

A Publication of Presbyterian Homes

Building a Fitness Center To Create a Fitness/Wellness Program for Older Adults

by Muriel Brunger, B.A., R.H.P, A.D.C., Director of Activities, Westminster Place, Presbyterian Homes
(written in 1997)

The following ideas and concept could be used to develop a fitness/wellness program in any setting, whether residential or community. Many of the finest programs being developed in the field of older adult fitness are through retirement communities, hospital or health care groups, community centers, and through extension services of colleges and universities. The basic principles apply to any of these settings.

When thinking becomes reality

It is rare that a person gets to fantasize about what they would like a program and facility to be and then have it become a reality. It is both a privilege and an enormous opportunity. Developing a program concept is an evolutionary process, and it is possible to adapt most of these programs and use many of these ideas without a Fitness Center building or on a different scale. Just using available space creatively, or using existing fitness facilities and resources in a community, can launch a facility into the world of wellness programming.

The seed of the idea for a facility or program may come from a very unexpected person or place. In our case, the idea for the Kimble Fitness and Therapeutic Center came from multiple sources. The staff of Presbyterian Homes' Westminster Place campus had discussed the idea of a 'swimming pool' in the long-range planning process, and a resident of the facility gave money to start a fundraising effort for a pool. The process started with brainstorming and research during the mid-1990s. The goal was to look at future trends in the retirement housing industry, at the resources in the larger community around the CCRC, to evaluate the interest of the current residents, and to study the feasibility of adding another building to the 40-acre campus. The program and design group consisted of the CEO; Vice President of Operations, Vice President of Medical Services; and the Directors of Activities, Buildings and Grounds, Facilities Management and Finance.

This group researched current trends, visited existing Fitness Centers and continued to look at possible alternatives before presenting a concept to the board of directors.

Visiting other facilities was one of the most beneficial parts of the process. It was important to be able to see the wide range of Fitness Center buildings and programs that existed, and use the ideas that would be most beneficial to our own residents. Also, focus groups of our own residents and potential residents supported the idea of a fitness facility on the CCRC campus.

Choosing an architect with experience in design of facilities for older adults greatly enhanced the process. Optimal site selection was critical in order to have the building fit into the architectural plan for the campus, and to allow connection to the main building of the CCRC for an underground access tunnel and utilities. Because of the size of the campus, the main buildings are connected by a lower-level passageway to allow for indoor access for residents and staff during inclement weather. In part, site selection for this building was based on access to this passageway system.

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Design by committee can be rewarding, because it brings different perspectives to the process and helps crystallize the scope of the project. In developing a facility, it is essential to use staff members' expertise in the design process, because those staff will be the driving force in programming efforts. It is also important to use available resources and experts, and acknowledge areas in which outside assistance is needed. There may be a need for negotiations of departmental roles and responsibilities for functions such as program, maintenance and therapy. There are governmental codes and regulations that need to be investigated. For instance, in some states, a facility with a pool must have a certified pool operator overseeing the maintenance. Issues of safety and security can be addressed by design concepts such as windows and glass doors that provide an adequate field of vision for staff members. In the case of the Kimble Center, city zoning allowed the facility to be built for use by residents of the CCRC. Due to zoning board concerns about traffic, parking and impact on the neighborhood, it was not possible to open up membership or use of the center to people in the larger community. These kinds of issues will vary by city, state and location, but are very important to the program and building planning process.

A recreational vs. a medical model

We decided to use a recreational model to design the Kimble Center building and to implement the program. Other CCRC facilities have Fitness Centers that function on a medical model, but we felt that focusing on where the Fitness Center fit into the community life would be more beneficial. Exploration of goals for the building led to the consensus that the primary function would be to provide a community center environment that had provided fitness, wellness, therapeutic, social and educational programs to all residents of the CCRC. This has allowed for integration of people from all the parts of the retirement community and endless opportunities for program expansion.

