

Senior Services of Seattle/King County

An innovative approach that combines a physical activity program with nutrition services in ethnic communities has enabled a diverse population of older adults to remain physically active and connected to others. By offering the Lifetime Fitness Program (LFP) at 81 ethnic meal sites, Senior Services of Seattle/King County reached a larger and more diverse group of seniors with a healthy lifestyle message. Furthermore, the relationships they built with the local Area Agency on Aging and the University of Washington will ensure that the program is sustained.

The Lifetime Fitness Program is an evidence-based exercise program providing low-cost, one-hour supervised classes three times per week. In 2004, more than 300 older adults in ethnic meal sites in Latino, Korean, Vietnamese, Filipino, African-American, Asian, Native American, Hmong/Laotian, and Somalian communities participated.

Through participation in LFP, participants achieved statistically significant improvement on a variety of physical activity measures. What's more, participants were so satisfied with the combined nutrition and physical activity program that administrators found resources to continue the program after grant funding ended.

The key partners in this collaboration were the Senior Services of Seattle/King County, who manage the program, the Aging and Disability Services Administration (the local AAA) who provide the funding, Group Health Cooperative who provides LFP as a benefit for Medicare enrollees, and the University of Washington Health Promotion Research Center, who assists Senior Services in the evaluation of the program and dissemination to ethnic communities. Some program materials have been translated into three languages.

By working with other organizations serving ethnic communities and the community itself, Senior Services of Seattle/King County determined how to implement the LFP in each community. The LFP program is interactive and can easily be adapted to meet the needs of the participants. The program can be provided in places older adults frequent, such as community centers that are close to where they live. It has been replicated on a Native American reservation as well as at a Latino site in central Washington.

To ensure the ongoing partnership between physical activity and nutrition, LFP instructors attend annual nutrition education workshops. Congregate meal sites also provide educational materials on the importance of physical activity.