



Active Aging Week 2021:

Celebrating active, engaged living

Local host organizations rolled out activities in person and online, encouraging adults 50+ to reclaim their health and wellness

Individuals engaging fully in life as they age—that’s the long-term outcome that active-aging professionals often hope for when they host Active Aging Week®. Since the annual observance launched in 2003, the wellness initiative has showcased the potential of older adults and their ability to participate fully in life’s different dimensions. And every year, host organizations create



Competition grew fierce during an Active Aging Week table tennis tournament at Stoneridge Creek in Pleasanton, California. Image courtesy of Stoneridge Creek Retirement Community

low-to-no-cost activities to encourage adults 50+ to try new experiences and savor the fun, friendship and joy of participation in physical, spiritual, social, emotional, intellectual, vocational and environmental wellness offerings. Through a mix of in-person and virtual programming, these organizations again enlivened their neighborhoods and communities in 2021 with opportunities to join in the week's celebrations.

Active Aging Week 2021, presented by Humana, was organized and led nationally by the International Council on Active Aging®. National sponsors Abbott

Nutrition and Aegis Therapies/EnerG® by Aegis supported the campaign, along with content providers Spiro100 and One Day University. From local hosts and sponsors to organizers and volunteers, a multitude of grassroots contributors made the initiative a highlight of early fall for older adults across North America and beyond. To give a flavor of the week, held October 4–10, the following pages share some of the activities offered.

Connecting communities

Successful outreach in neighborhoods and communities brings people together

with Active Aging Week's positive message that people have the potential to live full, engaged, active lives at any age. Every year, aging adults participate in free activities organized by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Department of Parks and Recreation in Prince George's County. In 2021, events kicked off on Monday, October 4, at Bladensburg Waterfront Park with fitness classes, line dancing and crafts; an opportunity to walk with the Club 300 Senior Walking Club and the launch of the new

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In Rohnert Park, California, a photographer captured images of the Clearwater of Sonoma Hills Superhero 7 for Active Aging Week. Miriam's 'superpower' in life is laughter. Image courtesy of Clearwater of Sonoma Hills

Cycling Seniors Bike Club. Archery, belly dancing and virtual yoga were among the offerings on Tuesday, along with a Senior Bike & Trike ride and a boat cruise on the Patuxent River. Highlights for Wednesday included Senior Fun & Fitness Day, kayaking, clay techniques and water aerobics, while participants enjoyed line and salsa dancing, ZumbaFit, painting and a chance to win prizes with “The Price is Right” on Thursday. Ending the week, Friday’s offerings included pickleball, chair tai chi and Total Fitness (core, resistance and flexibility training), plus free drop-ins at Prince George’s Sports & Learning Complex. In addition, neighboring Montgomery County offered programming at different locations. Among the activities provided were technology skills, fitness classes, book discussions, walks and games.

In California, the City of Santa Maria’s Active Aging Committee again organized a series of free activities for local older adults. Santa Maria Recreation and Parks Department provided free access to ZumbaGold,

Chairobics, Folk Dance, Build Your Own Body (BYOB) and yoga classes, as well as ukulele lessons for beginners. New this year were an outdoor ukulele demonstration and singalong, as well as an intergenerational story time for older adults and children sponsored by Santa Maria Public Library. Participants of all ages enjoyed the visit from the Bookmobile as well. The Elwin Mussell Senior Center hosted these events. Additionally, for those keen to learn pickleball, an introductory clinic took place on the new pickleball courts at the city’s Hagerman Sports Complex.

A free seven-day trial membership was available to older people keen to participate in “activities of their choosing” at the YMCA of Greater Brandywine in West Chester, Pennsylvania. The Greater Brandywine Y typically provides a wide range of activities for older adults. Offerings include in-person and virtual group exercise classes, targeted fitness and aqua classes, open and lap swimming, pickleball, social events and more. Meanwhile, in California, the

YMCA of San Diego County marked the week with workshops, classes and seminars taking place each day. Participants also enjoyed physical and social activities while celebrating the organization’s 18th annual Day at the Bay on October 6.

