

CHAPTER 11

RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to describe several recreational program ideas appropriate for elders in a variety of settings and communities. The programs discussed in this chapter are travel programs; camping; Road Scholar (formerly Exploritas and Elderhostel) and other educational programs; adventure/high-risk activities; Senior Games, Senior Olympics, and other sports programs; Elderfest; volunteering; and programs for rural elders. Unlike most of the other chapters of the book that focus on activities primarily for adults aged 80 and over, many of the programs described in this chapter are popular with younger retirees, and have minimum age requirements of 55 or even 50.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this chapter, the reader will be able to

- identify at least three different types of travel programs for elders,
- identify three goals and objectives for senior adult camping programs,
- identify three practical considerations in providing camping programs for elders,
- identify three program ideas for senior adult camps,
- describe what the Road Scholar program is,
- identify at least three adventure/high-risk activity ideas appropriate for elders,
- describe at least three successful sports programs for elders,
- describe what an Elderfest is,
- identify at least three practical considerations/procedures in organizing an Elderfest,
- identify at least three different types of volunteering programs for elders,

- identify at least three successful recreation programs for rural elders, and
- identify at least three special considerations in providing leisure services for rural elders.

TRAVEL PROGRAMS

Travel is a very popular leisure activity for older adults. Nimrod (2008) stresses the importance of tourism in leisure in later life. Research (Patterson, 2002) indicates that travel is the number one leisure activity that people want to engage in when they retire. Travel is an important and meaningful leisure activity for older Americans, and they tend to travel more often, further, and stay for longer than do younger adults (Gibson, 2002).

There are a variety of motivations for older adults to travel. These motivations determine the type of destination activities during travels. Nimrod and Rotem (2010) classify these motivations/behaviors into four types:

1. **Learners** are those who seek educational trips and gravitate more to group travel.
2. **Urban** are those who seek more city-based activities.
3. **Entertained** are those who seek more physical and simple pleasures.
4. **Spiritual** are those who seek spiritual benefits from travel experiences and are more inclined to travel on their own as opposed to group travel.

Penalta and Uysal (1992) discuss several factors influencing elders' travel patterns and potential obstacles to taking trips.

Safety

Safety has been identified as the greatest factor influencing travel plans of elders. Elders desire to travel to places where they feel safe and secure. Travel agents and tour promoters need to emphasize safety and security in their advertisements and make necessary arrangements for older travelers to be in a safe and secure environment once their destination has been reached.

Pets

Having a pet can be a barrier to traveling and is a factor that limits the number and frequency of trips made by elders. To alleviate this problem, some parks and resorts now offer kennel services for visitors at a minimal charge. Some hotels and motels allow pets in their rooms. But for those who do not wish to travel with their pet, pet-sitting services would be helpful.

House-sitting Services

Like pet-sitting, house-sitting services would enable more elders to feel capable or more comfortable with the idea of traveling away from home.

Accessibility

Common physical limitations of elders should be considered in making travel services and destinations more comfortable for elders. For example, seats that are placed 18 inches from the floor are more conducive for proper posture and drawers, doorknobs, and faucets that are easily opened with little use of wrist motion are helpful for elders.

Intergenerational Travel

Elders seem to desire to travel with their grandchildren and are doing so in increasing numbers.

Another factor to consider in attempting to encourage more elders to travel is the large number of elders who have a chronically ill or impaired spouse. Physical assistance needs to be available while traveling, otherwise taking trips is impractical. For example, bathrooms that are big enough for an elder and their helping spouse to fit into are needed on planes, buses, and trains. At an airport or other transfer point, services need to be available to help elders in the bathroom (e.g., a man can't easily enter the women's bathroom to assist his wife), to carry their luggage, and to get to their next destination. Such services would enable more elders to travel and help them to have peace of mind while they are en route to their destination. In addition, short-term nursing homes and senior day care centers in partnership with major resorts and hotels would be very attractive to older adults who have a low functioning spouse (Leitner, 1999).

A popular way for elders to travel is in groups. According to Hudson and Rich (1993), some of the advantages of group travel for elders are listed below:

- They meet others with similar interests.
- They are able to enjoy worry-free travel (all arrangements are made for them).
- It is cost effective, due to group discounts that are widely offered.

Hudson and Rich (1993) also identified several benefits to be reaped by park and recreation departments that sponsor group trips:

- It can be a source of revenue for the agency.
- It helps to diversify their program.
- It makes the agency more visible.
- It provides opportunities for intergenerational programming.
- It increases and diversifies the agency's clientele.

Some guidelines for designing group tours for elders are offered by Gay (1999):

- Ask potential customers if they require a special diet or have a medical condition requiring prescription medication, and inform tour leaders of these needs to ensure that they are met.
- Try to schedule tours during off and shoulder seasons in order to take advantage of lower prices and smaller crowds.
- Minimize the number of one-night stays in hotels, as the process of checking in and out and packing and unpacking is an unpleasant chore for many older adults.
- Older adults tend to like tours that include all or most of the meals. Preferably, breakfast and lunch should be the big meals of the day and the evening meal should be a light one consisting of soup, salads, and fruits.
- Try to schedule shorter and slower traveling periods for older adults.
- Smaller buses and vans have the advantage of being able to travel down more narrow, interesting roads. Also, because of hearing problems that are so common among older adults, the tour guide has a better chance of being understood by everyone in a smaller vehicle than in a large tour bus, even with a microphone and good sound system.

According to Hudson and Rich (1993), especially popular destinations for elders are historical sites, natural wonders, seashores and beaches, and special events and festivals. Clements and Barret (1993) describe the special benefits of museum trips for elders, especially in fostering creativity. They describe a museum experience that has three components to it:

1. A pre-museum lesson to acquaint elders with the exhibitions they will be seeing, and hands-on experiences for those with developmental disabilities.
2. The museum field trip.
3. A post-museum lesson in which elders actually work with the medium seen in the exhibition (e.g., clay). Creativity and laughter are key elements of the lesson.

