August 2023 Wellness Article

**Senior shares her tips for living a full life**

In May we celebrated Older Americans Month and discussed some key areas that can help keep individuals feeling strong, purposeful, and connected. On August 21 we honor seniors once again with National Senior Citizens Day. I have a wonderful job where I get the chance to meet so many great members of our community and a large portion are the seniors in our community.

The May wellness article highlighted the following 5 key areas to help individuals thrive as they get older: have a purpose, stay connected, don’t forget about nutrition, keep moving, and have a growth mindset. Tagging on to these key areas I asked some of the seniors in our community how they stay active, connected, and feeling like they have a purpose. It was interesting because after asking over 30 individuals the big take-a-away was that they are going out and finding things to do, people to connect with, and making sure they are staying active.

This is a good reminder for all of us that we need to be our own advocates, we need to be active in our own wellness – whether that be asking friends to hang out, joining a community group, or volunteering. Let’s get inspired by one another and learn how to live life to the fullest, no matter what age we are.

One individual I interviewed really stood out to me. Alyce Sykes is a long time Ridgecrest resident who has been retired for 10 years from a successful and fulfilling career as an owner of her own business. Alyce was a Cosmetologist and really enjoyed meeting new people and connecting with them. Alyce now volunteers as a Pink Lady at Ridgecrest Regional Hospital and as a volunteer at the Butterfly Boutique. She also use to volunteer for the VFW.

Alyce says that volunteering has impacted her well-being in almost every area. It gets her out of the house and provides a way for her to connect with others. “Volunteering at the Butterfly Boutique is especially fulfilling because knowing what we work toward for Hospice is rewarding.”

In fact Alyce mentioned that through volunteering at the boutique she has met some amazing friends and they call themselves the “Magnificent Seven”. They all met through volunteering and they now get together for dinners, going to the movies, swimming and shopping. They try to get together at least twice a month and really enjoy having this amazing support system. Without volunteering they all may have never met and formed this special group. I secretly wondered if I could sneak in to one of their gatherings because they seem to have found joy, fun, and connection with one another.

Alyce also utilizes one of RRH’s programs – SilverSneakers. Alyce knows without a doubt that this program has improved her balance and helped her be more active. It also provides an opportunity to meet new people which provides a mental health benefit. As many others noted, Alyce looks forward to going to SilverSneakers because the instructors and the participants are so welcoming and she feels both physically and mentally better after attending.

After talking with Alyce, she mentioned some of the struggles of this time in her life and missing loved ones but she said that her life is full and she is happy. I could tell that Alyce is setting herself up for success by being proactive about her health and wellness. The benefits of volunteering are so wide range and this is just one story that shows how volunteering provides purpose, connection, friendship and so much more. Balance and strength is also something many seniors struggle with and Alyce is making sure she is staying active, improving her balance and all while getting the mental health benefits of visiting with others in a great environment.

At RRH we offer many programs for seniors and on August 21st we will remember how amazing seniors are and gather inspiration from those who are thriving, living life to the fullest, having fun along the way and giving back.

For more information on the programs offered for free to seniors in our community please call 760-499-3825.

*Tera Moorehead is the Director of Community Outreach, Wellness and Philanthropy at Ridgecrest Regional Hospital. With dual master’s degrees in nutrition and education, as well as a national board certified health and wellness coach, Tera shares her passion for health and wellness through various programs offered free to the community through RRH. You can contact her at 760-499-3825.*