

Vitality in action:

It's time for
Active
Aging Week



This year's celebration is here. Are you ready? Official Host Sites can access free tools and resources online—plus suggestions in these pages—to jump-start last-minute planning

by Julie King, MS

Vim, vigor and variety are on full display during Active Aging Week®, a yearly celebration that highlights aging today and the ability of adults 50+ to lead full, active lives. In 2021, the 19th annual observance takes place October 4–10. As Official Host Sites gear up for the week, others can still join the campaign by registering online and inviting individuals to their offerings.

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At John Knox Village in Pompano Beach, Florida, Active Aging Week 2020 included a photo composition workshop with professional wildlife photographer Phoenix Marks

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Led and organized nationally by the International Council on Active Aging® (ICAA), Active Aging Week is supported in 2021 by Presenting Sponsor Humana and national sponsors Abbott Nutrition and Aegis Therapies/EnerG® by Aegis. ICAA created Active Aging Week in 2003 as a grassroots effort to promote a healthier, more engaged life. Each year, in neighborhoods and communities throughout North America and beyond, the festivities draw host organizations that develop their own creative menus of activities. These local hosts include senior living communities, seniors centers, libraries, health clubs, recreation centers, cities and others. Staff, volunteers and participants revel in

opportunities to explore the dimensions of wellness. [Ed. See “Showcasing older-adult wellness” on page 62 for some examples from past celebrations.]

As the world continues to deal with pandemic challenges, now is a particularly important time to embrace the goals of Active Aging Week: to introduce healthier, active lifestyles to as many adults as possible and to encourage individuals to live as fully as possible in all of life’s dimensions.

To adhere to COVID-19 safety guidance and local restrictions last year, host organizations offered activities in a hybrid format, with some in-person and others online. Colin Milner, ICAA founder and CEO, applauds the shift. “We’re excited about how Active Aging Week has been reimagined with a blended model of live and digital events, which can extend outreach,” he says.

“Overall wellness has declined for a great many older adults due to the pandemic,” Milner observes. “That’s why, as we continue to live with COVID, we need to ramp up our efforts to safely support wellness. For this reason, ICAA recently released a Call to Action to reclaim health and well-being for older people by integrating wellness throughout organizational strategies and operations,” he states. “Active Aging Week gives members a timely opportunity to embrace this mission.” [Ed. Refer to the sidebar on page 65 to find out about the benefits of participating.]

Customizable campaign toolkit

While the mission of Active Aging Week is universal, its implementation is customizable not only to each community’s needs, interests and resources, but also to the state of the pandemic in the local area. Formerly, ICAA chose a theme for the week. Now organizations may

Campaign resources

Internet

Active Aging Week

www.activeagingweek.com

Active Aging Week: Awards

www.activeagingweek.com/awards.php

Active Aging Week: Host site registration

www.activeagingweek.com/register/php

Active Aging Week: Theme Days

www.activeagingweek.com/themes.php

Active Aging Week Official Facebook page

www.facebook.com/ActiveAgingWeek

Alzheimer’s Association—Support for The Longest Day

<http://alz.org/icaa>

International Council on Active Aging (ICAA)

www.icaa.cc

WALK! with Aegis Therapies

www.walkwithaegis.com



identify their own themes that best represent and engage their audiences, while accommodating their resources.

Host sites can take advantage of this freedom to create their own version of Active Aging Week, with activities that meet the following criteria:

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

Organizations may provide a single event or multiple activities—in-person and/or online—to promote the benefits of an engaged, active lifestyle and to showcase wellness programs. Event schedules often encompass ICAA's seven dimensions: emotional, intellectual, physical, social, spiritual, vocational and environmental wellness.

The Active Aging Week website offers a comprehensive library of free materials online. Included are planning guides and checklists, which host sites may use to prioritize steps to fit the remaining time available. Different versions are provided for US and international audiences.