Trips can also be used as a means to facilitate therapeutic reminiscing. Elders can be encouraged to keep diaries, make scrapbooks, or draw pictures of situations or objects that evoke pleasant memories. The recreation therapist can then try to determine places to visit, such as historical sites, that would facilitate reminiscing and good feelings. Places that would stir unhappy recollections would be avoided.

Intergenerational travel is the business of Grandtravel, a travel agency that offers “very special vacations for grandparents and grandchildren.” The advantages of grandtravel are obvious; it not only gives grandparents and grandchildren time to enjoy each other’s company and strengthen their ties, but it also provides a respite from child care for busy parents and enables

children to take advantage of their school vacation time and see places that their working parents are unable to take them to. The Grandtravel journeys include opportunities for grandparents and grandchildren to relate to each other on an intergenerational level and connect with the family's past, private time alone together for grandparents and their grandchildren, and peer activities where grandchildren enjoy activities with other grandchildren and grandparents are with the other grandparents. Grandtravel destinations include Washington, DC; Alaska; France; Holland; New England; England; and Scotland.

Intergenerational travel cannot only be enjoyable for children and older adults, but it can also be used as a tool to promote peace. Research findings (Leitner, 1999) indicating that a program of intergenerational tourism caused the attitudes of Arab and Jewish elders to become more positive toward each other is an example of how such a program can help to promote peaceful relations.

The Seniors Vacation And Home Exchange (www.seniorshomeexchange.com) allows elders to do a straight vacation exchange of their homes. They can also exchange hospitality vacations. Elders can visit with a peer in another location and, in return, the hosts can visit the guests at a later date.

Backman, Backman, and Silverberg (1999) discuss the popularity of senior nature-based travels. Expenditures on nature-based tourism activities like wildlife viewing and photography by older adults are extensive. Moisey and Bichis (1999) report that senior nature tourists are more likely to be motivated by activities that promote good health and physical fitness, their understanding of nature, and their personal enrichment.

Similarly, Patterson (2002) suggests that adventure tourism for older adults is likely to become increasingly popular as more elders seek physically challenging and adrenaline-driven activities such as whitewater rafting, horse riding, hiking, skiing, scuba diving, mountain biking, backpacking, and camping.

As discussed in the next section of the chapter, camping is already a popular adventure travel activity for older adults, and the extent of physical challenge and adrenaline rush derived from it varies greatly depending on the type of camping.

CAMPING

Senior adult camping has been successful throughout the country. Topics discussed in this section of the chapter include philosophy, practical considerations, and program ideas for senior adult camping.

Philosophy

As documented by research studies cited in the first chapter of the book, elders can and do enjoy outdoor recreation experiences. Even elders with disabilities can enjoy a camping experience, as long as necessary adaptations are provided. Chenery (1987) reported that elders who were nearly blind, who used canes to walk, and had advanced heart problems were able to participate in and enjoy a camping experience. According to Chenery (1987), the benefits of camping for elders include change of routine, refreshing memories, gaining new perspectives, and renewal of the spirit and physical abilities. Some appropriate goals and objectives for a senior adult camp are (Armstrong, 1979)

- to provide opportunities for social interaction,
- to expose elders to new leisure activities in order to develop new activity interests and skills,
- to learn about and gain a greater appreciation for nature,
- to provide enjoyable activities that are physically and mentally stimulating, and
- to provide the opportunity to experience an aesthetically pleasing environment (an important objective, especially for urban elders).

Practical Considerations

Armstrong (1979) identifies several considerations in planning a successful camping experience for elders:

1. Involve the participants in the planning process.
2. Expose participants to new activities. Elders are as willing to learn as any other people.
3. Schedule religious activities such as morning worship and quiet times before meals.
4. As much as possible, provide historical background information on the places to be visited.
5. Take photographs during the outing; many people enjoy seeing pictures of themselves in camp after the experience is over.
6. Make provisions for those who have special dietary needs.
7. Schedule an orientation meeting for all staff and participants to be held approximately two weeks before the trip. The meeting gives participants a chance to meet staff and ask questions. Suggested topics for the orientation meeting are general camp policies, necessary items to bring to camp, health and safety considerations, emergency procedures, and schedule of activities. Participants can be asked to complete a health questionnaire and a leisure interest inventory.
8. Determine methods of evaluating camp programs before the camp begins.

Hupp (1987) states that camps for third agers do not require a large number of staff and personnel because elders can be included in the staffing of such programs. Another advantage that older campers have is that they tend to not have the same time constraints that other camper populations have.

Program Ideas

Leisure interest inventories should be reviewed to obtain program ideas. Armstrong (1979) identifies numerous sample program ideas:

- arts and crafts, such as sketching, oil painting, puppetry, and woodworking;
- sports and games, such as volleyball, horseshoes, table games, canoeing, Frisbee, yoga, and swimming;
- music and drama activities, such as singing, folk dancing, and short sketches;
- special events, such as a Cabaret night, travelogues, and an international dinner;
- nature activities, such as bird walks, all day hikes, night hikes, and environmental education discussions and hikes; and
- sightseeing trips to points of interest.

Another program idea is to have an intergenerational camping experience. Hayden (1988) discusses the ECHO (Elder Campers Helping Others) model, in which elders share some time and life experiences with children in a variety of summer camp settings, ranging from environmental awareness camps for 9- to 11-year-old 4-H members, to developmental day camps for children aged 6 to 14, to a special camp for children being treated for cancer and kidney disease. Similar to the Grandtravel concept, it would also be possible to have Grandcamps, where grandparents and grandchildren could enjoy a group intergenerational camping experience. To conclude this section of the chapter, Exercise 11.1 is presented to provide an opportunity to further develop the idea of Grandcamps. Base your answers to the exercise on the information presented earlier in the chapter on camping for third agers and on Grandtravel as well as the information on intergenerational programming presented in Chapter 10.

