

Active Aging Week 2016:

explore the possibilities



This year's health promotion campaign calls on hosts and participants to consider the possibilities that each day brings to choose wellness

Experiences that help people to grow, learn, improve their health and discover meaningful new interests are part of a vibrant, active lifestyle—and Active Aging Week®.

A health promotion campaign that celebrates the positivity of aging and living well, Active Aging Week features a bounty of fun, educational events and activities offered by local hosts in a welcoming atmosphere. In 2015, an estimated 3,000-plus organizations in six countries hosted participants for a week of adventure. This year's campaign encourages hosts and participants to "Explore the possibilities" to grow and live well that each day brings.

In 2016, for the first time, a Name-the-Theme Competition was held for Active Aging Week, and Elim Park's Barbara Womer submitted the winning entry. Womer, wellness director of the Cheshire, Connecticut, community, says her "Explore the possibilities" theme is

inspired by the "Why not?" attitude at Elim Park since a new wellness initiative launched. Her community also inspires her with its commitment to engaging residents in wellness and providing them with opportunities to grow.

"We encourage exploration year-round and keep an open mind when considering the possibilities," Womer shares. "Wouldn't Active Aging Week be the perfect time to encourage this across the globe?"

A significant message

Established by the International Council on Active Aging® (ICAA) in 2003, Active Aging Week unites the industry in a showcase of older adults' capabilities that emphasizes these individuals as fully participating members of society. The campaign also promotes the benefits of healthier, more active lifestyles.

The festival, held in the last full week of September, comes alive in local communities thanks to the work of hosts and sponsors. All organizations that host Active Aging Week develop and deliver a

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Adventurers from Highgate at Vancouver, Washington, enjoyed a day of zip lining for Active Aging Week 2015. Image courtesy of Highgate Senior Living



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A Villa Capri resident fulfilled a 'bucket list' wish to be a cowboy during his Active Aging Week visit to the Cloverleaf Ranch in Santa Rosa, California, in 2015. Image courtesy of Oakmont Senior Living

celebration that is uniquely their own—from how they schedule events, to what number and kind of activities they offer, to where events take place and who they involve. On-the-ground efforts allow the campaign to reach as many older adults as possible with opportunities to experience wellness activities and exercise in a safe, supportive environment.

Every event conveys a significant message: People can live as fully as possible throughout the life span in all areas of wellness—physical, social, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, vocational and environmental. That's the core philosophy of Active Aging Week. Host organizations spread this message in their local communities, with the goal of inspiring individuals not only to participate in events, but also to make wellness a way of life.

Promoting the week

Led by ICAA in partnership with the President's Council on Fitness, Sports

& Nutrition, and with the support of national sponsors, Active Aging Week 2016 will take place September 25 through October 1—the International Day of Older Persons and ICAA's 15th Anniversary.

"ICAA was a fledgling organization when Active Aging Week launched in 2003," says Colin Milner, the association's founder and CEO. "Yet members and allies were already passionate about hosting a week dedicated to healthy, active aging. Today, thousands of organizations consider Active Aging Week a highlight of their year, and event organizers challenge themselves to come up with fresh, creative offerings for participants. Positive life experiences are the result for everyone."

In the last two years, Active Aging Week themes have focused on living with a spirit of adventure. The 2016 campaign promises to build on that spirit by encouraging hosts and participants to keep

an open mind as they consider life's possibilities.

For many hosts, the annual theme focuses their Active Aging Week marketing and programming. Announcing the year's theme is one way to begin the journey of awareness with participants and colleagues, creating support and anticipation for September's events. It's also a point when advocates—organizations, professionals, older adults—often gear up their planning.

The Active Aging Week website features a variety of resources to help host organizations and participants prepare for the week. Event organizers will find the following there:

- promotional materials, including logos, press materials, posters, T-shirt designs, certificates, and educational PowerPoint presentations
- planning guides, worksheets and programming examples (including a downloadable version of the Active Aging Week five-month plan; see Figure 1 on page 49)
- webinars that offer practical guidance on adding themes to the schedule and implementing a comprehensive promotional plan

In their 2015 reports, numerous hosts mentioned the "Theme day" resources also available on the website. Event organizers said they turned to these resources—supplied by the campaign's national sponsors—to add key topics to their offerings and expand event schedules. Sponsors are offering "Theme day" programming resources again this year.

An individual experience

When it comes to programming, Active Aging Week hosts enjoy great flexibility in designing their schedules. ICAA believes that, given the diverse settings that make up the active-aging industry, organizers know best how to engage and program for their specific clients and

explore the possibilities



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.					
Launch marketing program.					
Finalize work that allies, volunteers and others will perform.					
Post posters and other displays.					
Welcome your participants.					

