

On the Move

The Newsletter of COTA's Physical Activity Unit

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In this issue

	Page
Living Longer Living Stronger™ Update	1
<i>Moving More</i> : COTA's Peer Education Program	2
LIFE Lines: News from Leaders in Fitness Education for Older Adults	3
Healthy Older Participants	3
Web site profile: International Council on Active Ageing	4
Research Update: Maintaining participation of older adults in community-based physical activity programs	5

Important dates for your diary

- Tuesday 22 July 2008: Living Longer Living Stronger™ Annual Conference (see below)

Response to the first issue of *On the Move*

We have received a very positive response to our first newsletter—thank you to those of you who provided feedback.

What makes newsletters like this interesting and informative are contributions from people 'in the field'—like Sandy Rowe, whose inspiring story appears on page 2. We look forward to receiving items of interest from you for future issues.

Living Longer Living Stronger™ Update

2008 LLLS™ Conference Update

The LLLS™ Conference will be held from 10.00 am to 3.30 pm on Tuesday 22 July 2008 at Victoria University in Flinders St Melbourne.

This year the theme is 'Taking LLLS™ into the future'. There will be a general morning program featuring, keynote speaker Scott Way, Managing Director of PKF Organisation Development, who will challenge you to think about how your programs can continue to best meet the needs of the changing and varied demographic that we call 'older people' The afternoon program will comprise two blocks of three concurrent sessions.

Put this date in your diaries now and look out for further details on our web site www.cotavic.org.au . Conference brochures including the program will be available soon.

Strength training grants

COTA believes appropriately qualified, dedicated instructors are crucial to promote and maintain participation of older adults in effective progressive strength training programs.

Over the past twelve months, with the support of the Office of Senior Victorians (OSV), COTA has been able to provide assistance in the form of grants towards the completion of qualifications for about 100 people committed to delivering strength training programs for older people.

Sandy Rowe from Carlton 55+ Club was one person to benefit from such a grant. She talks about her experiences.

I am 58 years young, and have two sons and three grandchildren. I was previously a teacher for many years and also owned an aged care facility with my husband. Unfortunately my husband had Motor Neurone Disease and passed away five years ago.

I have worked at the Carlton 55+ Club (formerly Carlton Senior Citizens) for five years now and love working with older people. So, where to for me?

I wanted to make a difference in people's lives. I always loved a challenge and decided to return to study in a way that would make people happier, healthier and fitter – hence strength training.

I have just completed Cert III in Fitness with the CAE and Fitness Training for Older People at the YMCA. I believe so much in strength training to keep people living stronger and longer with better quality of life. At first seniors were a little sceptical about weights (small to start), stretching, cardio, and of course, lots of laughing. But after only two weeks, people were coming to me saying that they now felt so well and so much stronger. Whoopee!!!

When I began the course, I was quite scared because I had not studied for 35 years, and in fact it was hard initially. My brain had forgotten how to remember and retain information – shock, horror! I jumped in anyway because I didn't want to stagnate. Now I am back into the swing of learning again and even getting addicted to study because I am actually passing all these exams!!! If anyone is thinking of having a go, my advice is DO IT!

What next? More courses? Absolutely! In fact today I have enrolled in an *Innovative Swiss Ball* workshop. After that, who knows? My brain is now working again and I'm feeling on top of the world so, look out seniors – I'm ready to set the world on fire and maybe help make a difference in your lives.

I would love to see you all at the 55+ Club in Carlton.

Sandy Rowe



*Sandy Rowe, Instructor
Carlton 55+ Club*

Moving More: COTA's Peer Education Program

First group of educators trained and ready for action

The first training session for our new *Moving More* Peer Education program was conducted on Tuesday 12 February 2008 with a follow-up session on Tuesday 18 March.

The seven 'graduates', of whom two are already experienced speakers, each have a great capacity to motivate others to be more active through their own interesting stories and varied experiences. Most are already booked to do at least one session during April/May and we are receiving regular inquiries from community groups for speakers into June and beyond.

Next training program to begin in April

The next 'intake' for *Moving More* educators commences with COTA Orientation Sessions on Monday 14 April and Monday 21 April from 9.30am – 3pm, followed by *Moving More*-specific training on Tuesday 6 May from 10.00 am to 3.30pm and Tuesday 2 June from 10.00 am – 12.30pm. There are still a couple of vacancies at this stage.

