

Inverness Village Wellness Center:



ICAA Industry Innovators Award

Established in a senior living setting, this community involves the vast majority of residents in wellness activities through its creative efforts to reach, engage and program for individuals in all levels of care

This is the fourth of seven articles profiling the recipients of the 2006 ICAA Industry Innovators Awards. Presented by the International Council on Active Aging® and sponsored by SportsArt Fitness, these awards honor excellence and creativity in the health and wellness field, and recognize organizations that have created cutting-edge offerings for active aging. In 2005, the awards program expanded to include the Industry Equipment Innovator category. ICAA is an association that supports professionals who develop wellness and fitness facilities and services for adults over 50.

The Inverness Village life care community prides itself on providing an environment in which residents can embrace life and enjoy it fully. Located in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the not-for-profit community opened in 2003 to offer local adults ages 55-plus a new option—a senior living environment that supports active aging and incorporates the wellness model throughout the continuum of care.

To encourage active lifestyles for residents, the 190-acre Inverness Village campus includes walking and wheelchair paths, nature preserves, gardens, ponds, and outdoor recreation amenities. In addition, the Inverness Village Wellness Center offers an array of programs and amenities to promote resident health and well-being. “We provide programming for all levels of fitness, so residents can move in and out of all phases as their needs change,” notes Wellness Director Jana Headrick.

Educational lectures and events inform and educate Inverness Village residents on wellness-related subjects. These offerings allow the community “to capture those who do not normally use the wellness center as their *physical activity* venue and to involve those who do not normally participate in *any* physical activity,” explains Headrick.

Fun is also part of the Wellness Center’s approach to engaging residents. The Kiss The Pig Contest, for example, was a special fundraising event in which the administrator who pulled in the most donations smooched a 150-lb. pig, to the delight of residents and staff. The result of such enthusiastic and innovative programming? In just a few years, Inverness Village Wellness Center has attained an 80–85% resident participation rate.

The *Journal on Active Aging*® recently asked Jana Headrick to tell us more about the Inverness Village Wellness

Center and how its staff reaches, engages and programs for the community’s residents.

JAA: *What amenities does Inverness Village provide to support physically active lifestyles for residents?*

JH: The vision of the founders was to attract an active population that chose to live at Inverness Village, rather than felt they had to. Therefore, amenities to support an active older adult population were built into the community. There are walking trails surrounding Inverness, with wellness stations located along these paths to allow for strength, flexibility and balance exercises; long hallways that encourage indoor walking groups; activity rooms for shuffle board and ping pong; plus a resident garden, fishing pond and billiards room. In the Inverness Village Wellness Center, amenities include an indoor swimming pool and hot tub, as well as a massage therapy room, snack bar, aerobics studio, and fitness room complete with aerobic and strength training equipment. Fully equipped locker rooms are also provided.

JAA: *The Inverness Village Wellness Center mission “is to create and sustain a path to wellness without walls that leads to successful aging.” How do you define wellness, and what do staff members do to create that path to wellness without walls?*

JH: We choose to define wellness as achieving balance in all six components of the wellness model—physical, emotional, spiritual, vocational, social and intellectual. This person-centered approach opens the doors and knocks down the walls to how we achieve health or wellness. And it provides the wellness staff and the Fitness Committee, made up of residents, with a blank canvas to create programming that will fulfill several components of the wellness model at a time. For instance, a Tai Chi Chih class includes social, physical and spiritual wellness components.

creating a path to wellness for all

JAA: *What are some of the most popular wellness activities that residents participate in inside the Wellness Center and in the community?*

JH: Incentive programs are among the most popular wellness activities. These programs promote a little healthy competition between different Inverness Village group classes, individual Wellness Center members, or even other communities. The Great Race is an example of an incentive-based program. Inverness Village Wellness Center members competed against other retirement communities to complete a virtual race through regular exercise. As participants turned in their exercise durations for each week, they accumulated miles that moved them ahead of the pack for an Inverness Village victory. Residents really enjoyed keeping tabs on each other—and, of course, the party, prizes and bragging rights at the end of the competition. Group water classes and the 24-hour fitness room are also very popular.

In addition, residents enjoy outings presented by the Resident Activities Committee. These community wellness programs include trips to the opera, jazz festivals and Tulsa Ballet, and to hear various speakers at Tulsa Town Hall. Finally, the Recreation Committee is responsible for such popular on-campus programs as bridge and game night.

JAA: *Your wellness program has an 80–85% participation rate. How do staff members reach out to and engage residents in programs?*

JH: Many factors go into successful participation—there is no such thing as a cookie-cutter wellness program. You must know your audience.

To have a successful program, you have to get the people you want to participate involved in the decision-making process. We create ownership when we use the

staff, Resident Fitness Committee, and input from members to design programs for Inverness Village residents. The responsibility for the program's success or failure is placed on the group that helped make the decision to implement it, which empowers its members to see the program succeed.

The educational background of Wellness Center staff allows them to understand and meet the needs of older adults. An individual exercise prescription is created for every person who walks through our doors, and we make sure it is achievable.

Follow-up letters of encouragement and support are sent to anyone who has not been seen on a routine basis. We keep in touch with doctors as residents' health or medical conditions change, and make sure that we provide individuals with new wellness programming as these needs occur. In addition, we communicate with physical therapists to create a smooth transition back to Wellness Center programs for residents after rehabilitation.

We also do not take one failed attempt as a final answer. On a number of occasions, residents have asked for specific programs, yet when these were provided, they were not successful. These occasions were opportunities to reevaluate a few variables. Was the time or day an issue? Was it the instructor? Or was it simply the way in which the program was packaged and delivered? Something as simple as a program's name—Yoga versus Stretch, for example—can attract or repel participants. Asking questions, reevaluating a program, and making minor changes can result in success.

