



Why Wouldn't Communities Do This?

By Susan Saldibar

I just signed up for something that I'm kind of stoked about. It's [Aegis Therapies](#) (a Senior Housing Forum partner) WALK! program, to celebrate [Active Aging Week](#), September 24-30th. WALK! is a program for communities, businesses and individuals, with activities that fit all ages and abilities. So, basically, there is no excuse for a not-in-great-shape boomer, like me not to participate.

And, it's free.

I found out about WALK! after speaking with Aegis' Kathryn Abrahamson, Director of Communications and PR and Shane Malecha, Clinical Specialist. This is the ninth year of the program and, by the looks of it, it's become pretty popular. Apparently, hundreds of communities and organizations across the country participate. And for a good reason.

WALK! is about much more than walking.

Instead of just packing a lot of exercise and "feel good" activities into a program format, Aegis has built WALK! strategically to cover the key dimensions of their wellness program. "This is a true mission driven event for Aegis to get everyone moving and thinking about wellness and active aging all year long," says Kathryn.

I asked Kathryn and Shane to give me the Reader's Digest version of the program. Here are the seven dimensions of wellness, according to EnerG® by Aegis program:

1. **Physical Wellness:** Daily exercise routines that cover a full range of abilities.
2. **Intellectual Wellness:** A trove of trivia questions, puzzles and brain teasers.
3. **Emotional Wellness:** Regimens for muscle relaxation and self-massage.
4. **Spiritual Wellness:** 15-minute guided meditation and deep breathing exercise techniques.
5. **Occupational Wellness:** A fun series of "name the occupation" matching famous people with occupations and discussion of favorite activities associated with wellness dimensions.
6. **Social Wellness:** Focus on the importance of socializing with others. Covers relationships, self-respect and support systems.
7. **Environmental Wellness:** Actions and activities designed to encourage participants to enjoy and take care of their surroundings.

For communities, they have created a comprehensive packet of programs that guides you through putting together a full week of events, with tips how to organize and execute each one.

What if you did this all year long?

After signing up for the program, I couldn't help but wonder why programs like this don't just continue all year long? It's great, of course, to have Active Aging Week and other awareness weeks. And, one could also argue that most communities already have activity and exercise programs. Yet I wonder how comprehensive they are? How many dimensions of wellness do they cover? Imagine if you did all of this, even once a month? What kind of residents and families would your community attract? As Kathryn notes, "Really the purpose of WALK! is to give communities, groups and individuals a jumping off point to help them understand how easy it is to incorporate physical activity and wellness into their daily lives."

Makes a lot of sense. And, as a boomer with a 92-year old mom, I like where wellness is going these days. Programs like WALK! (and I'm sure there are others) remind us that residents and their families are taking wellness programs seriously. Hopefully communities which serve them are too.

I've only scratched the surface of the WALK! program here. For more information, and to register, here is the [link](#).



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