Please continue to encourage anyone you consider to be a potential 'peer educator' to be involved—even if we cannot accommodate them in the next 'intake' there will be further opportunities later in the year. Contact Mitsuko (9655 2108 or enquire@cotavic.org.au) or Stephanie (9655 2105 or activemanager@cotavic.org.au) for further information.



L.I.F.E. Lines:

**News from Leaders in Fitness
Education for older adults**

It is just on a year since members of the former L.I.F.E. (Leaders in Fitness Education) for older adults Inc. were formally invited by COTA Victoria to become members of LIFE SIG (Special Interest Group), supported by COTA's Physical Activity Unit. In so doing, they would continue to receive support as fitness leaders of older adult exercise programs through up to date information on further education and training opportunities, along with the promotion of classes if required, and additional COTA membership benefits.

During the transition Kay Symes and Valerie Sayce, in conjunction with a working group of volunteer LIFE SIG members, have liaised and attended a number of meetings with Robyn Alexander (Physical Activity Project Officer) and Stephanie Harper (Physical Activity Manager) to establish a clear purpose and viable operating structure for LIFE, sustainable for the future.

The plan for 2008 is to focus on the priority, previously identified by fitness leaders, to have the opportunity to attend suitable workshops for education and training.

Planning is currently underway for a *Sensational Senior* Workshop, tentatively in June, to be provided by Kaye Deans and supported by COTA LIFE SIG. We would like to see as many LIFE SIG members as possible at this workshop as it will provide an opportunity for you to tell us how we can best support your work as fitness leaders for older adults. Further details regarding the workshop will be provided in the next edition of *On the Move* and on COTA Vic's website www.cotavic.org.au.

Kay Symes, LIFE SIG member

Healthy Older Participants: An update

Healthy Older Participants (HOP) aims to increase participation by older people in all aspects of sport and active recreation. Currently, our focus is in the Geelong area. The need to increase physical activity levels in people 65 years and over is also a key objective for Bellarine Community Health (BCH).

As such Robyn Alexander recently met with Brooke Connolly (Healthy Communities Team Leader, Leisure Networks), Louise van Herwerden (Health Promotion Coordinator, BCH) and Marg Ahern, (Primary Care Generalist Nurse, BCH) to discuss opportunities for collaboration on the Northern Bellarine Peninsula (St Leonards, Indented Heads and Portarlington)

Louise recently coordinated a study to estimate baseline physical activity levels and identify barriers to physical activity for older people living in the area. BCH workers carried out a 'door knock' survey, conducting face-to-face interviews with people in their own homes. The main findings, which will be used to guide pilot interventions in the North Bellarine area, include:

- The majority of older adults did not exercise for the recommended 30 minutes/day
- Health problems were the main barriers to physical activity
- Most physical activity was taking place at home or in the local environment, such as walking along the beach, around the block, or to the shops
- Walking, gardening, fishing and housework are popular activities
- People identified bowling, fishing, swimming and walking as preferred activities
- Only a small number of people were using sporting clubs or recreational facilities.

One of the next steps of this collaborative project will be to undertake further community consultation. This will assist in developing priorities for the expansion of physical activity opportunities and help to identify interested sporting clubs and/or programs.

Walking and gardening opportunities will be explored, as well as appropriate interventions for older adults with ill health, as proposed by the 'door knock' results.

Strategies to enhance the range and number of local opportunities will also be developed. This will include working with interested sport and active recreation services to encourage and assist them to offer appropriate, accessible and affordable activities for older people.

For more information contact Robyn Alexander, Physical Activity Unit, COTA Victoria on 9655 2113 or physicalactivity@cotavic.org.au

Web site profile: International Council on Active Ageing

The International Council on Active Aging (ICAA) is a US-based organisation supporting professionals in the 'retirement, assisted living, fitness, rehabilitation and wellness fields to dispel society's myths about aging'. The ICAA offer professionals:

- Membership and subscriptions
- A range of 'age-friendly' initiatives
- Networks and advocacy

Although US-based, the web site www.icaa.cc is worth a look, particularly 'Research and reports' in the Professional section (which, unlike much of the site, is accessible without ICAA membership). This section contains reports and information of relevance (or able to be adapted) to the Australian context interest to professionals working with older people, many of which can be downloaded free of charge. For example:

- *How to select an age-friendly personal trainer*
- Age-friendly facilities: 99 questions to assess your centre.

