

SilverSneakers® -- Helping Older Adults Get Fit, Have Fun and Make Friends!

Research points to the positive impact physical activity can have on the lives of older adults. Staying active as we age can aid in preventing the onset of diseases such as heart disease, and controlling other conditions such as arthritis and diabetes. To help older adults get the exercise they need to maintain a healthy lifestyle, there's a fun solution called the Healthways SilverSneakers® Fitness Program. The Waukegan Park District is recognizing the unique needs of the older adults in the community by partnering with the nationally recognized SilverSneakers Fitness Program. The Park District is now able to offer older adults a way to increase their levels of physical activity while motivating them to remain active.

SilverSneakers is the nation's leading exercise program designed exclusively for older adults and is available at no additional cost (beyond any monthly premium) to eligible Medicare health plan and group retiree members. The program offers physical activity, health education, and social events. With the SilverSneakers premier network, members receive a complimentary membership with access to a variety of participating locations throughout the country. The Waukegan Park District offers amenities such as fitness equipment, treadmills and free weights, and the signature SilverSneakers classes, designed specifically for older adults and taught by certified instructors. "The Field House Sports & Fitness Center at the Waukegan Park District is a perfect location for the SilverSneakers Fitness Program," says SilverSneakers Account Manager Bryan Giannetto. "Not only is the Field House's location very central to everyone in the community, it is a state-of-the-art facility with tons of amenities for older adults. The Park District is dedicated to providing a valuable service to everyone in the Waukegan community, and they have the desire to build a great senior program."

Waukegan Park District currently offers SilverSneakers Muscular Strength & Range of Movement class on Wednesday and Friday mornings at 10:15. With the addition of a Monday SilverSneakers class on the horizon, members can look forward to beginning their week with more fitness, fun and friends! Whether it's this facility or another participating location, a designated staff member will help SilverSneakers members along the way. Bryan Giannetto adds, "In addition to being a great facility, the Field House is staffed with some of the most professional and caring individuals from the front desk staff to the instructors. Since the program just started this year, not only do new SilverSneakers members have access to a great program, but they also have the opportunity to help shape and grow the program to meet their needs."

Turning a Vision into Reality

To understand the importance of physical activity for older adults is to understand how the SilverSneakers Fitness Program came to be. In 1992, Mary Swanson founded the SilverSneakers Fitness Program, now a product of Healthways, Inc., on the premise that for health care to be viable in the long run, cost-effective, preventive benefits needed to be incorporated into the care continuum. With her unique business model of an accountable, population-based exercise program, she quickly carved a niche between managed care and insurance companies throughout the United States and realized her vision of improving the health and well-being of everyone the program touched.

Swanson's inspiration was drawn from her own father who, after surviving a heart attack at age 51, pledged to improve his quality of life with regular physical activity. His commitment, coupled with her determination to see him succeed, laid the foundation for the exercise program that would become the nation's leading exercise program for older adults. This unique program continues to allow older adults to take charge of their health and maintain an active, independent lifestyle. In fact, this year the SilverSneakers program has seen an average of more than 2.35 million visits per month by members at participating locations. Every year, more than 650,000 SilverSneakers signature classes are held for members in addition to other amenities available at participating locations. "The benefit of regular exercise is making an indelible mark on older adults as they flock to local fitness and wellness centers around the country," states Giannetto. "SilverSneakers is appropriate for individuals who have not exercised in years as well as those who exercise on a regular basis."

The Proof is in the Program

According to the latest research and member testimonials, programs like SilverSneakers do work. In a nationwide study of more than 9,000 SilverSneakers members, 14% reported having diabetes. Forty-one percent of diabetic members reported having improved health after one or more years of participation and 46% reported improved body weight. High-risk sedentary behavior was reduced by 59% with SilverSneakers participation. Additionally, other research has shown:

- SilverSneakers participants utilize preventive care more often, are admitted to the hospital less often and have lower overall healthcare costs.ⁱ
- older adults with diabetes who participate in SilverSneakers are also admitted to the hospital less often, have lower inpatient care costs, and see significant reductions in their overall health care costs after only a year.ⁱⁱ
- greater participation in SilverSneakers is associated with significantly lower risk of depression.ⁱⁱⁱ

After joining SilverSneakers, numerous members around the country cite positive results, including improved energy and weight, reduced feelings of depression and anxiety, better control of chronic conditions like diabetes and hypertension, and newfound friendships and camaraderie. With the proven ability to help older adults stay physically healthy and provide a great way for them to socialize, meet new friends and have fun, why wouldn't you try out the SilverSneakers Fitness Program?

To find out if you are eligible for SilverSneakers, please contact your health plan. For more information on the program, call toll-free 1.888.423.4632 or visit the SilverSneakers website at www.silversneakers.com.

About Healthways

Healthways is the leading provider of specialized, comprehensive Health and Care SupportSM solutions to help millions of people maintain or improve their health and, as a result, reduce overall healthcare costs. Healthways' solutions are designed to help healthy

individuals stay healthy, mitigate and slow the progression of disease associated with family or lifestyle risk factors and promote the best possible health for those already affected by disease. Our proven, evidence-based programs provide highly specific and personalized interventions for each individual in a population, irrespective of age or health status, and are delivered to consumers by phone, mail, internet and face-to-face interactions, both domestically and internationally. Healthways also provides a national, fully accredited complementary and alternative Health Provider Network, offering convenient access to individuals who seek health services outside of, and in conjunction with, the traditional healthcare system. For more information, please visit www.healthways.com.

ⁱ The study, “*Managed-Medicare Health Club Benefit and Reduced Health Care Costs among Older Adults*,” was funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and conducted by Group Health and the University of Washington (UW). The full report is available at www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2008/jan/07_0148.htm.

ⁱⁱ Study published in *Diabetes Care*, the journal of the American Diabetes Association; <http://care.diabetesjournals.org/content/vol31/issue8/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Studies published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*; [http://www.ajpm-online.net/article/S0749-3797\(08\)00381-4/abstract](http://www.ajpm-online.net/article/S0749-3797(08)00381-4/abstract)