

Fitness, friendship, and fun in your community

A retirement community in Schaumburg, Ill., has really stepped it up when it comes to fitness, and you can too.

Award-winning Friendship Village offered a month-long fitness initiative to get residents moving on wellness goals. Let's face it: sometimes you need a little nudge to take that first step. The senior-living apartment drew participants to its two fitness centers and encouraged them to use pedometers or other fitness monitors to measure their progress. The multiunit living facility helped residents in developing a walking program and setting performance goals.

Little incentives were provided along the way to offer bragging rights to high performers, and targets were established by fitness staff members for the entire group so residents could participate at their own comfort level and contribute to the group's weekly accomplishments. It was a very low-cost, high-yield endeavor that any commercial residential business could implement. You will want to be sure to ask your insurance advisor to determine if you have the proper coverage for the type of activities your sponsor.

Encouraging increased movement not only helps the body and mind, it helps the community by providing members a common set of goals, time to do something together and a topic of conversation that can spark deeper relationships. Your residents might participate by climbing stairs, walking the grounds, using indoor fitness equipment or setting up their own exercise group. With the support of the property manager, you might also develop onsite classes in yoga or water aerobics. Friendship Village even offered Wii bowling!

Fitness isn't just for adults either. If your residents include children, consider offering a companion activity for kids that allows adults to exercise while their children participate in a nearby, supervised program that helps them get off the couch and into a positive group setting. Like Friendship Village, you might want to offer a short-term organized event that simply motivates residents to start or accelerate their exercise regimen then follow up with activities based on their interests. What an inexpensive and positive way to build community-wide relationships and health! Maybe it's the season to put a "spring in your step."

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