Research update: Maintaining participation of older adults in community-based physical activity programs

Not new research *per se* but the third in a series of 'issue briefs' in the **Best practice physical activity programs** from the US National Council on Aging. These issue briefs are useful evidence-based summaries, the first two in the series being:

- Motivating participants to be more physically active <http://www.healthyagingprograms.org/content.asp?sectionid=73&ElementID=305> , and
- Recruiting older adults into your physical activity programs <http://www.healthyagingprograms.org/content.asp?sectionid=73&ElementID=384> .

This third brief challenges the widespread perception of the inevitability of high attrition rates of for older adults in participating in physical activity programs and offers some strategies to promote both *retention* (motivating adults to continue) and *reengagement* (overcoming obstacles and restoring interest for those who have ceased to participate). Many of these will 'ring bells' for those of you running successful Living Longer Living Stronger™ (LLLS™) programs and most will seem obvious (or 'common sense'), yet it is surprising how easily their importance can be overlooked.

A summary of the key points follows.

Retention strategies:

To increase the likelihood of maintaining participation:

- *Celebrate milestones:* Recognise anniversaries and personal milestones, which can also be used as a means to consider the benefits of and contributions to the program by participants. The group format and social component of LLLS™ creates opportunities to incorporate this kind of celebration.
- *Use incentives:* Reward achievement of goals and regular and/or long-term participation. While tangible incentives (eg vouchers or coupons; water bottles or T-shirts) are nice, this can become expensive. Often something as simple as a certificate can serve a similar purpose at less cost and be equally valued by participants.
- *Minimise costs:* This one speaks for itself—many older people are on fixed and/or limited incomes and need to budget carefully. Again, this is the rationale for the criteria relating to session costs and payment structures for LLLS™.
- *Use a tracking or follow-up system:* A system whereby a change in participation is quickly identified and any issues are resolved helps to ensure your program is responsive to the needs of participants. It also ensures participants feel valued. Again, the group context of LLLS™ in which other participants often undertake this kind of follow-up is an example of how this can work at an informal level. However, the informal follow-up should be supported by the actions of program staff to ensure that participants feel that you also value their continued participation.
- *Enlist support of family, friends and others:* While it is not always feasible to involve family, creating an environment in which friendships can develop amongst participants, as occurs with LLLS™, helps to create a vital support network. Establishing networks with the health professionals who work with your participants, again encouraged in LLLS™, is also important.
- *Be patient and flexible:* It is important to work with each individual to support them in developing realistic and appropriate goals and to take account of changing circumstances. The quality, commitment and capacity of instructors to empathise with participants are critical and their involvement in assessing and reviewing the progress of each participant is considered an integral component of LLLS™.

Re-engagement strategies

When encouraging participants to return to the program after an absence:

- *Be understanding:* Avoid judging or labelling participants who stop participating—you may never know (any or all of) the factors that contributed to their absence. It is important that the person believes that you care about them (rather than the impact that their absence may have on you or the program). Again, the social support that develops in the group context of LLLS™ can assist here in that participants are more likely to feel they have been ‘missed’ when they return after a break in participation
- *Be supportive but persistent:* Emphasise the need for a ‘new start’ (and new goals) rather than dwelling on what has happened in the past. Be positive and optimistic but ensure the participant understand that you are sensitive to what the fact that there are other things going on in their lives that have nothing to do with you or your program. Other participants can also be enlisted to foster a sense of support and encouragement.

In conclusion, programs that are successful in maintaining the participation of older adults often do so because they foster a sense of ‘community’ amongst participants and staff. It is important to remember that while for us, the physical activity levels of the participants may be the priority, for many participants it is not the only (or even the primary) reason for their ongoing involvement.

You can download the full text of this issue brief at

<http://www.healthyagingprograms.org/content.asp?sectionid=73>

About COTA Vic

Our mission is to mobilise older people and those who work with them to age well in a just society.

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www.cotavic.org.au

Next edition of *On the Move*

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Please contact us if you have anything to contribute

Closing date for next edition: Friday 9 May