

## Active for Life Success Stories: Sharing our Success

*This collection of stories celebrates the personal triumphs of some of the people who have participated in the program. Their stories highlight their personal achievements, improved health and enhanced well-being. They reflect the amazing successes Active for Life program facilitators hear daily as they work with the wonderful people who have made physical activity a vital part of their everyday lives.*

Astonishing as it may seem, the youngest members of the Baby Boom generation are now 50-years old. And in just six years, the first wave of America's 78 million Boomers will turn 65. Population aging represents a remarkable human success story. Advances in health care and public health have contributed to a decline in injury and illness, resulting in the huge demographic shift we see in our increased mature adult population.

Preventing disease and injury can help mid-life and older adults remain healthy and independent, improve their quality of life, and delay the need for costly long-term care. Americans can improve their quality of life and increase their number of healthy years simply by adopting a healthy lifestyle. Research shows that many of the symptoms of deterioration that come with age are a matter of influence and mindset—not genetics. People who are physically active, eat a healthy diet, avoid tobacco products and practice other healthy behaviors reduce their risk of chronic diseases and have half the rate of disability of those who do not.

The benefits of regular physical activity are particularly notable. Physical activity helps to control weight; contributes to healthy bones, muscles and joints; reduces falls among the elderly; decreases symptoms of anxiety and depression; and can lessen the need for hospitalizations, physician visits and medications. Research has shown that, even among frail and very old adults, physical activity can improve mobility and functioning.

The *Active for Life*® program, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation®, is working with community-based organizations in 12 communities nationwide to test programs designed to help adults age 50 and older to get moving and stay active.

*Active for Life* grants have been awarded to:

- Blue Shield of California
- Church Health Center of Memphis
- Council on Aging of Southwestern Ohio
- Greater Detroit Area Health Council
- FirstHealth of the Carolinas
- Jewish Council for the Aging of Greater Washington, Inc. (with programs throughout the Washington D.C. metropolitan area)
- The OASIS Institute (with programs in Pittsburgh, Penn., St. Louis, Mo., and San Antonio, Texas)
- San Mateo County Health Services (with programs in San Mateo and Berkeley, Calif.)
- YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago



Increasing Physical Activity Levels in  
Adults Age 50 and Older  
[www.activeforlife.info](http://www.activeforlife.info)

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## Active for Life Success Stories: Making Dreams

It's never too late to live your dreams. That's what 71-year-old Barbara Britton has discovered. Barbara's interest in joining the Senior Corps, a national volunteer organization for people over age 55, as well as her desire to travel to South America to provide humanitarian aid had grown over the years. She knew that she had to be in better physical condition before her dream could become reality.

Decades ago, Barbara was an avid walker, getting up early every morning to walk 30 minutes around her neighborhood. But over the years, Barbara had stopped her daily walks and wasn't doing any physical activity. As a result, she gained a significant amount of weight.

One day, Justine Kaplan was recruiting for the *Active for Life*® Active Choices program at the housing unit in Berkeley where Barbara lived. Barbara knew immediately that the program was just what she needed.

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"Barbara is a friendly woman with vivid memories of the active, healthy woman she used to be," said Justine. "She realized that she enjoyed the activity she used to do and how good it made her feel. She worked hard to rekindle her commitment to herself and to exercise."

Barbara began the Active Choices program by going back to those morning walks she loved so much. She began with 15 minutes every day and was eventually able to get back to a 30-minute walk. Then she added an additional 10 minutes a day on her total body fitness machine.

Barbara loved feeling fit once again. "I have more energy than I have had in years," says a jubilant Barbara. "It's nice to have something that gets me up and moving in the morning!"

Once she started moving, the weight started to come off. She steadily lost three to five pounds every few weeks and has been able to maintain the weight loss. She also saw increased strength in her legs, increased stamina and endurance, and an improvement in body tone.

Barbara thoroughly enjoyed the Active Choices telephone phone sessions. She looked at the calls as a time to check in, report her progress and receive support and encouragement about her work.

As Justine and Barbara's Active Choices telephone sessions evolved, Barbara became more committed to her goal to be accepted into the Senior Corps. "She felt deeply moved by a Senior Corps recruiting presentation, and she was working hard to improve her health and her stamina so that she could go to South America," Justine said.

Recently, Justine checked in with Barbara and was happy to report that Barbara is doing well, staying active, working on the application process to the Senior Corps program and feeling quite excited about life in general.



## Active for Life Success Stories: Going the Extra Mile

A couple of times each week, 74-year-old Rose Watada and her friend took a slow 15-minute walk in their neighborhood. Rose wanted the walks to be longer and faster, but her friend was unable to work much harder due to her health. So Rose, being a good companion, continued to stay with her friend at the same slow pace.

Rose knew that she needed to incorporate more physical activity into her daily routine but was unsure how to go about doing it. As a diabetic with high blood pressure, she was concerned about her health. And she had started to notice a gradual loss of strength and flexibility.

Enter the *Active for Life*® Active Choices program in Berkeley, Calif. Rose joined the program during a recruiting event at a Berkeley-area senior center and attended an orientation session a few weeks later.

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During the program's telephone sessions, Rose and Justine Kaplan, a facilitator for the Active Choices program, discussed Rose's exercise plans and local community resources. According to Justine, Rose especially liked chatting after Senior Fitness Tests which helps participants gauge improvements in their fitness level. Those calls gave her the opportunity to ask questions and assess the progress she was making.