Linking participants with resources

Health fairs and presentations are popular ways to provide information to Active Aging Week participants. In 2021, the Southwest Georgia (Sowega) Council on Aging introduced participants to helpful resources and information via the Active Older Adult Health Fair–Drive-Thru Event, held at The Gathering Church in Thomasville. The Albany-based council also hosted Coffee Connections teleconferences (with participants socializing by telephone), call-in bingo games, walking clubs and an Active Aging Community River Walk at River Front Park in Albany. The River Walk featured half-mile and one-mile options, blood pressure assessments and giveaways for participants.

Bulverde Spring Branch Activity Center, a Texas nonprofit that serves older adults in the Bulverde/Spring Branch area, featured presentations and “Lunch & Learn” opportunities for participants to learn about services available in the local community. An Active Aging Health & Information Fair closed out the week on October 9. Attendees received gift bags and giveaways, connected with local health and wellness vendors, and if they registered in advance, received hearing screenings, flu shots and mammograms (provided on the University Health System’s Mammography Bus).

Each day during Active Aging Week, Avenida Lakewood in Lakewood, Colorado, highlighted a dimension of its Five to Thrive™, part of the 55+ active-adult community’s AvenidaLife™ wellness program. “Our most popular event was our Fall Market focused under our ‘Live Connected’ dimension,” notes Resident Enrichment Director Sadie Kice. “We hosted 16 vendors and had over 130 residents participate, along with 20 local community members.”

Residents bought gifts for themselves and their family members, purchased fresh produce and discovered more about businesses in the Lakewood area.

From healthy cooking to crafts, fitness to line dancing, and mah-jongg to bridge, Active Aging Week activities at Lewes Senior Activity Center in Lewes, Delaware, were open to members and other interested participants. The Center, which bills itself as “your place to do it all while getting away from it all,” welcomed individuals for fraud prevention advice, trail walking, health assessments and screenings, plus free flu shots. A blood drive also took place.

And in Somerset, New Jersey, Hidden Brook at Franklin offered an educational presentation on arthritis, osteoporosis and fall prevention for residents of this Springpoint affordable housing community. Put together by Springpoint’s LivWell team, the presentation provided attendees with information about these three important topics, plus each resident received a Home Safety checklist to use in their own apartments, according to LivWell Program Manager Amanda Oberg. As part of the event, the team also led the group in some simple exercises to improve balance.

Recognizing achievements

One winning aspect of Active Aging Week is the spotlight it shines on individuals. In 2021, events included a celebration of one longtime resident and his achievements—complete with Q&A and champagne toast—at Juniper Village at Paramus, an assisted living and memory care community in Bergen County, New Jersey. A former long-distance runner, Cris Cusack earned a degree in English Literature and wrote many short stories about running. One such story became a contest finalist. “Juniper partnered with Cris to compile his life’s work and ‘pride and joy’ into one anthology entitled *The Complete Crispin*,” says Connections Director Michele Martino. A signed copy is available for residents to borrow. In fact, after Active Aging Week, Juniper continued this focus, introducing a program in which Cusack read his book to participants. Among other events to celebrate the week, the community launched Juniper Beats, a new weekly fitness offering.

The LivingWell Program at Delmanor Northtown, a senior living community in North York, Ontario, Canada, focuses on fitness, mobility, strength and balance as part of the physical wellness dimension. During Active Aging Week, the communi-

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20th Annual Active Aging Week
October 3–9, 2022

#activeagingweek
www.activeagingweek.com
[Facebook.com/activeagingweek](https://www.facebook.com/activeagingweek)

Encourage adults 50+ to embrace wellness and engage in life as fully as possible by hosting Active Aging Week®. You’ll find free promotional and planning materials available online when you enroll your organization as an Official Active Aging Week Host Site. Visit the campaign website for more information.

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ty's Facebook page recognized its residents' dedication to staying healthy and active with photos showing them working out together. A Jeopardy Challenge added an intellectual dimension to the week, as well as a fun social one. Residents gave the competition a lot of satisfied thumbs-ups.

At Clearwater at Sonoma Hills, an assisted living and memory care community in Rohnert Park, California, everyone flexed their biceps in a new strength-training class, flexed their taste buds with a mystery dinner and flexed their community support by visiting a local mom-and-pop bookstore, mentions Lifestyle Director Jill Zimmerman. "We ended our week on a high note by asking seven residents to FLEX their 'superpower,'" she says. The Clearwater of Sonoma Hills Superhero 7 were asked what they felt their superpower was that had "gotten them through life." A professional makeup artist and photographer then helped in capturing these individuals in visual representations of their answers—one of which appears on page 72.

