Fitness class in Bannock County results in seniors increasing physical activity

AT A GLANCE
Persons over 65 years of age are more prone to falls. Fit and Fall Proof™ class participants showed improvement in mobility and balance.

The Situation
Falls are a concerning health issue for older adults and are a major cause of hip fractures, with half of those persons never regaining their previous level of function. Most falls are preventable. Extension educators are key providers of fitness programs to improve overall health.

Our Response
UI Extension in Bannock County did not offer a fitness class for seniors. As a new family and consumer sciences educator, I partnered with Southeastern Idaho Public Health to be trained and then offer free Fit and Fall Proof™ classes. From 2015-2016, I taught 10-week bi-weekly sessions three times per year. The course was funded by the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. Michelle Butterfield, health education specialist senior at the Southeastern Idaho Public Health, provided training, exercise equipment, and other supplies. The classes were advertised in the local newspaper, on social media and with fliers distributed to locations throughout the area. Senior citizens from Bannock County and surrounding areas attended the classes. Participants became so friendly with each other they invited their friends so formal advertising was no longer necessary to hold a full class. A participant described her experience, “my range of motion after shoulder surgery has improved from attending these classes so now I have less physical therapy appointments scheduled.”

Program Outcomes
Fit and Fall Proof™ classes challenge the visual and hearing abilities as the participants watch class leaders demonstrate the actions and then do the activity at the level of their ability. Chairs are available for those persons who need to sit while participating in the physical activity. Balance and postural training exercises improve sensory systems and may reduce risk of falling. The confidence gained in a small group setting reduces
the risk of falling and encourages more activity in other aspects of life. An eight foot Timed Up and Go Test (TUG) is performed the first and last day of the 10-week course. This measures the ability to rise from a seated position, walk eight feet, turn around a cone, walk back to the chair and return to a seated position. Benefits of the program were immediate, with many friendships developed and participants wanting to become instructors. Two women replaced my leadership by teaching the class in Bannock County. Improvement in mobility and functional balance was impacted as tested by the TUG test, as noted in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TUG Test</th>
<th>Participant improvement n(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015, n=3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016, n=7</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017, n=31</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Future

Fit and Fall Proof™ classes continue to be taught throughout southeast Idaho, most of them by trained community members.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Julie Buck, Family and Consumer Sciences Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Bingham County • 208-785-8060 • jhuck@uidaho.edu

Michelle Butterfield, Health Education Specialist Senior • Southeastern Idaho Public Health Department, Pocatello • 208-239-5207 • mbutterfield@siph.idaho.gov

23-18-jbuck-senior-activity • 8/18