

Lisa Ingebrand Photo

Cindy Hauer leads a S.A.I.L. class at the Waterville Area Senior Center in Waterville. The free classes, which are geared for those aged 55 years and older, are held Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m.

Free exercise class keeps seniors active & independent

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It was -13ºF outside, but things were heating up inside the Waterville Area Senior Center, Thursday morning, February 3.

There's music. There's laughter. And, there's exercise.

There's also a handmade sign taped in the front of the room that reads: Stop if you get tired. Sit and rest or sway side to side instead of marching. It's Okay!

It's the local S.A.I.L. (Stay Active and Independent for Life) exercise program.

The twice-a-week program is sponsored by Catholic Charities of Southern MN's Aging Program and is free to those aged 55 and older. The space is provided by the City of Waterville.

"It used to be called Bonebuilders back in the day," explained Cindy Hauer, who is one of six trained local S.A.I.L. leaders. "It's been held at different places in the area over the years, but now, we meet at the Senior Center on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, which I think is working well."

On this particular morning, approximately 10 ladies participated in the recent one-hour class.

Together, they completed a series of warm-ups, aerobics, balance exercises, strength training, stretching, and education.

Each participant has a chair near them on which to lean or sit if they need to slow down.

All the exercises can be adapted to sitting.

"Each part of the routine is purposeful," Hauer explained as members of the group strapped on their leg weights, which are provided free of charge. "And the purpose is to stay healthy, active, and independent as we age."

According to information provided by Catholic Charities, research studies have proven that when the S.A.I.L. exercise program is completed two times a week, it will result in overall health improvement for aging adults.

"The program was designed to improve balance, build bone density and build muscle strength," explained Active Aging Program Administrator Mary Cassem. "Falls in older adults are the leading cause of injury, hospitalizations and fatalities in the U.S. But, falls are not due to the aging process. They are due to muscle weakness, impaired mobility and balance deficits. This program addresses all three of those issues to lessen the risk of a fall."

Sue Olson of Waterville has personally experienced the health benefits of regularly participating in the program. "My bone density went up," she happily reported.

Other participants shared their own stories of improved balance, strength, and movement.

"It makes you use muscles you otherwise wouldn't use," shared 81-year-old S.A.I.L. participant Delores Schneider. "And, there's no pressure. No one is pushing you to do anything… You just do what you can and be happy."

The social piece of the program is obvious.

There's laughter and friendship.

"It's great to get out and do something, especially during the winter," Marge Boyd stated with a smile. "Otherwise, I'd just be sitting in my apartment."

Dallas McIntyre agreed. "This morning—maybe because it's so cold outside—I just wanted to sit back down and have a second cup of coffee, but I got myself up and got here, and I'm glad I did," she shared.

For 60-year-old Jeanne Tomlinson, the regular S.A.I.L. classes are her way of maintaining a healthy and active lifestyle. "It's easy to think that you're okay—you're staying healthy—because you're staying active at home, but many times, we're not doing enough at home," she stated. "I enjoy coming to the classes so much—and see the benefits of it—that I've decided to train to become a S.A.I.L. leader."

New S.A.I.L. members are welcome at anytime. The classes are held year-round, every Tuesday and Thursday morning, from 9 a.m. until 10 a.m. Anyone attending class for the first time is encouraged to arrive 15 minutes early to get registered and fitted for weights.

"A good friend of mine encouraged me to attend a class a while back, and while I wasn't quite sure about it at first, I'm glad I came," Schneider stated with a smile. "Now, I attend almost every class. It's great!"

From the back of the room, a member jokingly shared, "It sure is better than staying home and chasing dust!"

State Fair and Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation Accepting Century Farm Applications

Minnesota families who have owned their farms for 100 years or more are invited to apply for the 2022 Century Farm Program. Produced by the Minnesota State Fair in conjunction with the Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation, the Century Farm Program was created to promote agriculture and honor historic family farms in the state. Nearly 11,000 Minnesota farms have been honored since the program began in 1976.

Family farms are recognized as a Century Farm when three requirements are met. The farm must be: 1) at least 100 years old according to authentic land records; 2) in continuous family ownership for at least 100 years (continuous residence on the farm is not required); and 3) at least 50 acres and currently be involved in agricultural production.

A commemorative certificate signed by Governor Tim Walz, the State Fair Board of Managers President Joe Scapanski and Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation President Dan Glessing will be awarded to qualifying families, along with an outdoor sign signifying Century Farm status.

Applications are available online at mnstatefair.org/about-the-fair/awards-and-recognition/; at fbmn.org; by calling the State Fair at 651-288-4417; or at statewide county extension and county Farm Bureau offices. The submission deadline is Monday, March 7. Recipients will be announced in April. Previously recognized families should not reapply.

Information on the Century Farm Program will be available at the Minnesota Farm Bureau exhibit during the 2022 Minnesota State Fair. A Century Farm database is also available at fbmn.org.

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