Resources

Internet

Active Aging Week
www.activeagingweek.com

Active Aging Week on Facebook
www.facebook.com/ActiveAgingWeek/

International Council on Active Aging (ICAA)
www.icaa.cc

Print

King, J. (2021). Spirit of celebration. *Journal on Active Aging*, 20(6), 68–73. Available free online to International Council on Active Aging members in the "Articles" library at www.icaa.cc

Challenging opportunities

Local host organizations often encourage healthy competition during Active Aging Week. In Gaithersburg, Maryland, for example, Asbury Methodist Village hosted a Residents vs. Associates Cornhole Tournament, with champions in both groups receiving medals. Residents of the life-plan community could also try cardio drumming and stretching classes. One special highlight was the Maryland Senior Olympics Bocce Tournament, which took place on the community's campus.

The Center at Belvedere in Charlottesville, Virginia, held an Active Aging Week Challenge. Individuals took part in selected programs over five days, gaining points for their participation. Eight winners received prizes. The top three prizes included three sessions with a personal trainer and day trips to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond and the Peaks of Otter in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

At Madison Medical Resort, which offers post-hospital rehabilitation and long-term nursing care services in Odessa, Texas, organizers set up an indoor Wellness Trail with activities/movements to complete at each station (e.g., tai chi, rowing, weights). Participants challenged themselves to complete the trail and showed off the certificates they earned in photos posted to the community's Facebook page. Starting with goal setting, topics of focus throughout the week included—in addition to movement—hydration, nutrition, lifelong learning and rest. A virtual dance session ended the week.

In Greenville, South Carolina, Cascades-Verdae chose the theme "Living Our Best Life" for Active Aging Week 2021. The life-plan community regularly encourages residents to reimagine their lives, says Wellness Director Libby Stewart. Activities for the weeklong observance gave everyone a chance to challenge themselves—and traditional expectations of aging—with a trail hike, ropes and zipline course, plus a lively Zumba class.

Engaging experiences

Host organizers come up with creative ways each year to build camaraderie and engage individuals not only in activities, but in their communities as well. For Shell Point Retirement Community in Fort Myers, Florida, Active Aging Week activities highlighted the life-plan community's active lifestyle. According to Shell Point's Facebook page, residents played Frisbee Golf, pumped up their heart rates with a dance class from KariKardio fitness studio, and rose early for a kayak trip in support of an environmental initiative to clean up Florida's coastlines.

At Monarch Landing in Naperville, Illinois, roughly 300 residents decorated lunch bags for Hesed House, a local shelter for people

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who are homeless. Participants also laughed through therapeutic humor, relaxed in the tranquility room, played brain games and fitness bingo (chair jumping jacks included), and wrote notes to staff and fellow residents to share their appreciation, reveals Wellness Manager Marissa Krueger. A group from the life-plan community also ventured outdoors to hike in the 500-acre historical Cantigny Park, located in nearby Wheaton. Overall, everyone “had a wonderful time” during the week’s activities, Krueger says.

In Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, a group from Brightwater visited Myrtle Beach State Park for some pier fishing. Participants not only had a great time but also caught lots of fish, according to the life-plan community’s Facebook page, which adds: “It was the perfect way to enjoy the great outdoors and participate in this fun sport.” In another Brightwater post, participants hiked the Heritage Shores Nature Preserve trail, working up an appetite for the nutritious lunch that followed from Bay Naturals, a healthy market and restaurant.

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Key to photos

1. Residents from Evergreen Woods in North Branford, Connecticut, were in high spirits during their Bike Rail Adventure on the Essex Rail Trail for Active Aging Week 2021.
2. For a group from Wellmore of Daniel Island in Charleston, South Carolina, Active Aging Week included a ferryboat ride through the city’s historic harbor.
3. At Heisinger Bluffs in Jefferson City, Missouri, residents enjoyed time together as they strove to complete their bingo cards for a fun game of Social Bingo.
4. As part of their Active Aging Week activities, hundreds of residents at Monarch Landing in Naperville, Illinois, decorated lunch bags for a local homeless shelter.
5. Residents Ceri Dando and Charlie Darling sang backup for the Foothills Oompah Band at the Oktoberfest celebrations held during Active Aging Week on the White Oaks Estates campus in Spartanburg, South Carolina.
6. In Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Homestead Hills residents relaxed as they waited for their 45-minute halotherapy session in a local salt cave.
7. A fitness walk through Vancouver’s Pacific Spirit Park started the morning for residents of Tapestry at Wesbrook Village in British Columbia, Canada, during Active Aging Week.