Which features to choose

Deciding which of the features to incorporate into a fitness facility is an important part of the planning process. It took many hours of looking at options and planning to facilitate use of the building and the right design components. Design considerations included: maximum use of natural light through strategic placement of skylights and windows; wooden beam roof supports and separation of roof peaks over the pools to keep noise levels down; and zoning of the ventilation system throughout the building so that the locker rooms could be warmer than the exercise room. The swimming pool deck is finished with brick pavers to alleviate any concerns about slipping on ceramic tile. Such modifications as including six small individual dressing rooms in the women's locker room for those who want privacy and special assistance locker room space for physical therapy patients (who may need assistance with dressing before and after pool treatments) have alleviated concerns about privacy and respect for individual needs.

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As with any new building, there are things that cannot be anticipated. Grab bars were put everywhere but not put in the individual shower stalls. They have them now. It was necessary to shut down the pools for an unforeseen heat exchanger problem and then for a roof problem. Communication was made to the residents as clearly as possible about the problems, and provisions for alternative programming in another facility were arranged. Transportation was even provided, but the residents were still emotional about not being able to use their facility. So being prepared for the unexpected and, above all, keeping a sense of humor is essential in working on construction projects.

Testing the concept

The existing exercise room was a small windowless room on the lower level of the main complex. It was full of exercise bikes. Residents had donated some of the bikes when they had stopped using them, and there were a few that people were using and had grown attached to. Before the Fitness Center opened, tests were made in the old exercise room with a couple of new high-tech bikes, which we were proposing to purchase to see how people liked them. Residents were asked to track how much they were using the exercise room and how they felt about the new machines. Some were adamant that this was perfectly good equipment and that there was no need to buy new bikes. There were people who were enthusiastic about the prospect of new equipment and excited about the new technology that they were able to try. By asking for information about the use of the exercise room, we had a baseline against which to compare attendance numbers once the new facility opened.

There was not a lot of information available about what would work for older exercisers. The program group investigated fitness equipment companies, went to trade shows, and finally met with an exercise physiologist turned exercise equipment salesperson who understood our needs. The initial equipment was two treadmills (which were modified through the equipment manufacturer to include special emergency stop buttons), five bikes and one new rower. A resident who had been strength training at a local university facility donated a Paramount multi-station. When the Fitness Center opened, some of the old equipment was moved to the Fitness Center exercise room, because there were those with special loyalties to the vintage exercise equipment. It has now been possible to eliminate all but two pieces of the old equipment, an old rower and one of the bikes. These kinds of gentle transitions are very important and have helped convert some of the vocal opponents of the Fitness Center concept. At the present time, the program is growing and new equipment has been added to accommodate that growth. Two recumbent step machines, a second recumbent bike and another treadmill have been added. The treadmills and recumbent steppers are the most popular pieces of equipment.

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Creating excitement about the coming Fitness Center

It was important to create excitement about the potential program and building. The program and design committee went to resident council meetings, to board and potential donor events, to "For Your Information" meetings with resident groups, and they talked about fitness and wellness topics to anyone who would listen. It was essential to ask for the support of doctors, outside experts and staff. There was increased emphasis on ongoing exercise classes and the addition of new wellness-related programming.

At last, the Fitness Center opens

The Kimble Fitness and Therapeutic Center opened in the Fall of 1994 on the Westminster Place campus of Presbyterian Homes. It is a 25,000 sq. ft. two-story building with a fitness pool, therapy pool, exercise rooms, locker rooms and multi-purpose room on the second floor. The pools are 83 degrees and 93 degrees respectively. The building was carefully designed for older adults by installing pool access by ramp, stairs, ladders and hydraulic lift. The ramp into the fitness pool has allowed individuals who have trouble navigating stairs to walk into the pool on an even surface. Use of designated wheelchairs and walkers to the water's edge or into the water on the ramp allows for flexibility of access. Each part of the building has unique features to accommodate the population.

The grand opening was a weekend-long celebration, including a donor dinner & dedication of the building, a parade around the campus complete with vintage cars & a bagpipe band, and a picnic lunch with a series of hands-on demonstrations. These demonstrations included water exercise, cooking and billiards, quick massages and assistance with exercise equipment. A nationally recognized speaker from the world of aquatic exercise and rehabilitation came to talk about the benefits of the water exercise. There is nothing better than an enthusiastic expert to boost a program! It was a wonderful way to inaugurate the center.