With help from the Active Choices phone counseling sessions, Rose came up with a plan that let her continue her walking sessions with her friend, but also meet her need to exercise more. She would walk with her friend and then, after her friend stopped, Rose would walk another couple of times around the neighborhood at a faster pace. She even began to walk on the days when her friend could not join her. In addition, Rose added a chair exercise program to her fitness regimen to help her increase her strength and flexibility.

Rose has seen a substantial increase in her endurance, improvement in body tone and an increase in strength and flexibility. Her doctor has told her that her blood pressure, cholesterol and diabetes are all staying in check.

Justine proudly said, "Rose is a friendly, warm woman who really committed herself to staying healthier through exercise. She was able to balance her desire to casually walk and talk with her friend with her need to get more vigorous exercise to keep her body in the best shape possible."

And Rose couldn't be more pleased with her success. "I know what I need to do," Rose said. "I just needed a little push to get started."

By the end of the program, Rose's regular routine included a 30-minute walk six or seven times per week and a 30-minute chair exercise session four to five times per week. She regularly attends Senior Fitness Tests and special events.



## Active for Life Success Stories: **A Little Encouragement Was all She Needed**



Gail Hudson-Marko

*Webster's New World Dictionary* defines the word "encourage" as "to give courage, hope, or confidence to." Encouragement is all Glendale, Calif. resident Gail Hudson-Marko needed to get her started on a physical activity regimen.

Gail eagerly enrolled in Blue Shield of California's *Active for Life*® Active Choices program to increase her physical fitness and to lose some of the weight she had gained over the last few years. She admits that her slow-but-steady weight gain provided the motivation she needed to join a program like Active Choices.

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Juan Rivas, Gail's program facilitator, helped her develop a physical activity plan that fit into her busy lifestyle. The program rekindled her interest in walking on her treadmill at home. She also began to watch her diet, reducing calories and fat.

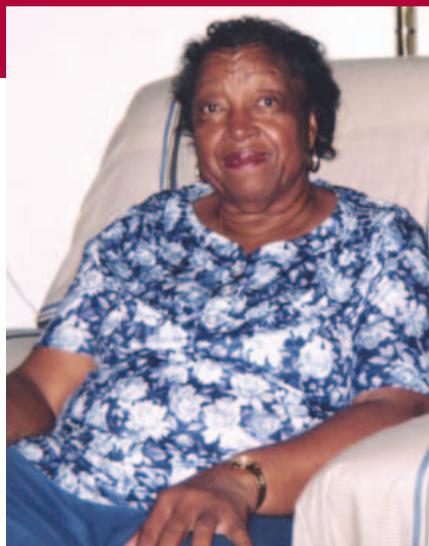
The results have been incredible. Gail has lost 40 pounds, increased her energy level, and lowered her cholesterol by 30 points during the six-month program. Gail's husband Bob, a Type II diabetic, was so encouraged by her success that he increased his own activity level and was able to significantly lower his blood sugar.

"The Active Choices program was great for Gail because she is more motivated when she gets reinforcement from, and is accountable to, someone," said Juan.

An enthusiastic Gail seconded Juan's opinion, "Taking weight off is one thing," Gail said. "Keeping it off is something else. My telephone coach, Juan, gave me the incentive to get active. It really helped to know that someone else cared about my progress."



## Active for Life Success Stories: Taking Control



Mabel Garrett

According to her doctor, 73-year-old Mabel Garrett is a role model for his other diabetic patients. Mabel suffers from diabetes, but she has learned how to control it better by enrolling in Blue Shield of California's *Active for Life*® Active Choices program.

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As she got older, Mabel's level of physical activity slowly decreased. She occasionally went on short walks, but had no regular physical activity regimen. As a result, her weight gradually started to increase.

In an effort to become more fit, Mabel joined the Active Choices program. With the help of her facilitator, Juan Rivas, Mabel started by walking for 20 minutes twice a week. She has been able to increase her walks to 45 minutes four times per week. She also began attending weekly yoga classes and started working in her garden.

Mabel said the regularly scheduled phone calls with Juan kept her "motivated and on track." And motivated she was. Mabel lost 23 pounds while in the Active Choices program and, since graduating from the program in April 2005, she has lost an additional four pounds.

"The program helped get me started," Mabel said. "This kind of program is good for anyone my age who wants to improve their health and stay motivated."

Juan said, "Working with Mabel was one of my greatest experiences, not only because I was able to see her progress and her success, but also because of her consistency and commitment, and of course, because of the good friendship that we built. She was always there and ready for her follow-up."

Since graduation, Mabel has acquired a new "facilitator." Her granddaughter is so excited about Mabel's progress that she has made a commitment to her grandmother to help keep her on track.



## Active for Life Success Stories: A Little Faith Goes a Long Way



Ella Weddington and Mia Earl-Clemmons

Mention the *Active for Life*® Active Choices program around 61-year-old Ella Weddington, a Memphis native, and you're likely to be rewarded with a huge smile. Ella credits the program for the amazing success she had recovering from double knee replacement surgery in 2003.

Ella joined the Active Choices program at the Church Health Center in Memphis, Tenn. shortly after her surgery. While in the program, she was laid off from her job. This was a difficult period in her life, and she decided to focus on improving her health. Active Choices appealed to Ella because she could participate over the phone after an initial face-to-face meeting. And it was free of charge.