JAA: *In your view, what other contributors have led to participation rates being so high?*

JH: Inverness Village lends itself to being a successful aging destination



Educational lectures inform Inverness Village residents about health and wellness topics and encourage them to take part in related wellness programs, such as tai chi for falls prevention

because of the founders' vision to provide an active adult community. That provides additional support for our success. Also, a knowledgeable staff member who is involved in and motivated by the success of the individual has a huge impact on successful operations.

JAA: *Please give an example of how educational lectures can act as a spring board for resident participation in both established and new programs.*

JH: Education provides motivation. Just because we may own a vehicle does not mean that we understand or possess the knowledge to maintain it. So, providing lectures that educate residents on how to better maintain their health and wellness may encourage them to take advantage of an existing Wellness Center program. A lecture on Falls Prevention, for example, may lead someone to participate in

Continued on page 80

Inverness Village Wellness Center: creating a path to wellness for all

Continued from page 79



The Full Moon Pool Party brought residents into the Inverness Village Wellness Center for a fun event

a Tai Chi Chih class or begin a strength training program, because they have learned that these programs can help them reduce their risk for falls. Through such lectures we tend to find our most unlikely candidates for the Wellness Center, or opportunities for additional programming because there is an unmet need.

JAA: *How do Wellness Center staff members work with the Resident Fitness Committee to ensure wellness programming meets the needs of residents?*

JH: The Resident Fitness Committee is our pulse on the community's needs. At the beginning of each year, the committee selects several goals it would like to achieve for the Wellness Center, and creates an action plan for follow-through. This group also chooses possible subjects for guest speakers to cover each quarter. Inverness Village residents are active and successful members of the Tulsa community, and instrumental in providing resources for our speakers and activities.

The needs that we, as a staff, consistently strive to meet or address are making our programs accessible to everyone and

keeping up the "wow" factor. We try to knock down barriers by educating and reaching those who think we can offer them nothing due to their age or ability and providing programming to support them. And we work at keeping things fresh and exciting and adapting programming to keep up with those who continue to get stronger and need to advance to more difficult classes and fitness levels.

JAA: *Inverness Village provides a continuum of care for residents, from residential living to skilled nursing and advanced memory care. How does your wellness programming accommodate residents' varied needs and levels of fitness?*

JH: Making sure that the wellness model is distributed through the continuum of care is a group effort. The department heads ensure a multidimensional approach is taken to the care provided through all levels to skilled nursing, memory support, assisted living and independent residents.

The Wellness Center's objective is to decrease as many barriers to wellness as

possible. The equipment selected for our fitness rooms accommodate all ranges, while various classes meet the needs of all ability levels. Our on-site physical therapy department also utilizes the Wellness Center for its patients throughout all levels of care.

JAA: *In your view, how important are special events that promote fun, vitality and socialization to a resident's participation?*

JH: The Wellness Center is renowned for its special events and parties. This winter we held a July in Christmas party for no other reason than to create awareness of the center's location and to have fun. The event did not include any education or anything that involved a physical wellness component, but people still talk about it. These types of events are important on many levels. For the resident, they create awareness, provide social opportunities, and create a welcoming and nonthreatening environment (fitness centers or gyms can be scary for some people); they also provide fun opportunities to socialize with the staff on a more personal level.

JAA: *What are the main achievements of the Wellness Center and program to date?*

JH: In 2005, the Wellness Center was recognized with the Innovation of the Year Award from the Oklahoma Association of Homes and Services for the Aging for our contribution in enhancing the lives of seniors and our commitment to the aging services profession. And, of course, in 2006 we were awarded an ICAA Industry Innovators Award. Some of the most humbling praise, however, has come from our residents. They are our biggest cheerleaders and best advocates.

JAA: *What are Inverness Village's long-term goals for the Wellness Center and program?*

Continued on page 82

Inverness Village Wellness Center: creating a path to wellness for all

Continued from page 80

JH: Wellness, its definition, and what it encompasses will always be evolving, and our long-term goal is to evolve with it. The Inverness Village Wellness Center will definitely develop and change to meet the needs of its changing audience, the advancement of medicine and the fast pace of technology. One constant, though, will be to provide personal and individualized programming and services, no matter the person's age or ability. ☺

The Journal on Active Aging® thanks Jana Headrick of Inverness Village for her help with this article. To learn more about Inverness Village, visit www.invernessvillage.com.

Photos courtesy of Inverness Village

Five key steps to providing successful programming

1. Knock down barriers to active aging, whether these are:
 - budget constraints
 - spatial/facility restraints
 - human behavior
 - staffing
2. Know your audience. Who are you serving, and what do *they* want?
3. Use your members/residents as resources. Provide them with an opportunity to take ownership of the services you will provide.
4. Choose the right staff. Who leads your programming? Are you using the appropriate resources for the job?
5. Offer multidimensional programming. Find a way to involve individuals who aren't interested in fitness and get them thinking about "activity" outside the fitness room.

Advertisers index

Pages 2–3

NuStep

Pages 4–5

Philips

Page 9

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Page 11

LifeTrail by Playworld Systems

Page 13

SportsArt

Page 15

First Step to Active Health

Page 17

FreeMotion

Page 21

JWT BOOM

Page 23

Life Fitness

Page 25

ICAA

Pages 26–27

SCIFIT

Page 32

ICAA

Page 33

IPFH

Page 37

MBT/SwissMasai

Page 43

HydroWorx

Page 45

ICAA

Pages 48–49

SilverSneakers

Page 57

Active Aging Week 2007

Page 63

Med-Fit

Page 69

AAHSA

Pages 76–77

Aquatic Trends

Page 81

AARP

Page 83

Landice

Page 93

ICAA

Page 95

Keiser

Page 96

Star Trac