The first two weeks of operation were spent doing orientations and open time in the pool and exercise room. More than 300 residents and more than 260 staff attended orientation sessions during the first two weeks. In this case, volunteers and board members are eligible to use the facility also. Everyone had to go through the orientation to use the building, so they did. There was an incredible amount of enthusiasm generated by this process.

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The role of Fitness Center staff and other Presbyterian Homes employees

Other aspects of the program that needed attention were recruiting, hiring and training staff. We also needed to develop emergency action plans, policies and procedures, and rules. The Fitness Center staff has been very carefully selected. Because of safety and well-being issues, these staff members have to have a clear understanding of the unique situation in which they are working. They must be able to relate to older adults, their families and guests in a professional, thoughtful and courteous way. It has been beneficial to the ongoing growth of the program to have the Fitness Center staff involved in all different aspects of activities at the facility. It has helped to tie together the whole wellness approach to programming.

A coordinator teaches the majority of the aquatic exercise classes and supervises three part-time lifeguards. Contract teachers come in to do specialized classes. This gives some flexibility in what is offered, and gives residents an opportunity to choose classes and instructors that most closely meet their needs. During planning, it was important that staff members involved in programming understand current trends in fitness. This involvement included going to workshops and conferences, getting certifications and tapping into other resources. In this case, it was essential that the staff who actually ran the program were people the residents already knew and trusted.

One of the features of a Fitness Center is that it appeals to people of all ages: residents, guests, families and staff. This was discussed extensively in the planning process, and it was realized that there are some real pluses to making use of the center an employee benefit. First of all, employee wellness: an employee group that is exercising is, as supported by emerging research, more likely to be healthy and happy. Secondly, if employees use the center and reap benefits, they are more likely to encourage resident participation. Employees encourage residents to exercise and look for balance in their lives, and they need to strive for that wellness in their own lives. There are specific hours at the beginning and end of the workday, Monday-Friday, that employees can use the facility.

Two employee water aerobics classes a week and three employee land aerobics classes a week are provided. As a result of employee interest in exercise and lifestyle changes, there is now an Employee Wellness Committee that has sponsored a weight management and maintenance program and Employee Family Nights at the Fitness Center. The committee has sponsored Breast Cancer Awareness Month events and supported several outside walk/run teams. This is a potential growth area for the overall program and it is an outstanding employee benefit.



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The benefits of adding a fitness program to our over-all activities program

The Kimble Fitness and Therapeutic Center program is a part of the overall activities offerings at Presbyterian Homes' north campus. In the process of building the Fitness Center, there were opportunities being created for everyone. Using a wellness model, basic information was disseminated to educate residents and staff. Wellness is, after all, not a place but a state of mind. The place can provide valuable tools to achieve personal goals through a healthy balance of recreation, physical activity, self-development, fellowship and fun.

The development of a successful program is dependent on the support of the community it is designed to serve. It takes time, energy and creativity to pull together the ideas that will gain support of the constituents of the program. The benefits to a fitness and wellness program are endless. The reasons for people to participate are countless and well established. People will feel better, have more energy, less stress, better range of motion, better endurance, more stamina, and a multitude of other scientifically proven physical and psychological benefits. The structure of the program will help the participants achieve these benefits. Within that structure, the schedule, the staffing, and the marketing of the program will all contribute to the success of the program. Developing a program is challenging and a lot of fun. Developing a program and or designing a facility are opportunities to see a fantasy become a reality.

Learning as we go

A few tidbits learned from others' experiences and through the planning phase: 1) It is important to set aside times for family swims and ask that children swim only at those times. Some older adults aren't comfortable in the pool or the locker room with children. 2) Having a guest policy makes the facility a friendly resource for visitors. The residents can bring an adult guest at any time, but the resident must be in the facility with the guest during the visit. In this case, it keeps the Fitness Center from becoming a health club for younger family members (intimidating to the older exerciser), and creates an opportunity for a multigenerational family experience for those who utilize the family time slots. There have been a number of families who have used the facility for a family birthday party during the scheduled family times. 3) It has been important to have a guard on deck, and a standard of only hiring certified water exercise instructors as substitutes has been maintained.