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In addition to her knee problems, Ella suffered from diabetes, high blood pressure and elevated cholesterol. Although it was difficult, Ella set a goal to start a walking program.

"When I joined Active Choices, I had just had both knees replaced," said Ella. "The pain that I was experiencing would not let me be as active as I wanted to be."

Ella used a pedometer to help her measure her efforts and track her success. With encouragement from her Active Choices facilitator, Mia Earl-Clemmons, Ella was able to gradually overcome her barriers, and she now walks at least two miles each day.

"Each time Mia called, I was ashamed to give her my numbers from my pedometer," Ella said. "Sometimes they would be less than the previous time she called. But Mia was so encouraging. Each phone call made me feel better about myself. Now I'm walking every day."

As a result of the program, Ella has been able to get her diabetes, blood pressure and cholesterol under control. She has sustained her walking program and has now added aerobics and strengthening exercises to her fitness regimen.

"Ms. Weddington was a joy to work with," said Mia. "She set goals and worked through barriers to accomplish them. Since completing the program, she has recruited her sister and church members to participate in the program."

Upon graduation from the program, Ella wrote a heartfelt note of appreciation to the Hope and Healing Center at Church Health, where the Active Choices program is headquartered. Her final sentence sums up all that the program has meant to her. "Thanks be to God for Active Choices and the Hope and Healing Center."



## Active for Life Success Stories: Dancing to a Different Tune



Frances Fuhrman

Frances Fuhrman thought she had tried everything to lose weight, including numerous commercial weight-loss programs. But nothing seemed to work, and after years of losing and regaining pounds, 74-year-old Frances had about given up on trying to slim down and get in shape. She conceded that she was never going to be able to achieve and maintain her ideal and said that she “just did not care.”

But she did care. And she continued to search for an effective program to help her lose weight and become more active. And she finally found success. In March 2005, Frances joined the *Active for Life*® Active Choices program at the Church Health Center in Memphis, Tenn.

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Within four months after enrolling in the program, Frances reduced her weight by 30 pounds, her mental outlook improved, and she no longer had joint pain in her knees. In addition, she was able to lower her elevated blood pressure to a normal range, and her cholesterol fell from a borderline high of 225 to a healthy 165.

What was it about Active Choices that helped Frances succeed where the other programs failed? Frances believes it was the assistance and support she received from her program facilitator, Pamela Joyner-Robinson.

“I appreciate the encouragement I receive from Pamela,” Frances said. “I am just elated about my accomplishments.”

When Frances first started the program, her goal was to walk three days a week for 10 minutes each time. During her first telephone call with Pamela, she complained of pain in her knees. But with Pamela’s help, Frances worked through this obstacle, and found that, as her physical activity level increased, the pain in her knees decreased. Soon Frances was doing all types of physical activity, including walking most days of the week, water aerobics three days a week, walking on a treadmill and dancing.

Frances is just thrilled with her progress. “The greatest benefits are the way I feel,” she said. “I have lost weight, the exercise is helping with my arthritis, and I am more conscientious of what I eat.”

“Frances has really made excellent progress in the program and is enjoying life by traveling and dancing regularly,” reported a pleased Pamela.



## Active for Life Success Stories: Inspiring Success



Bobbie Mauldin

It took a bit of persuading, but Linda Arrington finally talked Bobbie Mauldin into attending the *Active for Life*® Active Living Every Day class at FirstHealth Richmond Memorial Hospital in Rockingham, N.C. When Bobbie began the class, she had no idea she would become a source of inspiration for her fellow participants.

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Due to poor health, 60-year-old Bobbie rarely got out of her house except to attend church services. Because Bobbie has diabetes, cerebral palsy and significant weakness on one side of her body, she'd been afraid to try any physical activity. So just coming to the first class was a huge accomplishment.

Once she became comfortable with her classmates, Bobbie blossomed. Within weeks, she was participating in every class activity, and her enthusiasm to try whatever her classmates did motivated the entire class. "Her willingness to try everything made the others push themselves harder. She encouraged them," said Linda Arrington, facilitator for the Active Living Every Day program.

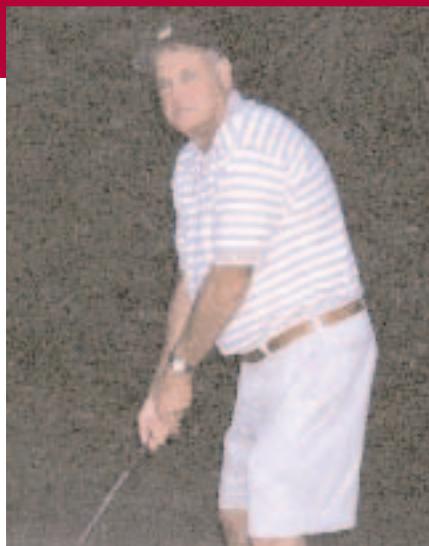
And Bobbie's classmates weren't the only ones who were encouraged. Bobbie herself said, "I thought I couldn't do the activities because of my disabilities but I proved myself wrong. I did some things that I have never done better."

At the end of the 20-week program, the class members wanted to give Bobbie special recognition for all that she'd accomplished and all that she had meant to them, but Bobbie refused. She just wanted to be part of the group and not be singled out for any special attention.