Additional resources include recommendations and information on such things as setting goals for Active Aging Week, gaining publicity and donations, and accomplishing last-minute planning. Upon registration, host organizations also access easy-to-use customizable promotional templates. These include:

- calendar announcements, press releases and fact sheets
- invitations, flyers and posters
- T-shirt designs
- social media templates
- PowerPoint presentation samples

To inspire ideas, the website posts past campaign program examples, summaries of Spirit Award winners (see below) and case studies of host organizations.

Showcasing older-adult wellness

The beauty of Active Aging Week is that activity options—from simple to involved, and in-person or online—are plentiful. Some popular activities include group walks, health fairs, scavenger hunts, cooking demonstrations, fitness classes, brain games, bocce, dance parties, lectures, photo workshops, pickleball and multievent competitions.

Each year, ICAA selects 10 Active Aging Week Spirit Award winners, highlighting success stories of host organizations that innovatively reframed aging and recognizing those whose images best capture the week's spirit. Undertakings by some past winners have included:

- *Indoor skydiving.* Residents of the Chateau on Capitol Avenue in

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Key to photos

1. *Competitor Sue McGimpsey drew cheers during an OlympiActs' Spelling Bee at Acts Retirement-Life Communities*
2. *Tapestry at Wesbrook Village residents pushed their comfort limit with a tree-top canopy walk*
3. *Shenandoah Valley Westminster-Canterbury held a basketball free-throw challenge*
4. *Residents celebrated 'four baggers' during Holland Home's bean bag tournament*
5. *Heisinger Bluffs residents solved the mystery of the most well-rounded active ager in a real-life game of Clue*
6. *The City of St. Peter's weeklong events included a pickleball clinic in the gorgeous Minnesota fall weather*
7. *South Port Square residents raced across campus to showcase active living*



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A socially distanced Fitness Trail Walk brought residents of Woodcrest Villa in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, outdoors for physical activity (and trail mix!) during Active Aging Week 2020

- Sacramento, California, simultaneously challenged gravity and crossed off a potential bucket list item by channeling their best Superman or Superwoman while floating in vertical wind tunnels.
- **Ziplining.** Brightwater, a senior living community in Highland, California, also gave participants a gravity-defying, fast-paced thrill by ziplining high between the trees.

Support Alzheimer's research

Before, during and after Active Aging Week®, please join the ICAA global team in supporting The Longest Day, an initiative that raises funds and awareness for the benefit of the Alzheimer's Association. Help meet the ICAA team goal of USD\$50,000. Visit <http://alz.org/icaa> to learn more.

- **Stand-up paddleboarding and kayaking.** Timing its annual Riverwalk to coincide with Active Aging Week, Asbury Solomons in Solomons, Maryland, treated residents to outdoor hydro-adventures such as stand-up paddleboarding and kayaking.
- **Plant therapy workshop.** At Woodcrest Villa, a Mennonite Home Community in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, residents cultivated their green thumbs to create their own succulent planters while learning about the benefits of gardening and flower arranging.
- **Games galore.** Competitive spirits flourished at South Port Square in Port Charlotte, Florida, where Active Aging Week participants took on disc golf, bean bag toss, ping pong, Wii™ video-game bowling, bicycle and tricycle races, and a poker walk.

Other unique ways to commemorate Active Aging Week have included the following:

- Sugar Creek Assisted Living in Troy, Missouri, celebrated different decades with special attire, music and food specific to that period. Monday was the 1930s; Tuesday, 1940s; Wednesday, 1960s; Thursday, 1970s; and Friday, 1950s.
- Presbyterian Senior Living in Dillsburg, Pennsylvania, modified its traditional organization-wide Successful Aging Retreat due to the pandemic's restrictions on large gatherings. Instead, Presbyterian's 12 life-plan/continuing care communities participated in mini-retreat online sessions that covered each of the seven dimensions of wellness. These included Tai Chi Qigong Shibashi; Joyous Movement, a seated, choreographed dance class; and Compassionate Touch, a session on how physical touch and presence can help reduce loneliness, depression, anxiety and pain.
- At Senior Resource Group's Maravilla Santa Barbara community in Santa Barbara, California, residents are continually encouraged to try things for the first time. During Active Aging Week, they put this into practice by engaging in boxing, bird-watching, and feeding ostriches at an ostrich farm.
- Due to COVID-19, Acts Retirement-Life Communities transformed its annual OlympiActs into a mostly virtual competition among all 26 Acts communities in nine American states. Approximately 1,600 residents and staff enjoyed games that were tweaked for social distancing, mask wearing, hand sanitizing and equipment cleaning. The games were divided between events held in the community and virtual competitions that happened in real time. Winning communities earned a gold, silver or bronze medal.
- Residents, families and staff of Pine Trail at Castle Rock, in Castle Rock, Colorado, donated gift cards and a variety of stocking stuffer items to create a Christmas surprise for The Gathering Place, a drop-in center for homeless women and children in

