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Get moving . . . get healthy . . . with Smart Moves



Staff photo

Constant movement, weight lifting and Tai Chi are all part of the fitness classes for senior citizens at Cedar Crest to help keep them healthy. Pictured from left are: Clarence Hammarlund, Bob Allord, Bob Stone and Donna Allord.

By Debra Jensen-De Hart

Features Editor

Her clients are teasing her about being the “torture queen” at this week-day morning fitness class.

“But they keep coming back for more,” she quips back.

They keep coming back for more because they are realizing the benefits of the Smart Moves exercise program.

Cedar Crest Wellness Coordinator and Wellness Manager Nancy Mayhew leads senior citizens in a variety of classes designed to get them moving, increase their strength and balance and improve their overall health.

She is a certified personal trainer through the Aerobics and Fitness Association of America as well as certified to teach the Strong Woman Program and Zumba Gold.

At 59, Mayhew, of Beloit, not only puts others through the paces, she does it with them, leading them several times a week at Cedar Crest in a variety of classes.

On this day, she led a group of nine seniors — both men and women — in an advanced exercise class.

Their ages ranged from 68 to 90.

Some were newer to the program, others had been exercising with Mayhew for years at the center.

“We start with cardio exercises,” she said as she turned on the music and “Going to Kansas City” resounded throughout the room.

The group marched to the music, did leg lifts, kicks — forward and backward, sidesteps and more.

“All this cardio helps the heart and balance,” Mayhew said.

It also helps posture.

Next came strength training and weight lifting with free weights ranging from two to 18 pounds.

Static stretches were done in-between the sets of weight lifting.

In one exercise, they lift in sync to the sounds of “Working on the Chain Gang,” she tells them to pretend they are pounding nails with their weights.

“So if you ever have to go to jail you will be ready,” she teases them.

Next, she does Tai Chi cool down exercises with controlled breathing as the music changes to more soothing mystical tunes and the lights are turned down.

The group has now completed an hour of cardio, balance and strength training and cool down moves.

While this is a very active and able group of seniors, some are not able to be so agile, Mayhew says.

But they are not left out. She also does classes geared for those with walkers, canes and in wheelchairs.

The idea is to keep moving, build strength and improve overall health, no matter what level the participant is at, she said.

So, how do they really feel about the class and their instructor?

According to program evaluation sheets, here is what some members of the advanced class had to report:

“Nancy makes this program fun for all of us, as well as beneficial,” Faye Bidwell said.

Jack Allord said he takes the class because he wants to maintain his good health and balance as he ages. He also highly recommended the program to others.

His wife, Donna Allord, also said she wants to maintain her health and agility. And, “Nancy does a fantastic job of keeping the exercise challenging but fun. If I miss a class, I notice that my body has slowed down. This is the best way to remain active, alert and balanced.”

Allord also commented that the class is very social which helps people mentally.

Natalie Upp said of the class: “It makes me feel relaxed, alert and happy.”

About Smart Moves

Smart Moves is offered to all Cedar Crest residents and is designed to promote health and wellness, balance, flexibility, strength and cardio endurance.

Classes offered include: Strong & Fit for beginner, intermediate and advanced levels; Chair Tai Chi, Zumba Gold and Walking Class.

According to information on the program:

- Being physically active reduces the incidence of heart disease, diabetes

and certain types of cancer.

- Focusing on gait and balance can reduce falls.

- Weight-bearing and resistance activities can help prevent osteoporosis.

- Strength training is effective in improving sleep quality, depression and quality of life.

- It is possible to slow down age-related declines in mental ability.

- Regular physical activity helps you sustain your ability to live independently.