Resources include fact sheets; formats for media advisory, press release and calendar announcements; logos; posters; certificates of participation; and more. A bevy of “planning guide” articles offers programming inspiration and practical information, while planning worksheets include a marketing matrix and lists that hosts can customize to meet their needs. To access these online resources, go to [www.icaa.cc/aaw.htm](http://www.icaa.cc/aaw.htm). Or, from ICAA’s homepage, select “Wellness programs,” then look under “Active Aging Week” in the left menu. Watch for new resources on the ICAA website in the months to come, as well as more articles in the *Journal on Active Aging*®.

In the lead-up to Active Aging Week, ICAA sends out news releases to media outlets across North America and works with partners to heighten awareness of the event. These efforts drive older adults and

their family members to the “Consumer section” of the ICAA website, where they can learn more about Active Aging Week and locate nearby event hosts. To take advantage of this promotion, just complete and forward the host registration form to ICAA. (You can find this form by clicking “Planning guides” on the left menu of the Active Aging Week webpage above; scroll *up* to reveal the host registration form link.) Your program and contact information will appear in the ICAA website’s consumer section.

## Active outreach

Older adults who visit the ICAA website are interested in active aging. They may have found the website through a topic search, or heard about Active Aging Week in a newspaper article and want to know more. What’s important is they are actively seeking information. Active Aging Week activities may be the opportunity they need to step outside their comfort zone, try something new, and find that perfect activity that lets them be active their way.

You could provide just that opportunity. By reaching out to older adults in your community or neighborhood, and provid-

## 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).

ing them with Active Aging Week information and activities, you could help launch them on their way to a lifestyle of active, healthier aging. ☺

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