Denver. Residents packed the stockings with toys, craft supplies, healthy snacks, toiletries and more—ultimately contributing 44 overstuffed holiday presents for those in need.

Ideas for activities also come every year with the campaign's Theme Days, provided at no charge to host organizations.

Theme days

National sponsors support Theme Days during the Active Aging Week campaign, which can serve as a focus for host organizations that are planning their agendas. These Theme Days offer convenient ways to add last-minute programming.

Now in its 13th year, WALK! With Aegis Therapies shares programming options with host organizations on the event website (see "Resources" on page 62). The annual initiative typically focuses on daily physical activity, plus additional activities in all the other dimensions of wellness.

Longtime sponsor Abbott Nutrition also provides a variety of support materials that hosts can use for in-person or online activities. These resources highlight nutrition and hydration to maximize immune health in actively aging adults. A healthy immune system allows individuals to thrive throughout their lives, while bolstering immune health is especially important in the COVID era.

Host organizations may choose to use Theme Day materials in presentations, workshops, mini-expos and health fairs, plus provide these resources as handouts or in giveaways to participants.

Act now

Host organizations bring the spirit of Active Aging Week to life. It is largely due to their efforts and those of sponsors, participants and supporters that the campaign reaches people in communities and neighborhoods with its positive message: People have the potential to lead healthier,

fuller, more active lives at any age. The *can-do* spirit of Active Aging Week reinforces the benefits of multidimensional wellness among participants of all capabilities, staff and volunteers.

By fostering engagement, facilitating new experiences and creating memories, this campaign leverages the strengths and skills of older adults, and serves as a powerful reminder of how they are vital contributors to vibrant societies.

Active Aging Week 2021 is here. Thanks to all the organizations that have already registered as Official Host Sites and are now gearing up for the week. Last-minute registrations are still possible throughout the campaign. Registration unlocks access to useful free materials and resources. It also enables ICAA to track participation, forward media inquiries and quantify support—an invaluable help when approaching potential sponsors for next year. Organizations can go online to register at www.activeagingweek.com/register.php.

Every Active Aging Week host organization makes a difference individually and collectively. Good luck to everyone participating this year. ICAA looks forward to hearing about every celebration! 🎉

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Thanks to sponsors

The International Council on Active Aging® is grateful to Presenting Sponsor Humana and national sponsors Abbott Nutrition and Aegis Therapies/EnerG® by Aegis Therapies for their generous support of Active Aging Week 2021. Thank you for making this year's campaign possible.



Active Aging Week: Benefits of participating

Why get involved with Active Aging Week®? The campaign is a practical vehicle for organizations and communities to promote their age-friendly new or traditional offerings to the older-adult cohort. These efforts can raise awareness, generate interest and increase participation.

In addition, Active Aging Week can deliver an impactful experience for both participants and staff, enhancing relationships, providing new experiences and fostering new habits.

Plus, host organizations are acknowledged as leaders in the broad mission to redefine how we age. Stories of Active Aging Week can resonate with broader audiences and increase exposure in the media and on social media channels even after the celebrations end—especially when photos document the fun. ICAA also recognizes participation on the campaign's website and Facebook page, and highlights select host sites in the *Journal on Active Aging*®.