As a result of Bobbie's increased physical activity, she has been able to reduce the dosage of some of her diabetes medication. In addition, Bobbie said, "The interaction with others in the class was one of my favorite things."



## Active for Life Success Stories: One Good Turn Deserves Another



Charlie Arrington

When Charlie Arrington agreed to join the *Active for Life*® Active Living Every Day program at FirstHealth Richmond Memorial Hospital in Rockingham, N.C. he was trying to help his anxious wife fill her first class. At the time, neither of them realized what an impact it would have on his health and his life.

“I convinced him that he needed to come to class,” said Linda Arrington, Charlie’s wife and program facilitator for Active Living Every Day at FirstHealth of the Carolinas. “More so for helping me fill up my first class rather than to help him focus on his health issues.”

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Charlie was forced to retire from his job with a local electric company due to the onset of several serious health problems. In a matter of about four years, he suffered a stroke, a heart attack and impaired kidney function. After his heart attack, Charlie had only 10 percent cardiac function.

Before participating in Active Living Every Day, Charlie admits his main activity was golfing. But he didn’t get the advantage of walking because he used a cart to go from hole to hole. After his heart attack and stroke, he was afraid to be physically active. He thought he might die if he pushed himself.

Slowly but surely, with encouragement from Linda and his classmates, Charlie realized that being active improved his health and made him feel better about life in general.

“The class helped improve his outlook on life,” said Linda. “He is more conscious about being active and frequently says ‘We can walk there,’ when we are out and about.”

Now the man who once paid someone to mow his lawn mows the lawn himself with a push mower. He also measures an average of 13,000 steps each day on his pedometer. Since becoming more active, Charlie has increased his cardiac output to 25 percent and is able to be active without chest pain or shortness of breath. His endurance has increased, and he has learned how to be physically active in spite of his disabilities.

Charlie credits Active Living Every Day with helping him get out and get moving again. “I enjoyed the class a lot,” said Charlie. “It really got me motivated to be physically active.”

In addition to the health benefits, Charlie formed a close friendship with another member of his class. They continue to walk together, and they participate in church activities too. And according to Linda, they were the class clowns. Linda also has noticed that Charlie is now able to think more clearly, and his self-esteem has increased.

These days, if someone wants to catch up with Charlie it may have to be while he is getting those 13,000 daily steps—and he’s more than happy to have company.



## Active for Life Success Stories: There's Nothing Like Starting Over

“My life will never be the same again. I feel like I am beginning anew.” That’s how Carrie Warren, a 70-year-old retired nurse’s aid from Detroit, describes how she feels since joining the *Active for Life*® Active Living Every Day program and becoming physically active.

Carrie became aware of the Active Living Every Day program through her involvement at the Virginia Park Citizens Service Corporation, where the program was offered by the Greater Detroit Area Health Council. According to Carrie, her declining health motivated her to get involved in the program. One of her primary health concerns was her high blood pressure, for which she was taking a fairly high dosage of medication. She also experienced frequent pain in her knees due to arthritis.

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For instance, Carrie learned to use household items as “fitness equipment.” She used her vacuum cleaner and broom for arm exercises and the stairs in her home as a stair-climbing machine. In addition, Carrie set a goal of walking one mile each day, and she’s maintained her goal for almost a year.

As a result of increasing her physical activity, Carrie has been able to decrease her blood pressure medication. She feels better and looks forward to opportunities to get out and be active. And the arthritis pain in her knees has all but disappeared.

“Carrie used to procrastinate when it came to exercise. But now she is much more disciplined and enjoys being active because of Active for Life,” said Carolyn Wilson-Hall, Active Living Every Day facilitator. “Her confidence and self-esteem have improved dramatically.”

“I have a new attitude, a new way of life, and a new way of thinking,” said Carrie. “The program allows moving at your own pace. It all begins with you. Individuals can go as far as they want.”



## Active for Life Success Stories: Time to Live

When we are young, it seems that time never goes quite fast enough and future events will never occur. Eventually, this impatience turns to quiet reflection and a realization of how quickly time is passing. Effie Jones, a 68-year-old from Detroit, has lived long enough to know both perspectives and to find the happy medium; she's enjoying life as it is and eagerly anticipating the future.

Effie, who has high blood pressure and chronic knee pain, joined the Greater Detroit Area Health Council's *Active for Life*® Active Living Every Day program in an effort to improve her health and become more active.

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Effie chose walking as her activity and has worked up to two miles each day. She's lost a total of eight pounds since beginning the program about a year ago. Knee problems side-lined Effie for a while but she's slowly building back up to her goal of two miles each day.

One of the biggest changes has been Effie's outlook on life. Since becoming part of Active Living Every Day, Effie said that she enjoys life to the fullest and looks forward to the future and what it holds. And the future holds a lot for Effie—she is engaged to be married. Effie's fiancé also has become physically active and joins her on her walks.

"I think Active Living Every Day is great for those who are homebound and don't get out much and perfect for seniors living in senior housing," said Effie. "Active Living Every Day inspired me to live life fully. Joining the program was the start of a major transformation in my life."

"Before the program, she wasn't doing anything but now she is active every day and enjoys life more," said a proud Carolyn Wilson-Hall, Effie's Active Living Every Day class facilitator.



