

HEALTHWORD  
Putting Health Promotion Back in Motion

March 2007

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HEALTHWORD is a monthly e-mail newsletter produced by the American Society on Aging's Live Well, Live Long project. 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:

WIDENING THE SCOPE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAMS

By Betsy M. Dorsett and Valerie Griffin

Organizations creating or sustaining physical activity programs for older adults often find that designing unique, fun opportunities that keep participants engaged and motivated is a major challenge. Declines in functional ability and physical fitness do not correspond with chronological age, and so many people ages 60, 70, and 80 who maintain a high activity level are not challenged by typical older-adult exercise programs.

Physical activity programs geared towards those ages 60 and older would do well to offer a range of activities for elders along the continuum of physical fitness and functional ability. Providing choices allows participants to move between activities, taking on new challenges as they gain or lose strength and endurance. Programs for active elders might include the following activities:

\* Scheduled bike rides

- \* Guided hikes and bird watching trips
- \* Tai chi or yoga
- \* Water aerobics
- \* Kayaking and camping
- \* Flexibility, strength-building, balance, and non-impact endurance classes

Valerie Griffin, coordinator of St. John Clinic-Smith Glynn Callaway's Older Adults Services, in Springfield, Mo., has been offering a variety of physical activity programming for active elders. St. John's Exercise for Life program (not to be confused with ASA's Exercise for Life! program, available through the Live Well, Live Long website) includes a bicycling component that has proven very popular with participants. This program includes informational sessions on how to choose a bike, bike safety, and injury prevention, as well as weekly "no one is left behind" trail rides. On the rides, mentor members with cycling experience coach members who are new to the sport.

Researchers at the University of Utah and Colorado State University have found that cycling programs like St. John's that supplement guided bike rides with classes in safety, basic bike maintenance, the proper fit of bikes and helmets, and other cycling topics are effective at empowering women and older adults participating in cycling activities to maintain their participation.

Another reason that Exercise for Life has been so successful is that it has formed formal and informal partnerships with local state parks and greenways. These partnerships give program members access to experienced guides for trail rides, hikes, and bird watching excursions.

Effective physical activity programs for older adults should take into account the continuum of fluctuating functional ability and physical-fitness levels that older adults experience. Offering a variety of challenging, audience-appropriate activities allows elders not to only pick and choose the activities that appeal most to them but also ensures that no one is left out.

#### ASA Resources

For more information regarding physical activity for older adults, visit Live Well, Live Long's Physical Activity module (<http://www.asaging.org/cdc/module6/home.cfm>). The module covers basic information regarding physical activity and older adults, and also lists a variety of program examples.

In addition, a Live Well, Live Long issue brief titled "Collaborations: Skill Building for Effective Partnerships" offers tips on how physical activity programs can establish and maintain partnerships: [http://www.asaging.org/cdc/issue\\_briefs/Issue\\_Brief\\_3.pdf](http://www.asaging.org/cdc/issue_briefs/Issue_Brief_3.pdf).

There are currently three editions available of ASA's Exercise for Life! program: the general edition for older adults, a special edition for older drivers, and a third edition for prevention and management of diabetes. Visit the Live Long, Live Well website to

download PDF versions of each:

[http://www.asaging.org/cdc/module6/phase4/phase4\\_1.cfm](http://www.asaging.org/cdc/module6/phase4/phase4_1.cfm).

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#### TOOLS YOU CAN USE:

Here are three Web-based resources that address topics in health promotion and aging that you may find of interest:

\* “DVT Connections” newsletter

The new newsletter of the Coalition to Prevent Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) is designed to keep the general public, as well as coalition members, abreast of the strides being made in raising DVT awareness. It also alerts readers to upcoming activities. Launched in February 2007, the newsletter will be published online four times a year. Read it at <http://www.preventdvt.org>.

\* Report: “The Imperative of Reducing Health Disparities Through Prevention: Challenges, Implications, and Opportunities”

This Prevention Institute report, released October 2006, focuses on eliminating and minimizing disease and injuries, before the need for treatment occurs, by changing fundamental conditions of the environment that arise from racial and economic injustice. The report covers such topics as nutrition, physical activity, environmental health problems, the built environment, and community-based efforts. Download a PDF version at [http://www.preventioninstitute.org/documents/DRA\\_ReducingHDthruPrx.pdf](http://www.preventioninstitute.org/documents/DRA_ReducingHDthruPrx.pdf).

\* Brochure: “Osteoporosis: The Silent Thief”

This brochure provides highly accessible information about osteoporosis based on research conducted among women ages 65 and older. The Institute for the Future of Aging Services developed the brochure as a part of a CDC project aimed at promoting healthy behavior among older adults. Download a free PDF version at <http://www.futureofaging.org/PublicationFiles/Osteoporosis%20Brochure.pdf>.

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#### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Event: Festival of International Conferences on Caregiving, Disability, Aging, and Technology

Date: June 16-19, 2007 (early registration deadline: Apr. 1, 2007)

Location: Toronto

Rehabilitation, social- and health-services providers, government policymakers, researchers, family caregivers, students, elders, and people with disabilities from around the world will gather in Toronto to explore issues facing aging populations and the implications for healthcare systems and service providers. For more information, visit <http://www.ficcdat.com/>.

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Event: 2007 Annual Scientific Meeting of the American Geriatrics Society  
Dates: May 2-6, 2007  
Location: Seattle

The AGS Annual Scientific Meeting will provide the latest information on clinical care, research on aging, and innovative models of care delivery. It addresses the educational needs of geriatrics professionals from all disciplines. For more information, visit <http://www.americangeriatrics.org/news/meeting/>.

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Event: Health Literacy and Chronic Illness Management Conference  
Dates: May 3-4, 2007 (early registration deadline: April 10)  
Location: Anaheim, Calif.

The Institute for Healthcare Advancement's annual Health Literacy Conference will include such sessions as "Health Literacy 101: An Introduction to the Field"; "Using Stories and Metaphors to Communicate Your Health Message"; "Quick and Low-Cost Ways to Test Your Written Material With Readers"; "Developing Plain Language Materials in Non-English Languages"; and many others. For more information, visit <http://www.ih4health.org/index.cfm/MenuItemID/123.htm>.

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Event: New Hampshire Conference on Aging  
Dates: May 11, 2007  
Location: Bartlett, N.H.

The theme of this conference is "Climb Every Mountain: Life Affirming Strategies," reflecting a focus on the positive aspects of aging. Topics of interest include falls, social isolation and depression, and transportation. For more information, visit <http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/BEAS/coa.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](mailto:betsyd@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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**SUGGESTIONS AND QUESTIONS.** For more information or comments about the newsletter, please contact Chaya Gordon, senior research manager at ASA, at [chayag@asaging.org](mailto:chayag@asaging.org).

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