Choosing and scheduling fitness activities

Information about programs in the Fitness Center continues to be important. There are monthly schedules and calendars and flyers about special events. Because the Fitness Center has become a general marketing tool for the Homes, it is now included in all of the brochures. The Fitness Center has become a centerpiece of campus life and attracts prospective residents. It has helped some people make the choice to move in earlier than they might have otherwise.

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Before the project opened, we distributed prototype information as to what the program might offer. The “sample daily schedule” of what a typical day might be was distributed. This ‘fantasy’ schedule had descriptions of classes and events and a primer on the Fitness Center that answered the questions most frequently asked about transportation, programs, amenities and facilities. By getting information out to residents so that they could react to it, it was possible to hear ideas and concerns and be better able to manage information about the center. There will always be reasons why a person is unable, unwilling or concerned about using a fitness facility.

During the planning phase, it was important to increase the number of exercise classes on the campus. There are currently six classes a week that take place outside of the Fitness Center. They take place in a large assembly-hall environment and in residential, living-room type environments. These classes have continued right where they are for a couple of reasons. The campus is very large and some of the residents are unable to make the trip over to the Fitness Center on their own for physical or cognitive reasons. Secondly, the class members were given a choice and they chose to keep their classes right where they were. If you are telling people to “use it or lose it,” why move it away from them. It makes more sense to facilitate their “using it” right where they are. Participation in all of the exercise classes, in and outside of the Fitness Center, has grown because of the increased emphasis on fitness programming and persistent marketing.

Water exercise

Developing a schedule is a continuous process. It had to fit time for personal use of the exercise room and pools as well as land and aquatic exercise classes and physical therapy water treatments. The first schedule was initiated with 13 regularly scheduled water exercise classes: seven in the small pool and six in the large pool. Two new classes have been added for new participants in the program. It was necessary to accommodate new exercisers and get them up to level of those residents who have been at it for the two years since the opening.

Water exercise classes are the backbone of the Kimble Fitness Center program. All the classes at the center have special names such as “Water Dynamics” or “Bodies in Motion.” This helps to identify class and teacher. All the classes that take place in the larger pool are designed to use major muscle groups, to increase heart rates, raise metabolism and give a participant an aerobic workout. The warm-water classes stress range of motion, joint flexibility and stretching. These classes are designed with minimal impact on feet, knees and hips. Older adults benefit from the hydrostatic pressure of the water and find that they have an increase in muscle strength, range of motion, balance and flexibility. Many of the participants in the program had never taken a water exercise class prior to coming to the Fitness Center, and most find the classes to be an excellent workout and a lot of fun. It has been important to encourage residents to try the water exercise classes. Many have found that the cross-training effect of a water workout increased their fitness and they are able to exercise more frequently.



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Physical Therapy uses the warm therapy pool two full afternoons of the week for rehab treatments. Physical Therapy has developed a total joint replacement program with two of the local hospitals and gets referrals for water therapy regularly. The physical therapy treatments are reimbursable and this program is growing steadily. The Physical Therapy department has developed relationships with orthopedic specialists in the area and this has helped to increase the census of patients in the health care center. On-staff occupational therapist treats patients in the pool also.

Land exercise

In planning the building, it wasn't possible to anticipate that the land exercise classes would outgrow the space in the exercise equipment room. It has meant converting a large storeroom in the basement of the facility into an exercise classroom. There are now have five land exercise classes in the Fitness Center each week: three aerobic classes for women and two exclusively for men. The men's class is taught by a male physical therapy assistant who has built up a consistent group of 25 men from the main campus and the men's facility. They all enjoy this opportunity to be together. Men are usually a minority group in a retirement community, but the Fitness Center seems to have had an effect on the male population; they seem to want to do more together. This is a programming opportunity that warrants expansion. There has traditionally been a monthly men's breakfast, but now there is a men's group that plays shuffleboard regularly, another group of men that gather to play pool, and yet another group of men working on their individual memoirs. This group of men is in the process of developing a book club and a photography group. This all started in their exercise class.