## Active for Life Success Stories: **She's Actively Living**

Anita Harris is a busy lady. She attends weekly classes for mat exercises and line dancing. At home, she rides her stationary bike, walks on the treadmill and uses exercise videos between household chores. She adds to her physical activity while running errands by parking her car a block away from the shopping center and by walking in the mall. So it's hard to imagine this 60-year-old woman as a former, self-described "couch potato" whose main forms of physical activity were bingo and duplicate bridge.

Anita has osteoarthritis in both knees and she thought that becoming physically active might improve her health. After hearing about an *Active for Life*® Active Living Every Day class offered by the Jewish Council for the Aging of Greater Washington, Inc., in Silver Spring, Md., Anita decided to sign up.

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Since beginning Active Living Every Day, Anita has participated in a number of physical activities, lost a considerable amount of weight and become an all-around healthier individual. She attributes her success to participation in the class.

"I liked getting ideas about physical activity from other participants," Anita said. "It made me feel comfortable and gave me the confidence to be more active."

Using what she learned in the program, Anita began slowly and worked up to 30 minutes of physical activity on most days. She increased her activity in 10-minute increments and, eventually, she was able to increase her activity to 60 minutes on most days.

Anita isn't the only one smiling about her accomplishments. Her doctor is very pleased with her progress and has advised her to keep moving. Her recovery from recent knee surgery is also going well. "I know the surgery went better and I'm recovering more rapidly because I did my physical activity all those days and months and strengthened the muscles in my knee."



## Active for Life Success Stories: Determined to Succeed

“I had a powerful incentive to just sit and do nothing,” said Genie Dutton. After she was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis in 2002, she experienced great difficulty walking, struggled with constant pain and often lacked the energy and motivation to get up and move.

Then her husband was diagnosed with a critical illness, and she was thrust into the stressful and demanding role of caregiver. Fortunately, the Jewish Council for the Aging of Greater Washington, Inc., was offering an *Active for Life*® Active Living Every Day class at the Rockville Senior Center in Rockville, Md. and Genie signed up. She used the program to explore a wide variety of physical activities and to choose those best suited to her needs.

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Genie purchased audio tapes and enjoyed walking in her neighborhood. “I had never done that before,” she said. She also used a stationary bike and a total body fitness machine at home.

She went on walks to special places, such as Brookside Garden, an award-winning 50-acre public display garden in the Rockville area. She even found the time during her husband’s medical appointments to walk up and down the hallways of the medical building, as well as around the outside of the building.

As Genie became more physically active, her aches and pains began to decrease. Her goal was to avoid knee replacement surgery, and so far she has been successful. She also has lost 20 pounds and joined a fitness center in her neighborhood.

Genie is quick to attribute her success to Active Living Every Day. “The workbook we used in the program helped me think about ways to bring joy into physical activity and make it fun,” she said. In fact, Genie still carries a worksheet from the program called *Accentuating the Positive*. Every time she has a problem, she pulls it out. “It’s in rags, folded multiple times, and stained. But I don’t leave home without it!”

“Genie was a peer leader in the class,” said Genie’s facilitator, Sharlene Hirsch. “She inspired every one of us with her determination to succeed and turn around her health. And she never missed a class.”



## Active for Life Success Stories: The Fountain of Youth Flows from Within



Estelle Zimmerman

“I feel 10 years younger,” says 72-year-old Estelle Zimmerman, a graduate of the *Active for Life*® Active Living Every Day program at the OASIS Center in San Antonio, Texas.

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When Estelle began the program, she was overweight, her energy level was low and she didn’t like to exercise. Program facilitator Tracy Slate found out why.

“Estelle’s main barrier was one that I had not encountered before and I’ve heard it only once more since working with Estelle,” said Tracy. “She did not like to exercise because it made her perspire.”

Through Active Living Every Day, Estelle quickly overcame that barrier and learned to enjoy being active. Using the important life skills and techniques she learned in the class, Estelle began with short amounts of physical activity and gradually increased her time and intensity. She set short- and long-term goals and came up with creative reminders to help her incorporate physical activity into her day.

One of Estelle’s reminder techniques was to place sticky notes (one for each of the 105 two-minute walks she planned) in prominent places throughout her home such as on walls, pictures and any visible flat surface. Each time she took a two-minute walk, she could remove one of the sticky notes.

Estelle walks everywhere now—on the treadmill, outside during good weather, and up and down every aisle in the grocery store and at the mall. As a result, she’s lost weight and lowered her blood pressure, and her energy level has increased. Estelle has maintained her walking program and her weight loss since graduating from the Active Living Every Day program over one-and-a-half years ago.

In addition to all that she learned in the program, Estelle credits much of her success to her fellow classmates. “The motivation kept coming,” Estelle said. “I relied on the support from the other participants.”

As a result of her success, Estelle was selected to represent OASIS in Washington, D.C. with other Active for Life graduates. They had the opportunity to meet with their elected officials and talk about the importance of physical activity as a way to help people age 50 and older remain healthy and independent.



## Active for Life Success Stories: She Practices What She Teaches



Loretta Davis

“I showed up early for class and some of the residents thought I was the facilitator,” 51-year-old Loretta Davis recalled, thinking back on her first *Active for Life*® Active Living Every Day class. At the time, she had no idea that one day she would, indeed, be a program facilitator.

