

HEALTHWORD
Putting Health Promotion Back in Motion

November 2004

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HEALTHWORD is a monthly e-mail newsletter produced by the American Society on Aging's Live Well, Live Long project, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Live Well, Live Long provides education and resources to professionals in the field of aging to help them improve health promotion and disease prevention efforts aimed at older adults. Current and past issues of this newsletter are available on the Live Well, Live Long website at <http://www.asaging.org/cdc/HealthWord.cfm>.

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FEATURE

CAN WE CREATE AN ONLINE COMMUNITY AROUND HEALTH PROMOTION?
by David Gan

Members of online communities gather on the Internet to participate in online message boards and discussion groups, or simply read listservs and e-newsletters like this one. Not too long ago, most online communities were supported by advertising revenue. But audiences hungry to be marketed to never materialized, and many of these communities faded away.

Nowadays, any company interested in creating a new website scrutinizes the business reasons for doing so. Online communities are no exception. Most are not economically viable, but one type of community that has emerged as a success is the "community of practice," which brings together people interested in specific professional practices. The Live Well, Live Long health-promotion website (<http://www.asaging.org/cdc>) belongs to this category.

Why establish an online community devoted to health promotion for older adults?

For one thing, a big part of health promotion is gaining access to up-to-date, relevant information. In fact, the goal of ASA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is to deliver that content to you. But member participation can also generate content that's as useful -- if not better than -- the primary information presented. The ability to interact with other practitioners and experts is one of the biggest perks of joining.

More important than merely finding access to information is getting information you can trust. The most successful online communities try to achieve a good balance between the organization's goals and the members' goals. As members of a practice community, you are empowered to influence what you get out of the community without having to worry too much about it being colored by corporate interests. The field of health promotion, which has a big impact on people's lives, could definitely benefit from this kind of community.

So how does a website like Live Well, Live Long evolve from a website into a full-fledged online community? The organizers' to-do list includes concrete steps like defining a purpose for the community, building online gathering places, and encouraging participation. But the key element is that you have to step into your role as a community member. Your input can be as simple as sending some feedback or participating in an online poll.

Live Well, Live Long is still in its nascent stages as an online community. In our first year, 911 users logged onto the Live Well, Live Long website. Since this past July, close to 6,500 users have elected to receive HEALTHWORD, and 5,300 of them have logged onto the website. At this rate, we can expect that our online community will comprise 10,000 professionals within the next year or two. Interest in health promotion for older adults is considerable! As more and more members start participating, the community will grow. And as the community grows, everyone -- professionals and elders alike -- will reap the benefits.

-- David Gan is a San Francisco-based interaction designer who creates websites and software applications.

TOOLS YOU CAN USE:
BUILDING THE HEALTHWORD COMMUNITY THROUGH INFORMATION
SHARING

Information sharing and discussion are key elements in our efforts to advance our understanding of effective health promotion practices and services. Often we forget that we can accomplish these tasks through the Internet.

In the months since ASA initiated HEALTHWORD, we have received many calls and e-mails from readers sharing promising programs that they have developed. Periodically, we

will share these programs with you -- not as a commercial forum to purchase products but as an interactive community of professionals. This month we present three innovative programs from around the United States:

LEARN, EMPOWER, ACHIEVE, PRODUCE (LEAP)

Mather Lifeways has developed the LEAP program to combat nursing turnover in long-term care facilities. Nationally, annual nursing staff turnover rates range from 45 percent to more than 100 percent for nursing homes. The average cost to hire and train each new staff member is \$5,000. LEAP programs have turned annual retention rates at some facilities around from 20 percent to 95 percent. These successes have won the program a number of national awards, most recently the Excellence in Practice Award from the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging and the Healthcare and Aging Award from ASA. For more information about the program, visit <http://www.L-E-A-P.com>.

SAMHSA WEB COURSE

HEALTHWORD subscriber Lisa Kleppel has just completed and posted "Out of the Shadows: Uncovering Substance Use and Elder Abuse," a free Web course that can be found on the SAMHSA website at <http://pathwayscourses.samhsa.gov>. The course examines substance abuse and other risk factors for elder abuse and identifies intervention techniques and effective prevention activities at the individual, family, and community level.

GERIATRIC BEST PRACTICE INITIATIVE

Via HEALTHWORD reader Jeff Finn, we discovered the Geriatric Best Practice Initiative. Funded by the Duke Endowment and the South Carolina Hospital Association, this initiative evaluated and catalogued more than 200 "best practices" in older adult healthcare and social services across South Carolina. You can read descriptions of the programs it identified by visiting <http://www.bestgeriatrics.com/>. For more information on the initiative, contact project director Erika Walker at the Sage Institute in Spartanburg, S.C., (864)585-7865.

We welcome tips on unsung programs that you would like to share with other members of the HEALTHWORD community -- specifically, programs that are Web-accessible, free or low cost, and focused on improving the health of older adults. E-mail us or log on to the "Forum" section of the Live Well, Live Long website (<http://www.asaging.org/cdc>) to engage in further discussion with your colleagues. The link to the forum can be found at the bottom of every page.

