



Ignite your passion

with Active Aging Week



Active Aging Week 2016 included Yoga Day at Acts Retirement-Life's Brittany Pointe Estates in Lansdale, Pennsylvania, and other Acts communities. Image courtesy of Acts Retirement-Life Communities

In a milestone year, the annual campaign invites hosts and participants to share experiences that add vibrancy and meaning in daily life

People may live fully—with verve, vigor and vitality—at any age and regardless of health conditions. That's the message and the reality that Active Aging Week® highlights each year during the last full week of September.

Led by the International Council on Active Aging® with support from national sponsors, Active Aging Week celebrates the positivity of aging today and promotes healthy, active living in communities and neighborhoods across North America and beyond. The campaign reaches adults ages 50 and older where it especially counts—at the local level.

All kinds of organizations serve as local hosts for the weeklong festival, offering activities and events that encourage people to try something new and perhaps embrace a wellness lifestyle.

There's additional cause to celebrate this year: Active Aging Week marks its 15th anniversary during the week of September 24 to 30. Why not plan to participate and host events in your area?

Planning participation

Every year, host organizations provide schedules of fun, meaningful and engaging opportunities that uniquely fit their settings and populations. Each also decides how to participate—from how many events they schedule, to the kind of activities they offer, to where and when these activities take place. The campaign has just three guidelines for those who organize events. These activities should be free-to-low cost for participants (so money presents no barrier), educational, and delivered in a safe, friendly and fun atmosphere.

With their potential to reach a wider audience, activities can introduce and showcase host organizations to their local communities. It's a marketing opportunity that savvy organizers make the most of.

To help hosts with developing and marketing their participation, Active Aging Week features an annual theme; this year's is "Ignite your passion." How might this theme fire up participation? As past hosts have suggested, a good place to start planning is by consulting clients on their interests and the activities they would like to try. What would spark their curiosity, zeal and energy? What burning desires are on their bucket lists? Advance planning for the campaign is the perfect time to find out.

Wellness is multidimensional
Optimally, Active Aging Week events and activities will encompass life's dif-

ferent facets. The seven wellness dimensions that ICAA endorse are physical, spiritual, social, emotional, environmental, intellectual and vocational wellness. This model can offer a framework for the week's programming, whether that involves a single event or a dozen.

Events typically run the gamut. It's one of the most enjoyable aspects of participating, whether as a host or a participant. Event organizers have delivered nature walks and beach walks, dancing and drumming, hikes and scavenger hunts, picnics and barbecues, health fairs and demonstrations, yoga classes and brain games, carnivals and competitions—and that's just a start. These activities take place everywhere from senior-living campuses and seniors centers, to public libraries, malls and neighborhood YMCAs, to name a few sites.

Some of the most popular activities happen outdoors or off-site. Participants have explored windmills, parks and canyons; gone kayaking and canoeing, and ridden on zip lines, go-karts, boats and biplanes. Somehow event organizers still come up with exciting new experiences every year. So what might a 15th-anniversary celebration warrant? Anything's possible.

Resources to help

For those thinking about getting involved for the first time, Active Aging Week hosts pay no fees to participate. Local organizers also access free promotional materials and resources provided via the campaign's website (www.activeagingweek.com). Available are:

- logos, posters, T-shirt designs, certificates, PowerPoint presentations, calendar announcements, fact sheets, and social media tools (campaign hashtag #activeagingweek);
- planning guides, case studies, downloadable worksheets, and program examples from past years; and
- how-to webinars on gaining attention with a promotional plan, and including theme days in the schedule.

Theme days provide programming resources that may expand a host's offerings. Supported by the campaign's

national sponsors, the 2017 theme days focus on multidimensional wellness, skin health, aquatic yoga, and nutrition. Besides anchoring a day's programming, such topics enrich health fairs, open houses, demonstrations, challenges, educational seminars, and more.

Along with their drive, imagination and creativity, local organizers can draw on the Active Aging Week library of resources to promote their celebration's success.

Some key steps

What else supports Active Aging Week success? Local hosts most consistently mention that it pays to begin planning early. And veterans advise novices to plan and deliver events as a team. Bring together colleagues from across organizations, they urge, and include residents/members, committee/board members, volunteers, family members, suppliers, and the like.

ICAA invites organizations to register as official host sites. Simply click on the link on the campaign website's home page, then fill out the short form. It's quick and easy to do. By registering, local hosts notify the campaign of their participation, which ensures their support is counted in the numbers provided to media and sponsors.

Host organizations may also want to tap individuals ahead of Active Aging Week to write posts, press releases or articles and take photos of events. Recording participation is valuable in so many ways—for traditional and social media marketing; media coverage (which may help attract sponsors and funding in future years); and communications and outreach to constituents and supporters. Hosts are also asked to share their organizations' experiences with ICAA in post-event comments or reports. Accompanying photos and excerpts will be considered for *Journal on Active Aging*® articles.

A positive impact

Thanks to supporters, Active Aging Week has continued to grow and evolve since its launch in 2003. Veteran hosts return and first-timers leap on board

because they see the value of positive life experiences that support better health, strengthen relationships, inspire new pursuits, and bring added meaning and zest to people's lives. Yet that is only part of the impact.

Active Aging Week also influences people's views of aging and the possibilities they believe to exist as they advance later in life. From organizers to older adults, sponsors to volunteers, participating groups to media contacts, the week's activities often touch many with their sunny *can-do* spirit. Exposure to events—directly, by word-of-mouth/social media or through the news—may nudge individuals to reevaluate their beliefs as a result. In this way, those who plan, deliver and support the campaign have reached millions of people over the years working in concert with ICAA, national sponsors and partners, and each other.

In its milestone year, Active Aging Week encourages participants and hosts to ignite their passions. To discover and do things that add vibrancy and meaning in daily life. And to live fully by embracing a healthy, active lifestyle. Through their week's activities and events, local hosts can help ignite a passion for active aging in their communities and neighborhoods—and promote positive life experiences for everyone.🌀

Active Aging Week 2017 is sponsored by Abbott Nutrition, Aegis Therapies/EnerG® by Aegis, Nestlé Skin Health and SwimEx.

Join the celebration

Observance: Active Aging Week

Theme: Ignite your passion

Dates: September 24–30, 2017

Connect with Active Aging Week's 15th anniversary campaign:
www.activeagingweek.com, www.facebook.com/ActiveAgingWeek, #activeagingweek