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While reading a magazine about volunteer opportunities, Loretta saw an advertisement for the Active Living Every Day class being offered by the OASIS Institute in St. Louis, Mo. Excited about the opportunity, Loretta contacted Mary Joyce, who was recruiting for the class at the OASIS Institute, to learn more about the program.

“I am in good health and was seeking information about staying healthy as I age,” said Loretta. “I had just turned 50.”

Loretta was thrilled to learn she was eligible to enroll in an upcoming class. Her fitness program now consists of between 4,000 and 6,000 steps per day and some strength training. She’s lost weight and her legs are more toned.

Commenting about the program, Loretta said one of her favorite things was the workbook participants used. “The book was an excellent tool for training and I particularly liked the section on how to break down barriers.”

“I also liked the tips on goal setting and the step counter that we received was a lot easier to use than the pedometer I had been using,” said Loretta.

Mary was so impressed with Loretta’s attitude and helpful nature that she approached her about becoming a program facilitator. Loretta was interested. She sent in her resume, completed her training, passed her final exam and the rest is history. She is now a facilitator for the OASIS Active Living Every Day program.

Shelia Pargo, facilitator for Loretta’s class, said that, “Loretta’s story is a great testimony to the success of the Active Living Every Day program. I applaud the opportunity the program offered Loretta for leadership development. She has remained enthusiastic throughout her experience as a program participant and now, as a facilitator.”



## Active for Life Success Stories: Physical Activity: A Springboard for Hope



Ted Kerin

Children are supposed to know the wisdom of listening to their elders. But 82-year-old Ted Kerin decided to listen to his children and take their advice.

A World War II veteran who was grieving over the death of his wife, Ted had, in his words, “let his mind and body go to pot.” He stayed inside most days, watching television and eating junk food. At the urging of his children, Ted visited the Mt. Washington Senior Center in Pittsburgh, Penn. There he met other people with similar backgrounds and experiences, and they helped him to come alive again.

“My kids talked me into going to the senior citizens center,” he said. “It’s very enlightening. I realized I was falling into a slump. Talking to people there helped a lot.”

Through his visits to the senior center, Ted learned about the *Active for Life*® Active Living Every Day program, sponsored by the OASIS Center in Pittsburgh.

Active Living Every Day is a comprehensive behavior change program that’s presented in a group setting and designed to help sedentary adults adopt and maintain active lifestyles. The program’s unique approach emphasizes lifestyle activity, encouraging people to find realistic ways to fit physical activity into their daily lives.

Ted enrolled in the 20-week program and, with help from his dedicated family, was able to attend the weekly classes. Shirley Pogue, the program facilitator, said, “Ted was my pride and joy in the Mt. Washington class. He was very nervous when he first came. His daughter brought him and stayed with him the first class, helped him fill out all the paperwork and continued to drop him off each week for class. I could see the changes take place in him from week one to week 20. He was very quiet at the beginning of the program, and then by the end of the program, you couldn’t get him to stop talking.”

Since September of 2004, when he started the program, Ted has been able to add physical activity to his daily routine in a myriad of ways. Most days, when the weather is good, he and his daughters walk about two miles up and down the hills of Mt. Washington. He also uses his basement gym.

“My kids gave me an exercise bike and some weights and we set them up in the basement,” Ted said. “It’s cold down there in the winter, but I use the equipment in the nice weather.” And when it’s too cold in the basement for Ted to work out, he cleans the house for exercise.

Ted has less stiffness and aching in his joints, but the biggest change in his life has been in his attitude.

“The class gave me a lift,” he said. “I had a chance to be with people who were understanding and helped me want to do activities and get back into life again. I haven’t felt this good mentally and physically in a long time.”

And Ted isn’t the only one who benefited from his participation in the class.

“Everyone in the group looked to him as the grandfather of the group,” Shirley said. “They were worried when he did not show up for class. This class was a great release for him. It motivated him to get going again, and when he talked about getting the gym equipment in the basement, it seemed like it opened another door that had been closed for a long time. He just kept smiling.”



## Active for Life Success Stories: **Breathing Easier**



Shirley Johnson

Most people take breathing for granted, but not Shirley Johnson. The 65-year-old from Redwood City, Calif., was dependent on portable oxygen and could only walk short distances before losing her breath and becoming fatigued. In addition, she suffered from diabetes.

When Shirley joined the *Active for Life*® Active Choices program offered by the San Mateo County Health Department, her goals were to improve her fitness, lose weight and control her diabetes. She also wanted to be able to take a simple walk whenever she felt like it.

Active Choices is a telephone-based program that provides the instruction, feedback and support that are important determinants of exercise participation, while offering individuals the flexibility to choose when and where to undertake their exercise. The program helps with goal-setting, motivation and dealing with obstacles people may face as they become more physically active.

With the help of the program, Shirley started out slowly and gradually worked her way up from walking three days each week for 15 minutes at a time to 30 minutes every other day. And some weeks she walks every day.

Shirley also is more careful about her daily diet. She now limits sugary treats to one per day.

“Walking has allowed me to wean myself off of my breathing machine,” says the now mobile Shirley. “I try to keep active every day. I really enjoy using a pedometer because it helps me to see how far I’ve walked and for how long. It’s very convenient!” In addition to no longer needing a portable oxygen machine, Shirley also has lost 20 pounds!

Katya Henriquez, Shirley’s Active Choice’s coach, said “All of her peers love talking about how active Shirley has become. They’re very proud of her weight loss, her change in lifestyle and—most important—that she no longer needs portable oxygen.”

