

**AoA Older Americans Month 2008 Program Champions Submission Form**



Name of Project: **Over 60 and Getting Fit**

Name of Organization: College of Southern Idaho, Health and Physical Education Department  
Twin Falls, Idaho

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### Program Description: The Over 60 and Getting Fit

The **Over 60 and Getting Fit** program best illustrates the Administration on Aging's priority area of "Making behavioral changes in lifestyles that can reduce risk of disease, disability and injury" for older people. The subtitle for the **Over 60 and Getting Fit** program is "Regular exercise is a vital part of healthy aging." Staying active becomes more important than ever during the second half of life. What was once considered to be "normal aging" we now know may have more to do with a sedentary lifestyle than it does with the actual aging process. The **Over 60 and Getting Fit** program targets people 60 and older and emphasizes walking as low-impact cardiovascular movement, stretching and resistance training in ten locations within several counties of southern Idaho. The program is free and is geared to serve older adults with varying levels of functioning. This semester 900 people are enrolled in classes throughout the region. Participants range in age from 60 to 96 years. The program has been sustained for over 25 years through public contributions and support of Older American Act funds through the Area IV Agency on Aging. Class leaders are recruited as adjunct faculty for the College of Southern Idaho, receive comprehensive training, and are paid for their time.

The goals of the program which are also proven benefits to the participants include:

- Maintain or improve cardiovascular functioning
- Increase muscular strength and endurance
- Help preserve and restore flexibility and range of motion
- Improve posture and mobility
- Decrease anxiety about falling
- Provide a social experience within a safe environment for appropriate physical activity
- Maintain or improve ability to do activities of daily living

There are other benefits of the **Over 60 and Getting Fit** which have become evident as the program has evolved. First, the program serves as a catalyst for health education from many community resources. Also, there is a social dimension to the course and participants develop friendships that last over time, which prompt travel education adventures, other social connections and even marriage for a few. For instance, twenty-one participants are going to Greece together in May 2008. Finally, the program provides a conduit for intergenerational and civic engagement opportunities. During classes class leaders announce community and school (many classes held in local schools) volunteer opportunities. Many participants commit to one time and ongoing volunteer opportunities, including supporting food drives, mentoring youth, and working with college students to fulfill their coursework.

Southern Idaho is a vast region of rural communities. In order to reach older persons throughout the region, many partnerships have been formed. Key partners for the **Over 60 and Getting Fit** program are the College of Southern Idaho, the Office on Aging (Area IV Agency on Aging), local school districts of Filer, Buhl, Shoshone, Hagerman and in Gooding, with the Idaho State School for the Blind, and local community Recreation Departments of communities Rupert and Hailey, among others.

The **Over 60 and Getting Fit** program conducts periodic testing for effectiveness to the participants of the program. Results of testing consistently produce the following results: 1) statistically significant functional fitness improvement; 2) self-reported subjective improvement in physical and quality-of-life indicators; 3) the studies have increased level of motivation among participants; and 4) there is no variation in results among the testing sites.

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The website for a description of the **Over 60 and Getting Fit** course as is taught at the College of Southern Idaho is <http://education.csi.edu/TE/syllaweb/2006/fall/PHYE144.doc> The free course is taught at multiple sites, including the College, and is college-accredited.

For more information about this program, please contact Jan Mittleider at 208-732-6488 or [JMittleider@csi.edu](mailto:JMittleider@csi.edu)