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Correction

The *Journal on Active Aging*® incorrectly identified an image submitted by Tapestry at Wesbrook Village in Vancouver, British Columbia, when highlighting the winners of the Active Aging Week Spirit Awards in the last issue. The photo on page 72 in Issue 6 showed resident Margot in farm waders during a “cranberry plunge” at THE BOG Riverside Cranberry Farm in Fort Langley. Apologies for this mistake.

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In California, Stoneridge Creek residents and staff trekked across the two-mile expanse of San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge for Active Aging Week. Image courtesy of Stoneridge Creek Retirement Community

Exploring area adventures

In numerous organizations, residents and members look forward to the trips planned for Active Aging Week. Staff at Homestead Hills in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, arranged social and educational adventures around the region. The goal was to give residents of this Senior Living Communities location opportunities to actively discover the Triad area, explains Wellness Director Meagan Isaacs. At the Carolina Classic Fair, a favorite local attraction, they learned about farm animals and wood carving—plus good food to eat! Staff also organized trips to Old Nick Williams Distillery in Lewisville, Divine Llama Vineyard in East Bend (wine, lunch and llamas included), and Historic Bethabara Park, where residents rang a bell at the area's first European settlement. And, residents relaxed and learned about halotherapy (inhaling salty air as a holistic health treatment) in a local salt cave.

Charleston, South Carolina-based Wellmore of Daniel Island aimed to create experiences that were outside the normal activity routine for its residents. The care services retirement community also came up with experiences that highlighted the port city, including a ride through Charleston

Harbor on a rented local ferryboat. In keeping with the week's spirit, experiences focused on what residents *could* do, observes Wellness Director Elizabeth Hubbard. From a Mediterranean lunch special to a plant-based party, good nutrition was emphasized, while a professional dancer taught energizing moves, and residents enjoyed spa pampering in the community's wellness center.

Finally, at Evergreen Woods, a Senior Living Communities location in North Branford, Connecticut, 16 residents enjoyed the fine New England weather during a nine-mile Rail Bike Adventure on the Essex Rail Trail. "The track took residents along the Preserve (a 963-acre forest recognized as the largest remaining unprotected coastal forest between Boston and New York before its acquisition for conservation)," notes Wellness Director Maureen Terwilliger. To prepare for the trip, which requires pedaling rail bikes for between 90 and 120 minutes, several residents boosted their physical fitness by riding the recumbent cross-trainer or stationary bike in the community's fitness room three times a week for months. Residents participating in the adventure ranged in age from 72 to 93 years old. Among the week's other activities

were pickleball, archery, and a "moderate level" hike in Devil's Hopyard State Park in East Haddam, with residents stopping for photos in front of scenic Chapman Falls. Terwilliger concludes, "At Evergreen Woods, we are living our best lives and truly believe age is just a number!"

More Active Aging Week stories appear in a roundup of the 2021 Spirit Award winners in the last issue of the *Journal on Active Aging** (see "Resources" on page 74 for details). The Spirit Awards capture success stories and moments from the week in images that exemplify the ways people can embrace healthier, more active and engaged living.

Reclaiming wellness

In 2021, Active Aging Week offered a platform to promote positivity and encourage participants to reclaim their health and wellness after another challenging year. It also gave host organizations an opportunity to increase awareness of and showcase not only the potential of older adults and aging actively, but also the lifestyles, programs and amenities they provide. Older adults embraced fun, friendship and festivity, connecting through the myriad of activities offered across the wellness dimensions. Kudos to everyone who participated in making the week a success!

The 20th Annual Active Aging Week* will take place in October 2022. ICAA invites organizers to enroll their community or organization as an Official Host Site. It's never too early to start brainstorming and to shine a light on aging and living well. 🌟

Thank you to Presenting Sponsor Humana and national sponsors Abbott Nutrition and Aegis Therapies/EnerG® by Aegis for their continued support of Active Aging Week, and to content providers Spiro100 and One Day University for their participation in 2021.