Figure 1. Active Aging Week five-month plan

other individuals they want to attract to their events. Activities have taken place in senior living communities and seniors centers, hospitals and medical fitness centers, health clubs and YMCAs, parks and recreation facilities, as well as public places such as malls and libraries. Outdoor activities, off-site events and outings are extremely popular. Some fun examples include boat trips, nature hikes, scavenger hunts, school visits, hot-air balloon rides, and skydiving (both real and simulated).

One way for hosts to develop a successful Active Aging Week celebration is to use the seven dimensions of wellness as a programming framework. Event organizers may focus activities primarily in one dimension (e.g., fitness classes) or target a mix (e.g., interactive cooking demonstrations), or plan a compre-

hensive schedule that covers them all. One, two or 20 events—it’s up to the individual planners. ICAA specifies only three guidelines for host organizations to follow. Activities should be:

- free-to-low cost for participants
- educational
- provided in a safe, friendly and fun atmosphere

Because wellness is personal, hosts have opportunities to “Explore the possibilities” as well. Efforts to learn what individuals will find most meaningful allow organizers to create an even greater wellness impact by integrating these elements into their programming.

Making it count

Several host reports from 2015 explicitly mentioned the importance of consulting

older adults about Active Aging Week planning. At California-based Oakmont Senior Living, activity directors “really got into [Active Aging Week] and used it as a platform to fulfill some residents’ ‘bucket list wishes,’” revealed Karen Orlando, the now former director of corporate communications and media relations for the organization.

Orlando wrote about one 90-year-old resident of Villa Capri, in Santa Rosa, whose wish was to be a cowboy. Wearing an outfit purchased for him by the community’s activity director, the man visited a local ranch and rode a horse during Active Aging Week, cheered on by family, seven other residents and the activity director. “He was absolutely thrilled to be on the horse and said it

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In one Episcopal Homes community, Active Aging Week 2015 included residents and staff dancing to live music at an outdoor concert and barbeque. Image courtesy of Episcopal Homes of Minnesota

made his life,” Orlando shared. The event was equally moving to the man’s adult son, she added, noting that he took photographs “through tears of happiness” for his father.

Michael Berg, life enhancement coordinator at Highgate Senior Living in Bellingham, Washington, also valued connecting with residents’ interests. After Active Aging Week 2015, Berg was eager “to see more input from residents on the types of activities they would like to do, particularly ‘bucket list’ type items that we may be able to work into the schedule.” He also aimed “to make the planning process more collaborative across [his community’s] departments.”

Along with their advice to start the planning process early, Active Aging Week veterans frequently suggest creating a team to plan and deliver the schedule of events. They recommend collaborating with colleagues in other departments, and considering other potential team members—board/committee members, older-adult volunteers, family members, and outside supporters, for example.

As part of their planning, organizers are urged to register their organizations as official host sites. It’s an important step that allows ICAA to know who is participating in Active Aging Week (and

thereby direct consumer and media inquiries effectively); it also strengthens the campaign’s appeal to media and sponsors. Registration involves filling out a brief form accessed through a link in the top right corner of the campaign’s home page (see “Mark your calendar” on this page for the website address).

Also, once Active Aging Week is over, ICAA asks hosts to send photographs and reports of activities and experiences. Staff not only discover how the week went and what hosts recommend as a result, but also consider images and excerpts to use in campaign articles in the *Journal on Active Aging*®.

Moments that matter

With its focus on the positivity of aging and living well, Active Aging Week highlights the possibilities that exist to choose wellness every day. This year’s theme, “Explore the possibilities,” encourages individuals to consider what each day brings in a personal journey of wellness. Possibilities to grow, to learn, to connect, to enhance well-being and to enjoy moments that matter.

Positive life experiences are what Active Aging Week is all about. Thanks to the remarkable efforts of everyone involved, this spirit invigorates local communities and the lives of individuals who

Mark your calendar

Observance: Active Aging Week®

Theme: Explore the possibilities

Dates: September 25–October 1, 2016

Format:

- Activities chosen and presented by local hosts
- Free-to-low cost for older adults
- Emphasis on fun, camaraderie and education

Visit www.activeagingweek.com for campaign information and resources, and to register as a host site. Alternatively, call ICAA at 866-335-9777 (toll-free) or 604-734-4466.

participate in the aging festival. ICAA CEO Colin Milner credits host organizations, event organizers, volunteers, participants, partners and sponsors for the impact of Active Aging Week. “What better way to showcase the capabilities—and possibilities—of today’s older adults,” he adds, “than by celebrating them wholeheartedly.”

Led by ICAA, Active Aging Week 2016 takes place in partnership with the President’s Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition. This year’s sponsors include Abbott, Aegis Therapies/EnerG® by Aegis, CaptionCall, MARS Center for Cocoa Health Science, Nestlé Skin Health and SwimEx.

Sponsors