ROAD SCHOLAR (FORMERLY EXPLORITAS AND ELDERHOSTEL) AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Road Scholar, though vastly different from camping, does share a few similarities. Participants are exposed to new experiences and are provided with numerous opportunities for enjoyable mentally and physically stimulating recreation activities. Also, Elderhostelers are provided with excellent opportunities for socialization. In addition, program participants must adapt to less than luxury living accommodations during their stay.

Road Scholar began by the name of Elderhostel at the University of New Hampshire in 1975 based on the idea of providing elders with a mentally and

Exercise 11.1

Planning a “Grandcamp”

Instructions:

1. Assume that there are at least 20 grandparents and 20 grandchildren in your group.
2. In the first column, list an activity schedule (with approximate times) for the first day of the camp; in the second column, do the same for the second day of the camp.
3. Each day’s plan should include at least one special event or main activity; describe this activity in detail, including staff and setup considerations, time needed, detailed plans for the activity, and leadership considerations.

Day #1 Activities

Day # 2 Activities

Details of the main activity of the day

Details of the main activity of the day

physically stimulating experience. Road Scholar participants live on a college campus for a one-week period during which they attend educational classes and participate in a variety of recreational activities on campus. Thus, Road Scholar is a unique, one-week college experience program designed especially for persons aged 55 and older. Research (Goggin, 1999) indicates that the motivation for learning for almost 80% of Road Scholar/Elderhostel participants is “the sheer joy of it.”

Road Scholar/Elderhostel has been a popular program. In 1978, 200 colleges and universities offered programs in 38 states; by 1984, over 700 colleges and universities offered programs in the U.S. and overseas. According to Gurewitsch (1980), 13,000 elders enrolled in Elderhostel programs in 1979, and approximately 20,000 enrolled in 1980. Elderhostel has become much more popular, with approximately 200,000 program attendees in 2002 in thousands of different programs located in over 90 countries (Elderhostel, 2003).

Most programs are limited to 35 to 40 participants. Most U.S. programs are one week in length and international programs are usually two to three weeks in duration (Goggin, 1999). Elderhostel, Inc., which runs the Road Scholar programs, is a nonprofit international organization, and program costs are kept as low as possible. Program fees include registration costs, six nights accommodation, all meals, five days of classes, and a variety of extracurricular activities. The Elderhostel office is responsible for coordinating all of the available programs, registering participants, disseminating information, and publishing catalogs.

It seems as if there is an ever-expanding need for new Elderhostel programs. If your college or university does not have an Elderhostel program, perhaps one can be started. Exercise 11.2 gives you an opportunity to generate ideas for a new Road Scholar program at your college or university.

Simons (1991) describes an interesting educational program for elders in France called “le brain jogging.” The program takes place in private clubs and clinics, homes and hospitals for the aged. The largest network of courses is a program named Eureka, which has workshops in more than 120 towns and villages. The courses consist of 15 weekly sessions of two hours each. There are usually 20 to 25 elders in a group. The sessions begin with a discussion of the week’s news to stimulate curiosity and communication with others. Mental jogging exercises follow the discussion. The exercises involve perception, concentration, reasoning, speech, and imagination. Program counselors encourage participants to do homework such as going shopping without a list, or memorizing a train schedule or poem. They also encourage elders to play bridge, chess, and other mentally stimulating games.

In the U.S., hundreds of thousands of older Americans are enrolled in college courses, including at the graduate and professional levels. Thousands more are attending lectures, auditing classes, and forming study groups. According to Beck, Glick, Gordon, and Picker (1991), the vast majority of elders are attracted

Exercise 11.2

Designing a Road Scholar Program

Instructions:

1. First, look through a recent Road Scholar catalog. You can find information about the programs at www.roadscholar.org or by calling 1-800-454-5768. Determine a program theme that is not currently being offered but which you feel would be popular with elders.
2. List the classes to be offered on your selected theme and identify local people who could teach the classes.
3. Identify appropriate extracurricular activities to be offered and staff needed.
4. Make some phone calls to determine the approximate cost per person of housing and meals.

Program theme: _____

List of classes to be offered: _____

Personnel (describe) needed to teach the classes: _____

Extracurricular activities to be offered: _____

Staff needed for extracurricular activities: _____

Approximate cost per person of housing and meals: _____

back to school for the sheer joy of learning. Recognizing that elders are a growth market, universities are now designing whole divisions for adult learners. A fast-growing program is the Learning in Retirement study group that is designed specifically for elders. Members of the program pay an annual fee and design their own courses, recruiting teachers from among their peers. College courses for elders are popular in other countries besides the U.S. In Israel, Bar-Ilan University's program of courses for older adults attracts thousands of enrollees. In China, The University for the Aged has a vast network of institutions for elders. One of its star students was Qian Likun, aged 102. One of the subjects he was studying was health care for the elderly, which helped him care for his 81-year-old daughter. As described in the next section, universities have more to offer elders than just courses and workshops.

ADVENTURE/HIGH-RISK ACTIVITIES

Older adults are willing to experience the thrills and adventures of activities that would be classified as high risk. Johnson (2010) reports that there is a great increase in participation in adventure-based recreational activities by older adults and that the global travel and leisure industry is scrambling to keep up with the demand. Adventure tours have become increasingly popular, even with the 85-and-over age group. Older adults can learn a great deal from participation in such activities because they involve tasks that are physically and/or mentally challenging. Activities can be perceived as being high risk in nature and carry the benefits associated with high-risk activities, yet in actuality be executed in such a way that safety is assured. Alessio, Grier, and Leviton (1989) state that the opportunity to participate in high-risk activities should not be limited to only the fittest elders, but also should emphasize that simply avoiding injury is not enough because a near-miss incident that causes anxiety could be harmful to someone with a heart condition. Therefore, extra precaution needs to be taken with elders who have heart conditions, respiratory ailments, osteoporosis, hypertension, and other health problems. Assistance should always be immediately available. Alessio et al. (1989) discuss some examples of appropriate high-risk activities for elders.

