ICAA Champion: introducing Wayne Senior Center

We also provide a myriad of opportunities for lifelong learning.” Attendance grows “almost daily,” Shapiro shares, revealing that members now number more than 1,000.

Although small in size, at only 4,700 sq. ft., “the Wayne Senior Center has a long reach into the community,” Shapiro states. “Anyone walking into our building is amazed at the amount of activity, number of programs and level of energy found here.” Most programs take place at the venue. However, the nonprofit holds yoga, tai chi and water-exercise classes off-site, with the help of community partners. In 2014 alone, the organization offered over 1,800 classes, as well as provided information and referrals to more than 1,000 people.

To promote living well, the Center encourages adults aged 50 years and older “to enrich their lives through activity and knowledge,” Shapiro says. Its educational and recreational activities “ensure meaningful leisure time, promote health and wellness, encourage an active lifestyle, and provide a friendly environment for socialization.” She adds, “Our center is the place where seniors become empowered to grow, develop and get involved.”

The Center’s supportive atmosphere helps individuals “embrace this new stage of life with its inherent opportunities, as well as its challenges,” continues Shapiro, who is acutely aware that her diverse membership ranges in age from 50 to 100 years. “Active aging means so many things to so many individuals,” she observes. “But, for all our members, it means staying healthy, active, socially engaged, independent and having purpose, whether they are Boomers or older.”

An ICAA Organization Champion, Wayne Senior Center also strives to influence how people view aging. “We recently embarked on a strong marketing campaign to champion aging as a positive chapter in life and to let people know that our organization is here to help them optimize their years ahead,” Shapiro reveals. “We have rebranded ourselves with the help of a local consultant. Our message is loud and clear, ‘If you are not sure how to age positively, we can help!’” The Center highlights this message through various communications channels—its newsletter, brochures and website; the television program it hosts on local cable channels; social media; and other community publications. “We also take every opportunity to speak to different groups in our community,” Shapiro mentions.

Still, the best messengers of the positive aging message are Center members, Shapiro believes. “Their range of ages and the depths of their experience and personal histories give them the unique perspective with which to show them how it’s done” in a very personal way.”

The Center “invites the community in,” plus hosts Active Aging Week® and gets involved in as many community events as possible, Shapiro says. One highlight is the annual open house that coincides with Wayne’s Tree Lighting at Christmas. “Visitors come in to warm up their frozen fingers and to enjoy hot chocolate, homemade cookies, and our Holiday Miniature Train Display,” she shares.

According to Shapiro, “People who would never come through the Center’s doors come in for the open house: children, their parents, and often their grandparents. When they see our Fitness Center and meet some of our members, we know that our organization is here to help them optimize their years ahead, and to let people know that our organization is here to help them optimize their years ahead.’”

To learn more about ICAA’s Changing the Way We Age® Campaign and how you or your organization can get involved, call the International Council on Active Aging® at 866-335-9777 or visit www.changingthewayweage.com.