Fitness Center staff teaches residents to use the exercise equipment, encourages them with tips on form and helps them track their efforts. In January 1995, an exercise motivation and adherence program was launched called "Around the World in 80 Ways." The total group goal was to circle the globe. That is 27,500 miles of walking, swimming, biking, rowing, taking exercise classes — however an individual chose to do their miles. Each individual participant got a Passport to Fitness and set a personal goal. Individuals got incentive prizes for every few passports turned in, including buttons, ribbons, pencils, water bottles and t-shirts. The group traveled the globe and stopped off monthly to visit places of interest: at 3,000 miles they went to Phoenix and had a line dance; at 4,000 miles to Athens, Greece, for a travelogue and Greek treats; they went to Shanghai, China, and ventured forth to Chinatown for dim sum. At 10,000 miles, there was a 10,000-mile inspection with a six-station fitness assessment, which is followed up on every six months. In January 1996, the group completed the world adventure. They are now tracking exercise minutes on their way to a star. The excitement builds as they "Reach for a Star!"



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In addition to their global and intergalactic travels, a “healthy lifestyle” program has been initiated that has featured presentations and workshops on nutrition, sleep, abdominal muscles, dance movement, aromatherapy and yoga. In the nice weather, there has been a walking club that has explored the neighborhood and occasionally gone off campus by bus for exploratory walks. Celebrating water fitness week and Senior Health and Fitness Day have added special sparks to everyday exercise. This wellness programming has exposed residents to different ideas and modalities and made them more open to trying new things. They bring in articles about the ‘latest’ thing and we post them in the exercise room. The monthly calendar includes fitness tips and cartoons collected by people connected to the facility.

Overcoming barriers to participation

Part of planning a facility is anticipating what kinds of objections to exercise there might be and working to assist people in overcoming them. Transportation to the Fitness Center was an issue for some people. Finding ways for them to share rides or participate in a shuttle bus service helped them overcome that objection. Many of the residents had never used a fitness facility. Actually, using a Fitness Center takes a desire to learn; no experience is necessary. Through a process of awareness and education, it was feasible to get people to try it. Positive experiences set people up for success and build up their confidence to try new activities.

It was very important to us that we give an orientation to every user of our new building. There were tours of the building given. People were shown how to use the facility and its amenities, including the suit extractor and hair dryers. Facility rules were explained and everyone was asked to sign waivers. The independent residents get their own doctor’s OK before exercising. The waiver acknowledges that the individual has gone through the orientation, understands the risks of exercise, has checked with their doctor and will waive the Home’s responsibility if any kind of problem occurs. If there are any questions, the residents are referred to their doctor or to a physical therapist.

Through the orientation process, individuals’ questions and concerns were addressed. This was a slow, gentle educational process that made everyone comfortable with the building, program and staff. Orientation is given to all new residents and staff who use the building as they come to Presbyterian Homes. Because the Kimble Center is a part of a CCRC and there is already medical and personal information available to staff, it is not necessary to have an intense medical or physical evaluation prior to use of the facility. It is important in a community-based program to have an assessment tool and personal medical information on file prior to an individual’s participation.



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People learn through experience. Many of the participants in the program had never taken an exercise class before. The teachers have adapted their classes to meet the needs of the people in them. When teaching classes and facilitating programs in this kind of setting, there are many barriers to participation. There are specific individual cognitive and physical impairments that need to be accommodated in order to make the group experience a positive one. For instance, a person with a cognitive impairment can often participate if the instructions are broken down to the simplest form and given one by one. Experience has shown that people with cognitive impairments can continue in exercise classes long after they are unable to function in other group settings, given the right environment and support. There are those older adults who may come to a facility with a life long fear of water. It is possible through one on one encouragement to help these people to participate in water exercise classes. In some cases, that has meant taking them into the pool a few times on their own to help them to adjust to the water as a medium. Again, positive outcomes can motivate people to continue trying new experiences.