Ropes Challenge and Initiatives Courses

These facilities have been constructed at schools, camps, parks, and other recreational facilities across the U.S. The courses have eight or 10 events. Some are elaborate courses that have dozens of cables, telephone poles, beams, and towers up to 75 feet high and that cross deep ravines, while others are simply constructed of ropes and boards. The courses can be adapted to meet the needs of different age groups and levels of functioning.

The course should begin with an orientation designed to allay fears regarding safety. Next, "icebreaker" activities should be led to encourage interaction among the group (usually 10 to 12 in size). The icebreaking activities can

also be helpful to the instructor/leader in identifying limitations of the group members. For example, an elder who obviously has weak upper-body muscle tone should avoid activities for which arm strength is important. Special body support devices, use of large handles and straps to ensure proper grip, and brightly colored materials should be used in order to maximize the safety of the participants. With proper precaution, ropes challenge and initiatives courses can be safely participated in and enjoyed by elders.

Waterfront Activities

Some of the possibilities in this category include swinging on a rope into a swimming lake, canoeing, rafting, kayaking, and sailboating. Although these activities are not necessarily dangerous, they do provide a sense of adventure and excitement.

Dry Land Activities

Not all elders like to be in the air, hanging on ropes, or in the water! Some dry land high-risk activity possibilities are mountain hiking, biking, caving, riflery, and archery. In addition, activities that are not high risk but are adventurous in nature, such as a treasure hunt or other group problem-solving task, can be exciting and help build the confidence needed for participation in more challenging activities.

In summary, a variety of high-risk activities can be successful with elders. As discussed in the next section, some sports activities that might be classified as high risk, such as downhill skiing, are gaining increasing popularity with elders.

SPORTS PROGRAMS

In 1977, a ski school in Keystone, Colorado started the first learn-to-ski program for adults aged 50 and over (“Never Too Late,” 1977). The learn-to-ski program consisted of a package including accommodations, lift tickets, lessons, a race, and a party. Every morning throughout the week, warm-up exercises, followed by two-hour group ski lessons were scheduled. Afternoons were devoted to cross-country ski tours, mountain ecology sessions, videotaping sessions to improve skiing techniques, and opportunities for relaxation in the swimming pool or whirlpool. Breckenridge ski resort hosted the 14th annual senior winter games in February 1994 (Rosen, 1993). At age 87, Lloyd Lambert ran an organization called “70+,” a club for skiers aged 70 and over. Both 70+ and another organization called “Over The Hill Gang” sponsor ski trips throughout the world for their members. Over The Hill Gang, International (www.othgi.com) offers “camaraderie, discounts and great trips for people 50 and over!” Their goal is to share the experience of skiing and other outdoor activities with other physically active older adults. Membership is available to individuals and to couples as long as one spouse is at least 50. More than 3,000

people in the U.S. and around the world enjoy OTHGI membership.

Tennis is an increasingly popular sport with older adults. The United States Tennis Association (USTA) sponsors tennis programs for older adults. Information is available on their website: www.usta.com. The National Senior Games Association (www.nsga.com) also offers tennis programs for older adults. The NSGA is a nonprofit member of the United States Olympic Committee dedicated to motivating senior men and women to lead a healthy lifestyle through the senior games movement. They govern the Summer National Senior Games, the largest multisport event in the world for seniors, and other national senior athletic events. They also serve as an umbrella for member state organizations across the United States that host Senior Games or Senior Olympics. The NSGA supports and sanctions these state organizations so that adults can participate in their state in events year-round that will keep them motivated to achieve greater value and quality in their lives by staying healthy, active, and fit.

The 2011 Summer National Senior Games was held June 16-30, 2011 in Houston, Texas. Competition was held in archery, badminton, basketball, bowling, cycling, golf, horseshoes, race walk, racquetball, road race, shuffleboard, softball, swimming, table tennis, tennis, track and field, triathlon, and volleyball. The 2013 Summer National Senior Games will be held in Cleveland, Ohio.

The Senior Olympics emphasizes that winning is not the only measure of success; all participants are recognized for their involvement. The event is an opportunity for people aged 50 to 120 to compete against same-age peers in a variety of sports. Provost (1981) presented guidelines for developing local Senior Olympics programs that are still applicable:

1. Establish an executive committee responsible for establishing policies and procedures, preparing a budget, and publicizing the event. A representative cross-section of the community should be on the committee, including recreation and physical education students and faculty, members of service clubs and the chamber of commerce, media personnel, and representatives of senior citizens' clubs and organizations.
2. Expenditures should be minimal. Use of athletic facilities should be obtained at no cost. Volunteer staff should be able to plan and lead all activities. Donations of awards and prizes for the events should be solicited from local businesses. Any other expenses should be covered by entry fees. Entry fees should be set as low as possible to ensure maximal participation, yet be set high enough to ensure that all expenses are covered.
3. Select sports for the program that are most popular in the community. International rules for all sports should be used wherever possible and distances should be measured in meters.

4. Keep complete and accurate records of results in all events, and develop a record book that will give each year's participants goals to strive to attain.
5. Age classifications for events should begin with the age 20 to 24 category, and continue in five-year increments, without an upper limit. If there are a large number of entries in one age category, then divide the category on the basis of ability (e.g., A, B, C, and D levels). The winners of one ability level should compete in the next ability level in the next Olympics.
6. Modifications in rules and equipment (reducing heights, weights, game time, etc.) should be made as necessary.
7. All participants should be required to submit a medical release form from their physician. A doctor and/or nurse should be available at most events.
8. Liability and accident insurance coverage should be obtained.