BEST PRACTICES:

2004 MINDALERT AWARDS RECOGNIZE INNOVATIVE MENTAL FITNESS PROGRAMMING

The annual ASA-MetLife Foundation MindAlert Awards recognize programs, products, or tools that promote cognitive fitness in later life. Programs are judged for their innovation, their basis in research, demonstration of their effectiveness, their potential for replication, and the extent to which they are accessible to diverse populations of elders. This year, ASA and MetLife Foundation presented MindAlert Awards to three programs:

SENIOR PEER COUNSELING

Center for Healthy Aging, Santa Barbara, Calif.

For older adults in need of emotional support, yet uncomfortable with professional psychiatric services, peer counselors help in coping with such issues as caregiving, finding community resources, and enhancing enthusiasm for life through active involvement. Center for Healthy Aging's senior peer counselors benefit from their participation in the program, too, by receiving mentally challenging and meaningful training coupled with supervision groups that build community among counselors. The center has developed a training manual and video that have been used by many programs around the world. For more information, contact Marlena Ross at the Center for Healthy Aging at (310) 576-2554, ext. 371; e-mail: mross@centerforhealthyaging.org.

THE BUDDY PROGRAM

Northwestern University Cognitive Neurology & Alzheimer's Disease Center, Chicago

The Cognitive Neurology and Alzheimer's Disease Center (CNADC) of Northwestern University's School of Medicine developed the Buddy Program six years ago. It matches first-year medical students with individuals diagnosed with early-stage Alzheimer's disease or related dementias. The Buddy Program thus offers people in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease opportunities to maintain their preferred level of activity in ways that are well suited to their individual capacity. In addition, the program provides participating medical students with increased knowledge about Alzheimer's as well as positive experiences with older patients beyond a clinical relationship. For more information, contact Darby Morhardt of the CNADC at (312) 695-7913; e-mail: d-morhardt@northwestern.edu.

THE ILLUMINATED LIFE

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute & University of Hawaii at Manoa, Manoa, Hi.

The Illuminated Life workshop is a comprehensive, structured life-review program designed to help independent older adults enhance their psychological functioning. Each of the 14 two-hour weekly meetings in the workshop addresses a "life question." Participants prepare for each meeting by reading a brief workbook chapter and completing an exercise that helps them arrive at their own answer to the life question. The Osher Institute is currently testing adaptations of the workshop materials for pairs and leaderless groups. For more information on the program, contact Rebecca Goodman at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at (808) 956-8224; e-mail: rgoodman@hawaii.edu.

To read more extensive descriptions of the 2004 award winners and learn how to submit an application for future awards programs, visit the MindAlert website at <http://www.asaging.org/mindalert>.

CALENDAR

Event: Eighth Annual Older Adults Mental Health Conference -- Dynamic Interventions:
Spanning the Generations of Aging
Date: December 1, 2004
Location: Riverside Convention Center, Riverside, Calif.

Sponsored by the Older Adults System of Care Committee of the Riverside County Department of Mental Health, this one-day conference will educate the community about mental health issues affecting older adults. Sessions include the following:

- * Managing Chronic Pain Without Causing Addiction for Older Adults: Struggling With Chronic Disease and Mental Illness
- * Asian Energy Methods of Preserving 'Mind and Body'
- * LifeSpan: Collaborative Community-Based Case Management

For more information, contact Barbara Mitchell at (951) 358-5370. To view brochure/registration form, visit <http://mentalhealth.co.riverside.ca.us/PDF/APS-2004-Conf.pdf>.

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Event: SOPHE Fourth Annual New Partners for Smart Growth Conference
Dates: January 27-29, 2005
Location: Miami Beach, Fla.

Sponsored by the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE), New Partners for Smart Growth will feature cutting-edge smart growth issues, the latest research findings, implementation tools and strategies, successful case studies, interactive learning experiences, new partners, new projects, and new policies. For more information, visit <http://www.outreach.psu.edu/programs/smartgrowth/>.

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Event: National Aging and Addiction Conference
Dates: January 28-29, 2005
Location: West Palm Beach, Fla.

The National Aging and Addiction Conference will feature nationally known experts in aging and addiction. The keynote speaker will be H. Wesley Clark, director of the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration. Day-one sessions target a broad range of professionals and others helping older adults, while day two invites older adults in recovery, family members, friends, and caring professionals to discuss issues related to addiction and substance-abuse prevention. For more information, visit <https://qnm01.securesites.net/hhnaac/index.php>.

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For more educational offerings in the field of aging, visit the searchable "Events in Aging" calendar on the ASA website: <http://www.asaging.org/calendar>.

Have an event related to health promotion and aging that you would like to tell your colleagues about? Please submit your event, call for papers, or grant announcements to Nancy Bui at nbui@asaging.org. Include the title, organization, date and time, location, contact information, and a short description of the event.

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HEALTHWORD

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