One of the most important factors to success in this setting is the feeling of safety and security. Older exercisers need to feel that the staff cares and will respond if they need assistance. In facilitating a program for older adults, another ongoing function of staff is gentle follow-up and motivation. This may be as simple as being certain that instructors know the names of all the participants in a class or it may mean devising a system for letting people know they are missed if they do not come to class. It is often the personal connection to teachers, classmates and staff that keep people motivated to come back to exercise.

Creating a lasting commitment to exercise is as important as helping people get started. Group participation helps with exercise adherence. By emphasizing the fun and variety in an exercise program and recognizing individual achievement to enhance self-esteem, it is possible to keep people coming back. Participants need positive feedback and encouragement and will often give it to each other.

The problem of swimsuits

Before the opening, there was a lot of apprehension about finding appropriate swimwear and exercise clothing. This was one of the biggest objections to overcome in discussing the Fitness Center with residents. Staff asked local vendors of swimwear, exercise clothing, shoes and accessories to come to an Aquatic & Fitness Expo at our facility. This provided a forum for these vendors to tell the residents about the latest in fitness wear. Videos were shown and there were educational sessions on aquatic exercise, fitness and the design of the Fitness Center. There were some extremes in fitness wear represented. There was something for everyone — from the custom-made \$300 swimsuit to the \$12 tank suit. The expo was a wonderful opportunity to get people energized and enthused about the impending opening of the Fitness Center. One of the interesting trends we have seen since center opened is a tendency of residents to dress more casually. They have realized how comfortable exercise clothing is and are wearing it everywhere now. There are fewer people exercising in suits and high heels than there used to be!



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Operational costs: where they come from

In the case of the Kimble Fitness Center, operational costs have been absorbed into the annual operating budget and are paid through residents' monthly fees. Some CCRCs have chosen to have resident users of their fitness facility pay a membership fee or daily use fee to belong to or use their facility. Because there are differing economic circumstances among the residents of Presbyterian Homes and because one of the goals of the Kimble Center was to be a community center, it was important to have the center available to every resident without any specific charges. Since this Fitness Center program needed to have a broad base of appeal, it needed to be accessible to all people who wanted to take advantage of it. Experience shows that people who can find an excuse to avoid exercising will, at any age. A financial reason not to exercise, such as a membership fee to join a Fitness Center, is one of the most potent reason a person, especially someone on a fixed income, can come up with. Fortunately, there are individuals and organizations willing to give money to support programs that enhance well-being.

The Kimble Fitness and Therapeutic Center today

Since the opening, there have been some changes that can be directly attributed to the Fitness Center. The way people dress on the campus has gone from very formal to more casual and comfortable. The men in the facility seem to want to do more together. People from all over the 40-acre campus and from the downtown campus have gotten to know each other and have shared a number of new experiences together. The residents say that they feel better, have better muscle tone, improved endurance, better flexibility and increased range of motion. They feel more relaxed, and have less stress and anxiety. All the activities programming has been enhanced by use of this facility. Most of all, people seem to genuinely enjoy being together in this building, doing any number of activities. It is a place that people feel good, smile and are happy.

There has been an expansion of the levels of classes offered. It is interesting that about one-third of the prospective resident applicants ask about the exercise program. Activities staff spends a lot of time encouraging people to get involved in all the programs, but there is a special emphasis on the opportunities for selecting their own fitness program. Future program expansion will include more outreach programs from the Fitness Center to other parts of the facility, including classes on every unit in the health care center. This will help connect staff and programs as residents move along the continuum of care.

It is important in developing a fitness program to make it coordinate with current programming. There has been a concerted effort to provide fitness programs for all levels of care in the CCRC. There are some movement and exercise classes on the health care units. Exercise videos are shown on the in-house TV channel. An effort is being made to reach everyone with opportunities to stay functionally fit. The good news is that there a lot more resources, certifications and organizations doing this type of fitness programming than there were when this project was embarked upon five years ago, and that residents are more informed about the benefits of exercise. Fitness programming is integral to a balanced activity program and residents are looking for exercise opportunities.