There is also a need for sports programs for elders who are at a lower level of functioning. One example of a successful program is a home-delivered bowling alley. The "alley" is a 30-foot carpet with marked spaces on which to place the plastic pins. The rubber bowling ball weighs only three pounds. The beauty of the program is that elders can participate right in the retirement home or nursing home, and even those who are frail can succeed at it.

In summary, there are a variety of options available for elders who enjoy sports.

ELDERFEST

Elders have many talents besides athletic prowess, and Elderfest is a festive community event designed to display some of these talents to the community in order to destroy myths and stereotypes of aging. An Elderfest can be a one-day, two-day, or even a week-long event and involves the display of the arts and crafts, hobby, dance, and musical talents of local elders, for people of all ages in the community to view. In Chico, California, the event began in 1981 with 300 participants but quickly grew to an annual one-day event involving over 1,000 people. The following guidelines for coordinating a local Elderfest are based on the success of the Chico Elderfests (Leitner, 1983):

1. Organization of the event should be intergenerational in nature. In Chico, the event was coordinated by local elders; students from the CSU, Chico Department of Recreation and Parks Management; the Chico Area Recreation District; and local businesses.
2. In addition to a general steering committee for the event, which is responsible for fund-raising, overseeing the budget, and determining the location, date(s), and time(s) for the event, several committees should be formed, each with a distinctive role in the event, such as a display/exhibits committee, entertainment committee, refreshments committee, transportation committee, and a publicity committee.

3. Policies for the event must be predetermined, such as the following:
 - a. What is the minimum age requirement for exhibitors and performers?
 - b. Can exhibitors sell merchandise?
 - c. Can a local business be allowed to have a display table in return for a generous contribution?
 - d. What are the geographical limitations on participation?
4. The participation of people of all age groups, especially of youth, is key to the success of the event in meeting its aim of dispelling myths and stereotypes of aging. Wherever possible, college students and children should be integrated into the event, performing tasks such as assistance with parking, exhibit setup, and ushers for entertainment.

The Chico Elderfest experienced difficulties in attracting young adults and children to attend the event. During the first several years of the event, it was held on a Saturday in order to facilitate maximal attendance. Despite massive publicity efforts, it was mainly older adults who attended the event. Even though the attendance was excellent (1,000), the population most in need of a positive experience to improve attitudes toward elders (young adults and children) was not attending the event in great enough numbers for the event to really be meeting its aim of dispelling myths and stereotypes of aging. Therefore, the event was changed to a weekday, and local schools arranged to have classes attend throughout the day at specific times. College students were enlisted to guide the children through the exhibits, displays, and entertainment. Although the overall number in attendance declined slightly, the event became more intergenerational in nature and was able to better meet its goal of improving young people's attitudes toward elders and aging. For further information on how to conduct an Elderfest, consult Leitner's (1983) article.

VOLUNTEERING

Many elders are involved in volunteer work as a leisure activity. The benefits of volunteering include (Leitner & Leitner, 1994) a euphoric feeling called "helper's high"; enhanced self-esteem from the feeling of helping others; feelings of achievement and recognition; learning new things; meeting people, making friends; the feeling of giving care and love to others and vice versa; and being able to participate in leisure activities that might otherwise be too costly (e.g., ushering at a theater and being able to see performances for free).

The different types of volunteering options available are discussed next (Leitner & Leitner, 1994).

Sports Programs Offered through Municipalities

Volunteers are usually needed for coaching, officiating, organizational help, and fund-raising. Programs for youth, elders, and other special populations have a special need for volunteers.

Hospitals and Nursing Homes

Volunteers are needed for a variety of functions, including assistance with recreational activities programs.

Cultural Organizations and Recreational/Educational Settings

Organizations that promote art, music, theater, and dance, and museums, aquariums, and zoos need volunteer help with fund-raising, security, leading or assisting with group tours, especially from schools and in organizing and leading special events and activities.

Travel-Related Volunteering

Many of these programs are environmentally related, but there are also programs, for example, for elders wishing to travel to Israel and engage in a program of volunteer work to help new immigrants or other people or organizations in need of helping hands.

National and International Organizations

Endless possibilities exist in this category, ranging from sports organizations such as the National Senior Sports Association, to hobby clubs such as stamp collecting, to organizations for elders, such as the American Association for Retired Persons.

Local Causes and Organizations

The possibilities in this category include libraries, schools and after-school programs, local humane society, churches and synagogues, and shelters for the homeless.

Elders in Need

Many of the local area agencies on aging coordinate volunteer programs in which healthy elders lend assistance to frail and disabled elders. Assistance can involve home visits, telephone calls, going for walks, taking short trips, doing errands together such as shopping, and even providing professional help such as legal and tax preparation assistance.

Performing Groups

Perhaps the most enjoyable and uplifting way for elders to help others is to be in a performing group, such as a drama group, band, or choir, and perform for residents of retirement and nursing homes and attendees of senior day care and senior centers.

An example of a thriving performing group comprised of elders wishing to volunteer their time by uplifting elders through music and dance is ATTAD (Aid to the Aged in Institutions). The group, founded in 1984 by Naomi Sklar, is based in Netanya, Israel, and travels to hospitals and homes for elders throughout Israel. Their entertainment troupe, comprised mainly of English-speaking older adults, is able to communicate without any problems to elders

whose primary language might be Russian, Yiddish, Hebrew, Spanish, Amharic, or Portuguese, through the language of music, dance, and touch. Their troupe travels in a group sometimes as large as 40 volunteers, sometimes as small as four volunteers. Regardless of the troupe's size, they are able to transform a depressing institutional setting into an enthusiastic, jubilant group of elders with eyes wide open, hands clapping, and feet tapping. ATTAD also assists elders through fund-raising activities, recruiting volunteers, and acquiring amenities such as tape players, movie projectors, musical instruments, and art supplies for institutions.

