

Senior News

A PUBLICATION OF THE CITY OF CLEVELAND DEPARTMENT OF AGING



CITY OF CLEVELAND
Mayor Frank G. Jackson

Issue 20 • September 2013

Cleveland Rocks the National Senior Games

By Mary McNamara

Eleven thousand athletes from each of the 50 states competed in 19 different sporting events in July when the National Senior Games were in town. They competed at different venues around town including Cleveland State University, Case Western Reserve University and the new Convention Center, to name a few. They competed in basketball, archery, bowling, badminton, tennis, swimming, track and field and in 12 other sports. The athletes ranged in age from 50 to 101 years young. I had the privilege of talking to about 40 of the 11,000 athletes. Their stories were personal, powerful and inspirational to me. I feel fortunate to have met each one of them. I am a social worker at the Cleveland Department of Aging but I met each of them in the capacity of being a volunteer at the National Senior Games.

There is the story of Phyllis from Florida who finished a sprint triathlon in just over 2 hours. That's a 400 meter freestyle swim in Lake Erie, a 20 kilometer bike ride on the Shoreway and a 5 kilometer run downtown. Not far behind her was Miriam who won the silver medal in the 85 and over age group as an 88 year old athlete. The age of each of the triathlon athletes was written in marker on their back calf. As they ran past me, I took notice of the



ages: 52, 61, 74, 79, 82 and on and on. Each one striving for their personal best.

I met Jim, a 69 year old pickle ball player from New Jersey. He taught me the rules of pickle ball, as it was the first time I had seen a match. It is a mix of table tennis and tennis played with a whiffle type ball. He told me that pickle ball may be the fastest growing sport and I could see why. It looked fun, included lots of volleys between the double teams and seemed easy to pick up.

I met a women's basketball team, the "Fabulous 70's," from Raleigh, North Carolina. The team had just won bronze in their age group. They had bruises and stories to go with their medals. Their stories spoke of friendship, fun and adventure.

The games celebrated older athletes and I think changed the perception of the capabilities of older adults. I think the athletes reminded many of us that being active is a lifelong pursuit. And while I haven't done a freestyle swim in Lake

Erie yet, Phyllis and Miriam and others inspired me to try. Sure I could hurt myself, but as they reminded me, I could also hurt myself by not moving.

~Mary McNamara



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Age Strong – Live Strong How Exercise Can Help You

Exercise and physical activity are good for just about everyone, including older adults. No matter your health and physical abilities, you can gain a lot by staying active. In fact, in most cases you have more to lose by not being active. Here are just a few of the benefits. Exercise and physical activity:

- Can help maintain and improve your physical strength and fitness;
- Can help improve your ability to do the everyday things you want to do;
- Can help improve your balance;
- Can help manage and improve diseases like diabetes; heart disease, and osteoporosis;
- Can help reduce feelings of depression and may improve mood and overall well-being; and
- May improve your ability to shift quickly between tasks, plan an activity, and ignore irrelevant information.

The key word in all these benefits is YOU — how fit and active you are now and how much effort you put into being active. Stay safe while you exercise and be sure to eat a healthy diet too.



Source: Go4Life from the National Institute of Aging at NIH

Largest Cleveland Senior Walk Ever held July, 2013!

The 9th Annual Cleveland Senior Walk was held on Thursday, July 25. Over 1,600 participants joined the one – two mile fun walk which took place on Malls B and C, just west of Cleveland City Hall. The purpose of the annual walk is to promote exercise, good nutrition and healthy life styles for older adults. Walkers enjoyed healthy snacks and received pedometers to count the steps they took during the walk and in the future. Following the walk participants visited the new Cleveland Convention Center to watch some of the National Senior Games sports competition, visit resource booths, to hear healthy aging presentations, and to listen to the TOPS (Tough Old Pros) Swing Band. The Cleveland Department of Aging was proud to host this event in collaboration with the National Senior Games and fellow partner agencies: the Cleveland Department of Public Health, the Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging, University Hospitals, the YMCA, MetroHealth and the Greater Cleveland Sports Commission.



Summer Crisis Program – Senior Day

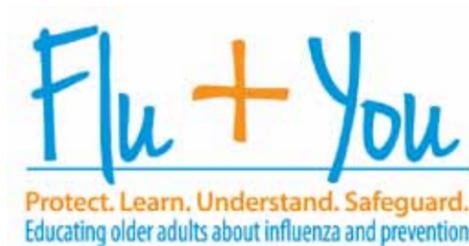
On July 12, 2013 Cleveland Housing Network (CHN) in collaboration with the City of Cleveland Department of Aging and Cuyahoga County Division of Senior and Adult Services held a special Senior Day for the Summer Crisis Program. Low income seniors and adults with medical conditions were able to take window air conditioning units home that day to receive immediate relief from the heat. Transportation was provided by the Senior Transportation Connection for seniors unable to drive. Teen volunteers from Fairhill Partners assisted throughout the day. Sixty-five City of Cleveland seniors had the opportunity to see if they qualified for an air conditioning unit, fan or payment on an electric bill. Sixty seniors left with an air conditioning unit that day. Seniors were also given the opportunity to complete a Benefits CheckUp to determine if they were eligible for any additional programs.



With the summer weather ending and cold weather approaching, contact the Cleveland Department of Aging's Access Your Benefits program for assistance applying for the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) or the Winter Crisis Program by calling 216- 664-3418.

Help Protect Yourself Against the Flu this Season by Getting Vaccinated

Older adults are an important part of the City of Cleveland, and making sure they stay healthy this and every flu season is a top priority. Influenza (commonly known as “the flu”) is a serious and potentially life-threatening disease that can cause severe complications. The best way to help protect against it is through annual vaccination.¹



No matter how healthy or youthful we feel, as we age, our immune system weakens, leaving people 65 and older more vulnerable to the flu and its related complications.^{2, 3} In fact, each year in the United States, about nine out of 10 flu-related deaths and roughly six out of 10 flu-related hospital stays occur in people 65 and older, making flu vaccination especially crucial for this population.⁴

That is why the Cleveland Departments of Aging and Public Health and the Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging have joined the National Council on Aging's Flu + You campaign to help educate adults 65 and older about the seriousness of the flu and the importance of vaccination.

References:

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The good news is that adults 65 and older have vaccine options available to help protect against the flu. In addition to the traditional flu vaccine (which helps protect against three strains of the flu virus), there is also a quadrivalent vaccine (which helps protect against four strains), and a higher dose vaccine. The higher dose flu shot improves the production of antibodies in older patients. Antibodies are the soldiers of the immune system that help fight infection when the body is exposed to the virus.

Whichever vaccine option is selected, the good news is that an annual flu shot is a Medicare Part B benefit. This means that the vaccine is covered with no copay for Medicare beneficiaries 65 years of age and older.

Talk to your health care provider about the dangers of the flu, the benefits of vaccination, and the best flu vaccination option to meet the needs of your age group, and visit www.ncoa.org/Flu for more information. Younger adults with a disability can contact the Department of Aging's Access Your Benefits Program at 216-664-3418 to learn about flu shot coverage options.