Shirley said she particularly enjoyed the regularly scheduled phone calls with Katya because they kept her motivated to do things and get out there and stay fit. She said the sessions reiterated the importance of physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle.

Since graduating from the program, Shirley has maintained her own walking program and has started a weekly walking group at her local senior center.



## Active for Life Success Stories: **She's on Her Way to the Top**



Treva Ludy

Treva Ludy has been on six rock-climbing expeditions. That's a feat for most people, and it's especially impressive because Treva is 72-years old and just recently started rock climbing.

Until recently, Treva's elliptical trainer was collecting dust, and she wasn't being physically active on a regular basis. Although she was in relatively good health, she knew that more physical activity would be good for her both mentally and physically. Fortunately, she discovered the *Active for Life*® Active Choices program offered by the San Mateo County Health Department.

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Once she started Active Choices, Treva dusted off her elliptical trainer and began doing floor exercises at home. She set a goal of joining her church's rock-climbing group, something she had always wanted to try. The Active Choices program gave her the push she needed to take a chance and do it.

"After getting to know Treva, you'd understand that when she puts her mind to something, she makes it happen," said Katya Henriquez, Treva's Active Choices telephone coach. "She accomplished her goal of a successful rock climb, and she has also taken up line dancing twice a week and exercises at home four to five times per week."

Treva enjoyed the scheduled telephone phone calls with Katya. "The calls geared me up and provided the right amount of healthy guilt to motivate me to exercise," Treva said, adding that the phone calls made her feel like she was not doing this alone and that she had support and encouragement.

Since becoming active, Treva's stamina and endurance have improved, and her arthritis doesn't bother her as much. Most important, Treva has kept up her exercise regimen and has no plans to stop.

"Treva can do anything she sets her mind to," said Doris Estremera, the San Mateo Active Choices program director. "She has joined our steering committee and has remained an active member."

Treva enthusiastically endorsed *Active for Life* and the Active Choices program. "Exercise improves everything, absolutely everything," Treva said. "I was inspired, and *Active for Life* got me started."



## Active for Life Success Stories: You've Got Mail



Elsie Fields (right)

“I did it!” exclaimed an elated Elsie Fields. “I made it to the mailbox.”

Walking to and from the mailbox is a task most of us take for granted, but for Elsie, it’s a major accomplishment. Elsie has made a lot of progress since having heart surgery earlier this year and has learned that achieving even small goals can mean big rewards.

After her surgery, it was a struggle for Elsie to move, even with the aid of a walker. She had frequent painful swelling in her legs, shoulder strain from using the walker and weight gain caused by one of the medications prescribed for her after the procedure.

As part of her rehabilitation process, Elsie joined the *Active for Life*® Active Living Every Day program offered by the Council on Aging of Southwestern Ohio. The program has helped her learn how to overcome barriers and incorporate physical activity into her daily life.

Active Living Every Day is a comprehensive behavior change program that’s presented in a group setting and designed to help sedentary adults adopt and maintain active lifestyles. The program’s unique approach emphasizes lifestyle activity, encouraging people to find realistic ways to fit physical activity into their daily lives.

One strategy Elsie used to increase her physical activity was to add extra steps when doing household chores that normally require only a few steps. When doing laundry, an activity she knew she could accomplish in about 300 steps, Elsie pushed herself to take at least 3,000 steps by dividing each load of laundry into smaller folded piles and putting each pile away on a separate trip.

Elsie also set goals for herself with outdoor activity. One of her first short-term goals was to be able to walk to and from her mailbox—a one-mile round trip.

“When I used to walk to the mailbox, it seemed several miles away,” Elsie said. She now makes the daily trip with no problems.

In fact, Elsie did so well that she became frustrated with the slow pace her walker forced her to keep. As a personal reward, Elsie upgraded to a four-wheeled walker that allowed her to keep a more comfortable pace and cover more distance when walking with others.

Since joining the program, Elsie has lost five pounds and no longer suffers from shoulder strain or swelling in her legs.

Her favorite activity these days is playing with her very active grandson, something she said she never thought she’d be able to do.



## Active for Life Success Stories: Used Walker for Sale



Sue Binkert and Wanda Stahley

Wanda Stahley is looking for a buyer for her walker. “I’ve got one real cheap,” reports the 80-year-old from Ohio. Although the walker is now sitting idle, she once relied heavily on it for the small amount of walking she did outside her home. Then Wanda decided she wanted to take a long-distance vacation to Colorado but knew that, in order to do so, she needed to become more physically active and build her endurance.

In an effort to reach her goal, Wanda joined the *Active for Life*® Active Living Every Day program offered by the Council on Aging of Southwestern Ohio.

Active Living Every Day is a comprehensive behavior change program that’s presented in a group setting and designed to help sedentary adults adopt and maintain active lifestyles. The program’s unique approach emphasizes lifestyle activity, encouraging people to find realistic ways to fit physical activity into their daily lives.

Wanda’s program facilitator, Sue Binkert, helped her understand that little changes in her life could make a big difference in her health and help her reach her goal. “Wanda has really engaged in the program,” Sue said. “Early on, she moved from thinking about being active to doing it. She often refers to a familiar saying as her personal motto—‘Just do it!’”