In addition to recreation-related volunteering opportunities, there are work-related volunteer opportunities for elders. Hamilton (1991) reports that small business owners and communities are benefiting from the knowledge and experience of elders through organizations such as SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives), RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program), and the International Executive Service Corps. SCORE provides small businesses with free advice; RSVP provides a means for elders to volunteer for community service; and the International Executive Service Corps gives managerial and technical advice to third world countries that are making the transition to market economies.

Many of the programs discussed thus far in the chapter are more accessible to urban elders than they are to rural elders. As discussed in the next section, recognizing the special needs of rural elders, there are a number of programs developed specifically for this population.

PROGRAMS FOR RURAL ELDERS

(based on Leitner, M. J., Shepherd, P.L., & Ansello, E.F. (1985). Recreation and the rural elderly. In Leisure in Later Life, (1st ed.), pp. 291-324.)

Definition

For the purposes of this book, the term *rural* refers to all people who live outside of Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSAs), whether they live on farms; open countryside; or in villages, towns, or cities of up to 50,000 in population. Approximately 7.5 million of the 50 million Americans living in rural areas are aged 65 and over (Rural Assistance Center, 2012). Rural elders face special challenges in their lives as compared to elders living in urban areas. Some of these challenges that relate specifically to leisure include lack of transportation for shopping and senior activities and unavailable cultural and social services. Although recreational programs and services for rural elders are in need of improvement and expansion, there are nevertheless some excellent programs being offered.

Existing Programs

In Colorado, rural elders are able to enroll in outreach courses offered through community colleges (Blanding, Turner, & Gerbrandt, 1993). Courses include computer science, creative painting, musical expressions, mental jogging, and “senior shape-up.” Some courses were renamed in order to sound more exciting and recreational in nature. For example, “Interpersonal Communication” was renamed as “How to Talk so People Will Listen,” and “Prominent Women in History” was renamed as “Women Who Dared to be Different.”

In Nebraska, Project Rural A.L.I.V.E. (Americans Living in Varied Environments) provides recreational activities such as bingo and watching movies to rural elders as part of a nutrition and social interaction program (Goldenrod Hills Community Action Council, n.d.). A similar program in Kentucky offered recreational activities, which include listening to music, oral reading, discussions, live music by elders, poetry reading, art demonstrations, social events, hobbies, and holiday celebrations. Recreational activities are also offered as part of a meals program for rural elders in Idaho. According to Simonsen (n.d.), the meals not only promote proper nutrition but are also a form of social recreation.

In Washoe County, Nevada, native American elders began teaching Indian dances, songs, and rhythms to native American children in the evenings at their senior center. The elders contribute valuable knowledge that helps to preserve their culture, while the children are able to increase their appreciation for their culture.

In northeast Kentucky, senior centers are partially heated by solar greenhouses. Elders grow vegetables and houseplants in these greenhouses, and the sale of these products helps to raise money for the senior centers. The program not only provides an enjoyable activity for rural elders, but it is also a productive activity that fosters feelings of pride and dignity.

Recreational programs for rural elders are also offered as part of community service programs. Success with such programs has been reported in areas of Arkansas; Florida; Franklin County, New York; and West Virginia. Dancing, cards, and other games are enjoyed by over 500 elders in rural Gadsden County, Florida (Ford, 1976), while in Idaho, dances, bus trips, picnics, parades, and potluck dinners are part of the activity program (Reed, 1970).

Stough (1974) discussed a church program labeled “adult education” in rural Oklahoma, with over 700 enrollees and 30 volunteer instructors participating in activities with a heavy emphasis in the arts. Beaver and Elias (1980) reported that an experimental painting class helped to increase social interaction, feelings of self-worth, self-confidence, and independence among its participants. Hirzel (1977) described a senior companion program in rural counties of Maryland, in which elderly volunteers worked with frail and ill elders in order to stimulate interest in new activities and hobbies as well as to provide companionship.

In summary, there are many successful recreational programs for rural elders, despite the numerous obstacles to service provision. These obstacles, along with various solutions, are discussed in the next section.

Obstacles to Service Provision and Ways They Can Be Overcome

Transportation is a particularly significant barrier to recreation participation among rural elders because many of them do not own automobiles, public transportation services are not as readily available as they are in urban areas, and greater distances need to be traveled due to the lower population density in rural areas. According to Notess (1978), a factor that might compound the problem of lack of transportation is the desire of many rural elders to ride on vans or buses only with people that they know.

However, there are some solutions to problems of transportation. Burkhardt (1970) reported that as a result of a free bus ride system provided for rural elders in West Virginia, the number of trips made for social and recreational purposes increased. Another possibility is the coordination of elders who own and drive cars with those who do not. School buses can be used to transport rural elders to and from senior centers. To reduce transportation needs, mobile centers can be used to provide recreational services to different areas within a region during different days of the week. For example, Murray (1979) recommended bookmobile visits to nursing homes in order to meet the recreational reading needs of rural institutionalized elders.

A parallel concept is that of roving activity specialists. Due to the geographic dispersion of the rural elderly, programs are often conducted on a small scale (i.e., a relatively low number of participants and staff). For programs to be conducted on a larger scale, they would often have to include a geographic area so large that transportation to and from the center would not be feasible for intended service recipients. A disadvantage of small-scale programs is that they are only able to have a limited range of activities, given the limitations of a small staff. A solution to this problem is to have activity specialists visit different centers within a region on different days of the week. In this way, centers might have a music specialist one day, an art specialist another day, and so on. Roving activity specialists could enrich the lives of rural elders by exposing them to a wider range of activities than would otherwise be possible.

