

HEALTHWORD
Putting Health Promotion Back in Motion

July 2006

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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:

BRAIN HEALTH -- HEALTH PROMOTION ABOVE THE NECK

According to a recent survey titled "MetLife Foundation Alzheimer's Survey: What America Thinks," outside of cancer, no illness frightens Americans ages 55 and older more than Alzheimer's disease, a progressive brain disorder that science has yet to defeat. (To read the full study, visit <http://www.metlife.com/Applications/Corporate/WPS/CDA/PageGenerator/0,4132,P12046,00.html>).

Although researchers have not yet found solid evidence that preventive measures against Alzheimer's can be taken, a number of studies suggest that some activities and health behaviors might reduce the likelihood of developing Alzheimer's. However, a 2004 Alzheimer's Association survey reported that only 52 percent of adults currently engage in activities to stay "brain healthy." More guidance is needed, even for those who do.

Brain-health programs began entering the market just 10 years ago. Some, such as Marge Engleman's "Aerobics for the Mind: Keeping the Mind Active in Aging" (1995) and Sandra Cusack's "Mental Fitness for Life" (2005) were authored by individuals. A number of organizations have also published brain-health programs for professionals who work with older adults. The American Society on Aging (ASA) launched "Strategies for Cognitive Vitality" in 2001 (<http://www.asaging.org/cdc>). Two years later, AARP's Educator Community, in cooperation with the Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives, began producing brain-health booklets (http://www.aarp.org/health/brain/program/staying_sharp_booklets.html). The Alzheimer's Association has been conducting "Maintain Your Brain" trainings across the nation since 2004 (<http://www.alz.org/maintainyourbrain/overview.asp>).

Engleman and Cusack have both received MindAlert Awards for their programs. Recently, ASA and MetLife Foundation, which cosponsor these awards, launched the MindAlert Speaker's Bureau to enhance the reach of the awards program. Nonprofits throughout the country may apply to host a training conducted by professionals from MindAlert Award-winning programs. This fall, 15 sites from Portland, Maine, to Long Beach, Calif., will host speakers addressing topics such as creativity and cognition, guided autobiography, and the use of storytelling with people who have Alzheimer's. You can learn more about the speakers bureau at <http://www.asaging.org/asav2/mindalerts>.

TOOLS YOU CAN USE:

2006 MINDALERT AWARD WINNERS

The MindAlert Awards, cosponsored by ASA and the MetLife Foundation, recognize programs and products that promote cognitive function. The 2006 awards were presented to the following programs at the Joint Conference of the National Council on the Aging and the American Society on Aging in Anaheim, Calif.:

CATEGORY: PROGRAMS DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY FOR COGNITIVELY IMPAIRED OLDER ADULTS

The SPECS (Social, Physical, Emotional, Cognitive, and Spiritual) program, based in Findlay, Ohio, provides care and ongoing interactions for children and for older adults with dementia. The multigenerational activities promote positive self-esteem, improve physical and cognitive function, and allow individuals to feel better about life in general.

CATEGORY: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR THE GENERAL POPULATION OF OLDER ADULTS

Based in Washington, D.C., the Staying Sharp campaign disseminates messages targeting critical aspects of cognitive fitness through a coordinated multimedia effort that includes live presentations, a Web area, TV broadcasts, and print materials.

CATEGORY: LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMS

Kingsborough Community College's My Turn Program (Brooklyn, N.Y.) is one of the first programs in the United States to offer a college educational experience to older adults. It currently serves about 2,000 students each academic year. My Turn demonstrates that learning can take place in the classroom, over conversations, in volunteering, and in the home.

The call for submissions for the 2007 MindAlert Awards program has been announced, with a deadline of September 15, 2006. You can find more information on the awards, as well as an online application, at <http://www.asaging.org/awards>.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Event: Diversity and Aging in the 21st Century
Dates: Sept. 7-8, 2006
Location: Los Angeles

AARP, working in partnership with a variety of organizations committed to aging and cultural diversity issues, is bringing together a host of stakeholders for this national conference on diversity and aging in the 21st century. Health promotion professionals may be find two subject tracks of special interest: "Health and Supportive Services" and "Livable Communities for All." CEUs are available. For more information, visit http://www.aarp.org/aarp_benefits/natl_events/diversity_aging/.

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Event: 14th Annual Alzheimer's Association Dementia Care Conference
Dates: Sept. 11-13, 2006
Location: Atlanta

The Alzheimer's Association Dementia Care Conference is a dynamic, multidisciplinary national forum for professionals dedicated to the care of people with dementia and their families. The event highlights the latest, most innovative practices and programs appropriate for both the beginning and the advanced practitioner, with topics ranging from early-stage Alzheimer's to end-of-life issues. Read more about the conference at <http://www.alz.org/careconference/06/overview.asp>.

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Event: 2006 National Health Promotion Conference
Dates: Sept. 12-14, 2006
Location: Atlanta

This conference is presented by CDC's Coordinating Center for Health Promotion, the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, and the Office of Genomics and Disease Prevention. Conference tracks include "Innovative Approaches to Public Health Practice," "Health Policy and Communications," and "Implementing Best Practices at the Local Level." For more information, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/cochp/conference>.

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Event: 2006 Active Aging Week
Dates: Sept. 25-Oct. 1, 2006

Sponsored by the International Council on Active Aging, the fourth annual Active Aging Week heightens awareness of the health benefits of leading an active, healthy lifestyle. During this national health observance, hundreds of fitness and wellness facilities will open their doors to older adults, offering free fitness classes, educational sessions, and more. For more information, visit <http://www.icaa.cc/aaw.htm>.

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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 Betsy Dorsett at betsyd@asaging.org. Include the title, organization, date and time, location, contact information, and a short description of the event.

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