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The main direction for the Kimble Fitness Center is to develop and grow the current resident program. The challenges are to find ways to build participation, encourage adherence to people's exercise program of choice and focus on health, fitness and fun.

The Fitness Center is unique in its recreational approach, and for that reason there has been a lot of attention focused on the facility and its program. There has been media and professional attention that has resulted in exposure for Presbyterian Homes. Tours are a regular part of the activities at the Kimble Center. The tours include applicants, residents proudly showing their families around and professionals interested in the facility. Even those residents and staff members who were skeptical about the facility at its inception now enthusiastically show it off.

By design, the multi-purpose/club room' on the second floor of the Fitness Center has become a hub of activity and a place for special events on campus such as a Santa's Workshop, a do-it-yourself gift-making workshop; intergenerational programs; outside group meetings and resident family events. In the course of the past two years, the James Room has been used over 200 times for special functions. Every kind of event imaginable has taken place there, from a residents' wedding reception to educational seminars.

In the first year, there were 150 different residents using this facility regularly. There are now 190 regular exercisers. This is 42% of the independent population of this retirement community. Attendance is highest when classes are in session. This can be attributed to the fact that people seem to like a class structure rather than exercising on their own. Residents from the health care facility are using the Fitness Center. They are brought over by their families or by activities staff either for post-therapy workouts or for fun. They must have written orders from their physician in their chart. There was a 102-year-old woman resident with memory issues who, until recently, regularly swam with her 78-year-old son. They would often argue about whether to swim across the pool (30 feet) or the length (60 feet). She felt that widths of the pool were too easy!

There was input from residents throughout the planning process. Residents were on the initial program concept planning committee, and they spearheaded the fundraising efforts for this building, but once the Fitness Center was up and operating, there was a need for a group for evaluation and input. A group of the heaviest users were asked to become the Fitness Center Advisory Committee. The group has been helpful in making suggestions, in assessing the program and in supporting new ideas. At the end of the first year, they assisted in putting together a written survey of the program. The second survey was completed in July 1996. Some favorite statistics are that there are 9 people over 90 who use the facility regularly. The largest group of users is in the 80-89 age group. The average age of regulars is 84.5. So those who said that only the younger residents would use it were proven wrong.

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Resources/Organizations:

Muriel A. Brunger currently serves as Director of Activities for more than 650 residents at all levels of care on the Westminster Place campus of Presbyterian Homes in Evanston, Illinois. She is responsible for recruitment, selection, training and supervision of a staff of seventeen. She supervises the program planning, development, implementation and evaluation of activities programs. She manages the operations and expenses of the department, and coordinates all activities, including the development of the fitness and aquatic facility building and program. Her background includes:

- 1996 Retirement Housing Professional (RHP), American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging.
- 1995 Aquatic Exercise Instructor Certification, Aquatic Exercise Association.
- 1995 Certification: Fitness and Strength Training for Adults 50+ (FAST 50), Dallas Geriatric Institute.
- 2000 Red Cross Life guarding, CPR, and CPR for the Professional Rescuer, Red Cross First Aid.
- 1990 Activity Director, Certified (ADC).
- 1977 College of Wooster, Wooster, Ohio, B. A. Sociology.
- Ms. Brunger holds a Nursing Home Administrator's license.

Aquatic Exercise Association, POB 1609, Nokomis, FL. 34274, (941) 486-8600 www.aeawave.com.

Aquatic Therapy and Rehab Institute, (906) 482-9500 www.atri.org

YMCA of the USA, 101 N. Wacker Dr., Chicago, IL. 60606 (312) 977-0031 www.ymca.net

American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, 1909 K Street NW, Washington DC 20049, (202) 783-2242
www.aahsa.org

The National Council of Certification for Activity Professionals (NCCA), (757) 552-0653

The American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (APHRD), 1900 Association Dr., Reston, VA 22091-9989 (703) 476-3400

Aquatics International Magazine, 4160 Wilshire Blvd. Los Angeles, CA (323) 964-4800 www.aquaticsintl.com

Fitness Management Magazine, Leisure Publications, 4160 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90010 CA (323) 964-4800
www.fitnessmanagement.com