According to Notess (1978), another obstacle to recreation services for rural elders is their tendency to reject anything considered to be charity, such as free rides and free meals. The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (1978) also cited mistrust of federal programs as an obstacle to providing leisure services for rural elders. One approach to overcoming this obstacle is to elicit the cooperation of churches and religious organizations in providing leisure services to rural elders. Karcher and Karcher (1980) stated that the church is the most trusted institution of rural elders and that outside programs need to tie in with the rural church. Many community activities are church-

related, and the church is the most widely participated in social organization for rural elders. Rural churches can stimulate the development of leisure activities for elders, assist in grant solicitation, and can even make contacts with nearby colleges and universities for student volunteers to assist with the provision of recreational activities.

Stough (1974) presented case studies of church-sponsored recreation programs for rural elders. These case studies indicated that religious institutions are a convenient meeting place, a location for social contacts and recreation, and often a sponsor of senior citizen clubs. Murray (1979) recommended that with the help of churches, large-print books of light spiritual reading be available to satisfy the reading interests of rural elders. Rural elders tend to congregate in churches, fire departments, grange halls, county fairgrounds, town commons, and community centers. These places are therefore natural focal points for the delivery of leisure services for rural elders and are also good places to post flyers and posters publicizing programs.

Inadequate publicity, lack of awareness of existing programs can be an obstacle preventing rural elders from participating in recreational activities. The ability of service providers to locate elders in need of services can be difficult given the resistance of rural elders to intervention programs and the geographic dispersion of the rural population. Means, Mann, and Van Dyk (1978) suggested reaching out to isolated rural elders in order to increase their awareness of recreational opportunities. Notess (1978) stated that outreach programs are more effective when the service provider visits the client's home and wins the trust of clients and their families. According to Coward (1979), the inclusion of family members and close friends can increase the impact of services and make them more efficient. Family-oriented programming for rural elders is therefore desirable.

The Voice-a-Gram Program (Administration on Aging, 1976), a program whereby isolated elders and their families exchange prepared messages on tape cassettes, is an example of an outreach service that can help reduce loneliness of isolated elders and increase their awareness of recreational opportunities. Other recommended publicity techniques are radio interviews, speeches, news articles, and regular columns in rural newspapers (Ambrosius, 1979).

Another way to make rural elders more aware of existing recreational opportunities is through the provision of pre- and post-retirement leisure counseling services. Leisure counseling for rural elders can not only increase rural elders' awareness of existing programs, but can also assist elders in making appropriate choices in use of free time and can help to remove psychosocial barriers against engaging in leisure activities. For more details on leisure counseling, refer to Chapter 9.

SUMMARY

Many of the programs discussed in this chapter were initiated by one motivated individual with a good idea, who was able to inspire others and

eventually create a program serving thousands of elders. There is always room for new programs; what new program ideas do you have? Exercise 11.3 is an opportunity to explore ideas for new programs that might be successful with elders and even be profitable.

Exercise 11.3

A New Recreational Enterprise Especially for Elders

Instructions:

1. Based on this chapter, decide on a recreational program for elders that is not yet being offered, but which you feel would be well received by elders. Select a program idea that could be offered privately, on a profit-making basis.
2. Describe the idea, exactly what activities the program would involve. Your program can be a “spin-off” of an existing program.
3. Briefly but clearly identify the physical and psychosocial needs of elders that your program would fulfill. Try to support your statements with research cited in Chapter 1.
4. In the spaces provided, identify the specific target population for your program (the young-old? the old-old? healthy or impaired? urban or rural? etc.), geographic location, facilities, equipment, and supplies needed, staff needed, approximate program costs, fees to be charged, estimated number of participants, and expected profit margin.

My program idea: _____

Specific activities in the program/program description: _____

Physical and psychosocial needs of elders that the program would fulfill: _____

Target population: _____

Geographic location: _____

Facilities, equipment, and supplies needed: _____

Staff needed: _____

Cost estimate: _____

Program fees: _____

Projected number of participants: _____

Expected profit margin: _____

Hope your program is a big success!

REFERENCES

- Administration on Aging. (1976). Voice-a-gram: Prescription for loneliness. *Aging Magazine*, 5, 261-262.
- Alessio, H. M., Grier, L. J., & Leviton, D. (1989). Trailblazing recreational programming with the elderly: High-risk activities. *Activities, Adaptation, & Aging*, 13(4), 9-16.
- Ambrosius, G. R. (1979). *A report on national rural strategy conference to improve service delivery to rural elderly*. Spencer, IA: Iowa Lakes Area Agency on Aging.
- Armstrong, C. H. (1979). *Senior adult camping*. Martinsville, IN: American Camping Assoc.
- Backman, K. F., Backman, S. J., & Silverberg, K. E. (1999). An investigation into the psychographics of senior nature-based travelers. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 24(1), 13-22.
- Beaver, M., & Elias, B. (1980). Enhancing the well-being of the marginal elderly through art appreciation [Abstract]. *Gerontologist*, 20(5), 63.
- Beck, M., Glick, D., Gordon, J., & Picker, L. (1991, November 11). School days for seniors. *Newsweek*, 60-63.
- Bishop, K. (1991, February 27). Smashing a cliché with sis, boom, bah. *New York Times*, B1, B7.
- Blanding, C. W., Turner, J., & Gerbrandt, M. (1993). Creating leisure opportunities for rural seniors: The community college outreach concept. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation, & Dance*, 64(4), 52-54.
- Burkhardt, J. E. (1970). Transportation and the rural elderly. In E. Cantrill & J. Schemetzer (Eds.), *Transportation and aging: Selected issues*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Carter Administration. (1979, December 20). *Small community and rural development policy*. Washington, DC: The White House.
- Chenery, M. F. (1987, March). Camping and senior adults. *Camping Magazine*, 50-51, 62.
- Clements, C., & Barret, D. B. (1993). The quality of life program: Fostering creativity in seniors through a museum experience. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation, & Dance*, 64(4), 48-51.
- Coward, R. T. (1979). Planning community services for the rural elderly: Implications from research. *Gerontologist*, 19, 275-282.
- Elderhostel. (2003). About elderhostel. Retrieved from www.elderhostel.org
- Ford, Q. E. (1976). *A model project for aging: Coordinated service program for senior citizens in a rural county*. Quincy, FL: Gadsen County Senior Citizens Council, Inc.
- Gay, J. (1999). A guide to tour designing for seniors. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 24(1), 90-92.

