

Rural Healthy Aging Network

Volume 1

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GREETINGS!

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide an update on the activities of the Rural Health Aging Network (RHAN). If you have anything you would like to include in this newsletter, please send it to Joshua Byrd at jbyrd@hsc.wvu.edu.

Fit and Strong! in McDowell County

This project seeks to work with community partners in McDowell County to deliver an evidence-based exercise program called Fit and Strong! for older persons with osteoarthritis (OA). Two key community members working intimately with the project are Emily Yeager (Executive Director of the McDowell Commission on Aging) and Cheryl Mitchem (the Tug River Health Association Fitness Center Coordinator). Turner Goins is the primary researcher in this intervention. Compared to other states, West Virginia sorely lags behind in ensuring these kinds of programs are available and we forward to participating in this much overdue and needed effort.

OA is the most common condition affecting older adults today and prevalence increases with age. West Virginia has the highest rate of arthritis in the U.S. with McDowell County residents having the highest prevalence (48%) in the state. Research results for the past three decades have consistently indicated that moderate-intensity aerobic exercise is safe and physically and psychologically beneficial for people with arthritis.

This intervention has two objectives:

- (1) Implement Fit and Strong! for older residents in McDowell County
- (2) Evaluate the effects of the program using the RE-AIM framework.

Fit and Strong! is offered in 90-minute sessions held three times per week for eight weeks. The project will enroll 12 participants in one 8-week session of Fit and Strong!. Each Fit and Strong! class begins with the first 60 minutes with both resistance training and aerobic walking and the last 30 minutes includes a group discussion—educational component to enhance adherence efficacy. The sessions begin and end with 10-minute warm-up and cool-down periods that involve neck, trunk, and extremity range of motion exercises. Static and dynamic sitting and standing balance exercises are used during these periods. Fit and Strong! has been tested using a randomized trial and is the only program of which we are aware that combines instruction in exercise with education/group problem solving for maintenance of lifestyle change.



Tug River Health Association's Fitness Center has agreed to host the classes at their facility. Transportation will be provided to participants by the McDowell County Commission on Aging. We expect improvements in participation in and self-efficacy for exercise, pain, lower extremity stiffness, and other-related symptom management as found in the randomized controlled trial of Fit and Strong!. We hope that as a result of this successful older adult program, other community and state leaders will begin to pay more attention to the needs of West Virginia seniors.

Welcome New RHAN Advisory Members!

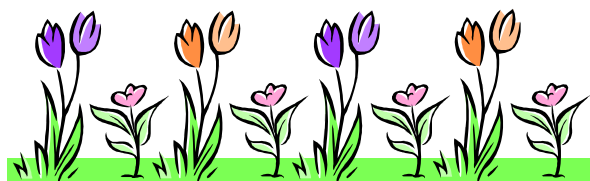
Paul Gordon



We would like to welcome Dr. Paul M. Gordon as a new member of the Rural Healthy Aging Network Advisory Committee. Dr. Gordon is an Associate Professor in the Division of Exercise Physiology within the WVU School of Medicine. He has participated in many studies focusing on the lack of physical activity among West Virginia residents. In particular, he investigates the role of social and physical environments in relation to behavior concerning physical activity. Recently his publications have evaluated the impact of particular aspects of the physical environment such as community trails on physical activity levels of West Virginia residents.

Helen Sine

We would like to welcome Helen Sine as a new member of the Rural Health Aging Network Advisory Committee. Helen was recommended to us by Emily Yeager. We will have more information to share with you about Helen in the near future.



WV Community Based Initiative Grants!!!

Community Based Initiative Grants are available in the spring. These grants, which can be up to \$20,000, need to focus on nutrition, physical activity or injury. Agencies serving seniors could be very competitive. There is \$340,000 total available.

We really hope you or someone working primarily with older adults will apply for these funds. RHAN is ready and willing to help with developing an idea and writing the grant. To take advantage of this, contact Turner at 293-3129 or rgoins@hsc.wvu.edu.

Applicants MUST submit a "Notice of Intent" forms which are due May 4, 2007.

Full grant applications are due May 25, 2007.

The application materials are being put up on a web site, and post cards are going to go out to let community agencies know of the availability of the funding and the address for the web site. The documents are available on the CBI page of the www.wvhpcd.org site. The only requirement is to be a not-for-profit or government entity. Agencies that service seniors are urged to apply.

May is Older Americans Month

When older Americans month was established in 1963, only 17 million Americans reached their 65th birthday, however, in 2011 78 million baby boomers will begin to turn 65. This dramatic increase highlights the importance of protecting the independence and dignity of older generations. Events are hosted across the country to highlight the contributions of this population. This year's theme, "Older Americans: Making Choices for a Healthier Future" emphasizes the importance of health and long term care and the need to plan for the future. In the spirit of Older Americans Month, we encourage others to help plan, promote and participate in events that reflect this theme and highlight the importance of a healthy future for older citizens