



*At Westminster Village, participants of all ages exercised together to break the Guinness World Record. Image courtesy of Westminster Village*

# It takes a community:

## Westminster Village sets a world record during Active Aging Week 2014

**This Indiana continuing care retirement community achieved a 'history-making' goal for last September's campaign**



At Westminster Village in West Lafayette, Indiana, Active Aging Week 2014 had an audacious goal: Set a new Guinness World Record for the number of people participating in a chair-based

exercise class. The record-breaking attempt fit the theme of the September health-promotion event—"Let the adventure begin." It also fit the community and its goals.

Located just two miles from Purdue University,<sup>1</sup> “Westminster Village is a vibrant, progressive continuing care retirement community,” says Health and Wellness Director Jordan Morrow. About 350 adults live in the Village’s independent-living apartments and homes, licensed assisted-living apartments, and skilled nursing center, with rehabilitative care and memory support care also provided. The not-for-profit community, managed by Life Care Services (LCS), “creates opportunities for, and connects seniors to, a lifestyle of optimal well-being.”

Morrow notes that “many of the Village’s current residents have been active all their lives. As their physical and cognitive abilities diminish, however, they find themselves in need of skilled support, understanding and adaptations.” To enhance residents’ daily lives and help them enjoy the highest level of independence, the community offers “enrichment opportunities within all eight dimensions of wellness,” he explains. These dimensions include physical, emotional, social, vocational, spiritual, intellectual, health services and environmental.

In 2013, Westminster Village introduced the residents to Active Aging Week®, a national campaign sponsored each year by the International Council on Active Aging®. Host organizations typically develop events that appeal to those who embrace a wellness lifestyle, as well as those taking their first steps toward lifestyle change. Programming encourages living well at any age. “The Village created and replicated some amazing and fun activities” in 2013, recalls Morrow. “It was the first year our community had celebrated Active Aging Week, and it was a grand success. In 2014, we broke a world record!”

### ‘Amazing feat’

So where did the idea come from to pursue the Guinness World Record for chair exercise in 2014? “Guinness World Records is the universally recognized authority on record-breaking achievement,”

Morrow says. “Because we believe that LCS residents are the best in the world, we wanted to prove it.” A bold goal such as Westminster Village’s may help to foster an individual and collective sense of challenge—and pride—among all who support or participate in achieving it. An inclusive goal will also build community spirit.

From independent and assisted living to skilled nursing, Westminster Village residents of all fitness levels can choose from a variety of chair-based exercise classes on campus, according to Morrow. So, “it was only natural that we attempted to break a world record that all residents could participate in—and one that represented something we embrace as a continuing care retirement community.”

On September 22, 2014, participants gathered at Westminster Village’s main entrance to perform the 40-minute chair-exercise class. Event organizers asked participants to bring cans of food to use as weights during the class and to donate afterwards to the local food bank. “We collected 761 lbs. of canned foods for Food Finders Food Bank,” Morrow reveals. In the end, the group numbered 481 people<sup>2</sup>—smashing the existing record (384) by almost 100 people. Residents, family members, friends and community members united to break the record, states Morrow, who adds, “It was truly a team effort to pull off this amazing feat.”

The chair-exercise record had been set four times previously, Morrow mentions. But Westminster Village’s achievement resonates all the more because the community “broke the record by an unprecedented increase in participants.” For the wellness professional, the most inspiring aspect of the event was its intergenerational nature. “The 481 successful participants ranged in age from 3 to 98 years old,” he shares.

### Event organization

Westminster Village’s record attempt harnessed the positive, “can-do” energy

## Resources

### Active Aging Week

[www.activeagingweek.com](http://www.activeagingweek.com)

### Guinness World Records

[www.guinnessworldrecords.com](http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com)

### Life Care Services

[www.lcsnet.com](http://www.lcsnet.com)

### Westminster Village West

#### Lafayette

[www.wvwl.org](http://www.wvwl.org)

of Active Aging Week to engage residents in a memorable adventure. The community’s objectives synchronized with those of the health-promotion campaign in giving as many people as possible the opportunity to get involved in the experience.

“A number of our residents participate in various chair-based exercise classes every week to help them stay fit and active,” Morrow says. “The chance to set a Guinness World Record was an opportunity to encourage nonparticipants to try the activity. Adding the charity component appealed to another group of residents,” he continues. “Through a program sponsored by our local food bank and coordinated through local schools, many Village residents fill backpacks with food every week for children who otherwise would go hungry. Keeping in the spirit of whole-being wellness, we decided to incorporate the vocational component into our event.”

What was involved practically in organizing the Westminster Village effort? Quite a lot, it turns out. “In order to officially break a record, you need to meet Guinness World Records rigorous demands,” Morrow notes. “The record-attempt packet consists of nearly 20

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### Founding Partners



pages of rules, regulations, requirements, guidelines and expectations.” (For information, go to “Set a record” on the Guinness World Records website; see “Resources” on page 45.)

Not surprisingly, Westminster Village enlisted nearly 50 volunteers to help organize and execute the event, Morrow says, while most staff members helped prepare for and/or participated in the class. “We blocked off the parking lot and rented 500 chairs and a sound system,” he states. “Considering the event was outdoors and in Indiana of all places, we put a lot of faith in Mother Nature, but when the day came, we had clear sunny skies and a temperature in the mid-70s.”

### Community support

A well-organized event was essential for Westminster Village's attempt to comply with Guinness World Records demands. The event also needed to attract enough support to succeed. How did the Village encourage sufficient participation and enlist support for the effort without losing its focus on creating resident opportunities?

“By engaging the Westminster Village community to participate in the event as instructors, seat counters and timekeepers, we stayed true to our mission and made the event about the community,” says Morrow. “We used meetings, flyers and the resident newsletter to invite residents. We also used our Facebook page, press release to the local media, direct mail, phone calls to local schools, and newspaper ads to invite participants.”

People's familiarity with Guinness World Records helped with outreach. The *Lafayette Journal & Courier*, for example, highlighted the opportunity “to make history with Westminster Village” in a call for event volunteers.<sup>3</sup> Communications from the Village invited the greater community “to be part of the fun.”<sup>4</sup> Takeaways also encouraged people

to get involved: Each event participant was promised a free T-shirt, as well as an official certificate from Guinness World Records if the group effort triumphed. Its success left a lot of people happily anticipating their certificates.

### Campaign synergy

Together with its residents and supporters, Westminster Village achieved more than a Guinness World Record during Active Aging Week 2014. The community as a whole embraced a spirit of adventure and embodied what the yearly campaign promotes: People living well at any age—regardless of health challenges—and continuing to participate fully in society. This synergy was neatly echoed in the Village's “Live connected. Live well.” tagline.<sup>5</sup>

What's next at Westminster Village after last year's Active Aging Week feat? Morrow isn't saying. “But we can't wait to see what our residents have in store for this year's campaign.”

### References

1. Westminster Village. About us. Retrieved on April 8, 2015, from <http://www.wvwl.org/about.php>.
2. Guinness World Records. Most people doing chair-based exercise. Retrieved on April 8, 2015, from <http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/most-people-doing-chair-based-exercise>.
3. Staff reports. (2014, September 11). Volunteer Needs: Week of Sept. 12. *Lafayette Journal & Courier*. Retrieved on April 8, 2015, from <http://www.jconline.com/story/life/2014/09/11/volunteer-needs-sept/15352303>.
4. Westminster Village. News & Events. Westminster Village invites community to attempt to break Guinness World Record. Retrieved on April 8, 2015, from <http://www.wvwl.org/news/westminster-village-invites-community-to-attempt-to-break-guinness-world-record>.
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