- Gibson, H. J. (2002). Busy travelers: Leisure travel patterns and meanings in later life. *World Leisure*, 44(2), 11-20.
- Goldenrod Hills Community Action Council. *Project Rural A.L.I.V.E. (Americans living in varied environments): An evaluation*. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse on Aging, SCAN Social Practice Resource Center. #CF 000 387.
- Goggin, J. M. (1999). Elderhostel meets the "silent revolution." *Tourism Recreation Research*, 24(1), 86-89.
- Gurewitsch, E. (1980). Elderhostel: A good idea is growing and growing. *Aging*, 303-304, 12-16.
- Hamilton, P. W. (1991, March-April). Help wanted. *D & B Reports*, 28.
- Harbert, A. S., & Wilkinson, C. W. (1979, January). Growing old in rural America. *Aging Magazine*, 36-40.
- Hayden, C. S. (1988). Elder campers helping others—The ECHO project: A unique intergenerational model. *Activities, Adaptation, & Aging*, 11(1), 11-19.
- Hirzel, D. (1977, March 7). Elderly will help elderly. *Washington Star*, p. 19.
- Hong, G. S., Kim, S. Y., & Lee, J. (1999). Travel expenditure patterns of elderly households in the U.S. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 24(1), 43-52.
- Hudson, S. D., & Rich, S. M. (1993). Group travel programs: A creative way to meet the leisure needs of older adults. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation, & Dance*, 64(4), 38-40.
- Hupp, S. (1987, January). Camping in the third age. *Camping Magazine*, 20-22.
- Johnson, K. (2010, January 8). Seeing old age as a never-ending adventure. *The New York Times*, retrieved from www.nytimes.com/2010/01/08/us/08aging.html
- Karcher, C. J., & Karcher, B. C. (1980). Higher education and religion: Potential partners in service to the rural elderly. *Educational Gerontology*, 5(4), 409-421.
- Larson, D. K., & Youmans, E. G. (1978). *Problems of rural elderly households in Powell County, Kentucky*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- Leitner, M. J. (1983). Elderfest: The experience of a lifetime! *Parks & Recreation*, 18(8), 56-58.
- Leitner, M. J. (1999). Promoting peace through intergenerational tourism. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 24(1), 53-56.
- Leitner, M. J., & Leitner, S. F. (1994). *How to improve your life through leisure*. Salt Lake City, UT: Northwest.
- Means, G., Mann, J., & Van Dyk, D. (1978). Reaching out to the rural elderly: Services to rural America. *Human Services in the Rural Environment*, 3(2), 1-6.
- Mitric, J. M., & Gibson, G. (1988, March 13). Seniors enter B&B business for fun, profit. *Chicago Tribune*, Section 12, p. 2.

- Moisey, N., & Bichis, M. (1999). Psychographics of senior nature tourists: The Katy nature trail. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 24(1), 69-76.
- Murray, M. S. (1979). Variables affecting the reading preferences of institutionalized versus non-institutionalized rural elder adults. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 40, 1815A.
- National Association of Area Agencies on Aging. (1978). *Rural affairs committee report*. Washington, DC: Administration on Aging.
- Never too late for ski school. (1977, November 13). *New York Daily News*, Travel section, p. 10.
- Nimrod, G. (2008). Retirement and tourism: Themes in retirees' narratives. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 35(4), 859-878.
- Nimrod, G., & Rotem, A. (2010). Between Relaxation and Excitement: Activities and Benefits Gained in Retirees' Tourism. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 12(1), 65-78.
- Noble, H. B. (1998, October 20). A secret of health in old age: Muscles. *The New York Times*, p. D8.
- Northeast Kentucky Area Development Council, Inc. (1971). *Country gathering: A nutrition demonstration project, final report*. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse on Aging, SCAN Social Practice Resource Center, CF #000 351.
- Notess, C. B. (1978). Rural elderly transit markets. *Journal of American Institute of Planners*, 44, 328-334.
- Patterson, I. (2002). Baby boomers and adventure tourism: The importance of marketing the leisure experience. *World Leisure*, 44(2), pp. 4-10.
- Penalta, L. A. R., & Uysal, M. (1992, September). Aging and the future travel market. *Parks & Recreation*, 96-99.
- Provost, C. A. (1981). *The Senior Olympics, preventative medicine with findings pertaining to health and longevity*. Los Angeles: Warren W. Blaney, Publisher.
- Reed, G. R. (1970). *Survey of elderly participation in community activities for aged* (#CF 000 233). Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse on Aging, SCAN Social Practice Resource Center.
- Rosen J. (1993, December 6). Breckenridge ski resort to host 14th Senior Winter Games. *Travel Weekly*, pp. 61-62.
- Rural Assistance Center. (2012, February 24). *Aging*. Retrived from <http://www.raconline.org/topics/aging/>
- Simons, M. (1991, October 6). Le brain jogging. *New York Times Magazine*, 16, 44.
- Simonsen, I. (n.d.). *Senior meals: Improved nutrition and social association in rural America* (#CF 000 232). Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse on Aging, SCAN Social Practice Resource Center.

- Stough, A. D. (1974). *Brighter vistas: Church programs for older adults*. Washington, DC: Administration on Aging.
- Teaff, J. D., & Turpin, T. (1996, June). Travel and the elderly. *Parks & Recreation*, 16-22.
- Your 1993 masters sports directory. (1993, January). *Modern Maturity*, 60-61.