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THE NATIONAL
COUNCIL ON
THE AGING

Part of Broader Effort to Encourage Healthier Seniors

NCOA Selects 10 Exceptional Physical Activity Programs

WASHINGTON, DC – After completing a national competition to identify best practices in physical activity programming for older adults, The National Council on the Aging (NCOA) has selected 10 programs to receive a cash award and recognition out of the over 1,100 that downloaded the application.

Each of the following will receive a \$1,000 award and certificate of achievement from NCOA. Three programs will also be invited to participate in a yearlong University of Illinois, Chicago (UIC) impact study to measure their health benefit.

- Chicago Department on Aging, Chicago, IL - Chicago Fitness Plus
- City of Aurora Senior Services, Aurora, CO
- Holy Cross Hospital, Community Health, Silver Spring, MD - Senior Fit
- Hospital of Saint Raphael, New Haven, CT - CareCard
- Johnson City Seniors Center, Johnson City, TN
- Madison School & Community Recreation (MSCR), Madison, WI - MSCR Goodman-Rotary 50+ Fitness Program
- MU School of Health Professions, Columbia, MO - The Health Connection
- Resources for Seniors, Inc., Raleigh, NC
- Senior Services of Seattle/King County, Seattle, WA - Lifetime Fitness Program
- The Capital Senior Center, Columbia, SC

Through October, a team of NCOA, UIC, and other staff are conducting onsite assessments to learn what makes these programs successful. They are looking at their physical activity programs, the program's ability to attract and retain hundreds of participants and the way in which an agency provides resources and long-term supports. What they find out will be used to help other agencies increase quality and capacity of their physical activity programs, and to garner support for state and national policies greatly needed for program expansion.

Also, much of what is learned will be published in future issue briefs that NCOA will publish and disseminate.

The top 10 programs were chosen following a thorough review process, which included the help of a cadre of advisors from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Aging Studies Branch and Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity), Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the Administration on Aging, the Healthy Aging Network: Prevention Research Centers, as well as members of the Aging Network and NCOA.

Lack of physical activity and poor diets contribute to chronic diseases and are the major causes of the obesity epidemic in this country. Despite overwhelming evidence demonstrating the now well-known benefits of physical activity, older adults have the lowest rates of activity among all adults. Nearly 75 percent of older Americans do not participate in any routine physical activities. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, few older Americans achieve the minimum recommended 30 or more minutes of physical activity on five or more days a week.

To help change this dynamic, NCOA has launched a three-year, multi-pronged effort to assist community service organizations in offering higher quality, accessible programs that will reduce the rates of physical inactivity among seniors in communities across the nation.

The NCOA project, which began last fall, addresses a number of strategies identified by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's *National Blueprint: Increasing Physical Activity Among Adults Age 50 and Older*. The project is funded by the foundation.

Founded in 1950, The National Council on the Aging is the nation's first organization dedicated to promoting the dignity, independence, well being, and contributions of older Americans. NCOA serves as a national voice and powerful advocate on behalf of older Americans. NCOA is an innovator, developing programs such as BenefitsCheckUp®, Foster Grandparents and Family Friends. NCOA is an activator, working with its thousands of community organization members nationwide to provide needed services to older people. For more information on NCOA, visit www.ncoa.org.