Using what she learned in the Active Living Every Day program, Wanda created a walking program that she could do in the comfort of her apartment building. Her daily goal was to go up at least one flight of stairs each day and to take the stairs instead of the elevator when she went from her apartment down to the main floor.

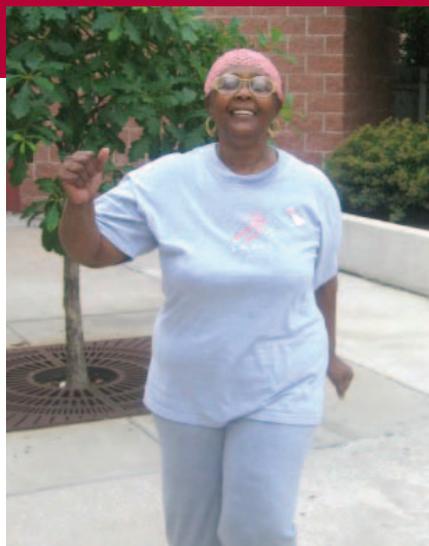
Since beginning her walking program, Wanda has lost five pounds and is happy to be more mobile. In July, she achieved her goal and traveled by train to Colorado.

And, Wanda isn’t going to stop with one vacation. At graduation in August, she announced that she would be rewarding her hard work with a new car. “Now that I can walk more easily and I’m enjoying it, there are other places I want to go,” she said.

“Wanda is an inspiration for her classmates,” said a pleased Sue. “It’s great to see that this new car will help her continue to meet her goals as she will be able to travel to new destinations and explore on foot.”



## Active for Life Success Stories: Where There's a Will, There's a Way



Edith Stapleton

Edith Stapleton's journey to better health has been marked by sheer will and determination. Since joining the *Active for Life*® Active Choices program at the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago, Edith has lost 10 pounds, and she's still losing inches. Her blood pressure has gone down, and she no longer needs medication to control the arthritic pain in her knees. Not only has she stopped using her handicap parking permit, but she now chooses to park a distance away from the places she's visiting so she can get out and walk a little more.

All of these steps are no small accomplishment, especially when you consider that two hit-and-run accidents in 1994 and 2001 left 65-year-old Edith in poor health. But she decided not to let the pain stop her.

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Prior to joining the Active Choices program, Edith already had started to exercise at a local senior center in Chicago. She was riding a stationary bike and walking on a treadmill at a light intensity for 10-minute segments. Since joining Active Choices, Edith now goes to the senior center four times a week and has built up to 60 minutes of endurance activity, using both a treadmill and stationary bike. She also recently completed the three mile ShapeWalk, Chicago's Senior Health and Fitness Walk.

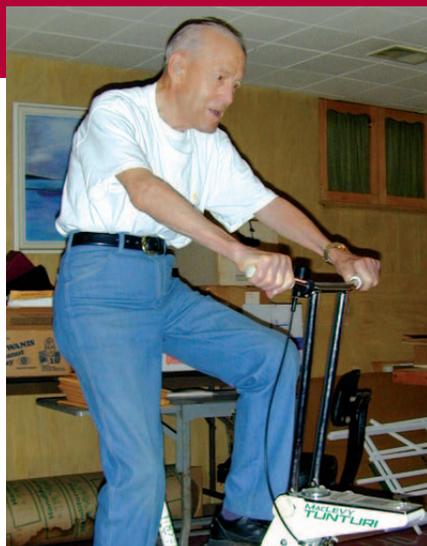
Edith said she enjoyed the regular phone calls with her Active Choices facilitator, Martha Muir, who was encouraging, but didn't put too much pressure on her. Edith said she also loved learning new tips and receiving information about physical activity in the mail.

"Edith is one of the most encouraging and determined women I have ever met," says Martha.

As she has proved time and again, Edith does not believe in giving up. "You don't have to be sick," Edith said. "There are opportunities to seek out help, and this program was an opportunity."



## Active for Life Success Stories: Jumping for the Health of It



Russell Morris

Russell Morris is so excited about the *Active for Life*® Active Choices program offered by the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago that he's jumping for joy. Actually, he's jumping for health on his mini-trampoline, which he's had for 20 years and uses as part of his physical activity regimen.

Russell, age 89, is retired from the banking business and is a well-respected member of his community. He's involved as a volunteer in many organizations, such as Kiwanis, Meals on Wheels, Men's Association of Lutheran General Hospital, and his church. He had a mitral valve replacement in 1994 and is on several different heart medications, but is otherwise in good physical condition.

Russell joined the Active Choices program to increase and maintain his fitness level so that he would not deteriorate. He was thrilled to find out that there is someone out there interested in helping him get and stay in shape.

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During the Active Choices program, Russell began walking on the track at a local recreation center, using the rowing machine, walking on a treadmill. He also continued to use his mini-trampoline and a self-fashioned pulley system that lifts large containers of detergent off the floor.

Since beginning Active Choices, Russell has been able to maintain his fitness level. And he has noticed more flexibility and endurance when walking and moving.

Mary Ganzel, program facilitator at the Y, said, "Russell Morris is the type of person who makes you want to be a better person." She noted that his many years of giving to his community were recognized on May 26, 2005, when he was awarded the Cook County Sheriff's Senior Medal of Honor. "His wonderful spirit, positive attitude, and competitiveness with himself to get 10,000 steps four or more days per week made him successful with *Active for Life*. He is truly 89-years young."

