



City of DeWitt
Parks & Recreation Department
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MEMBER IOWA LEAGUE OF CITIES

Senior Stability Fitness Class

Each year, more than 1.6 million older Americans go to the emergency room for fall related injuries. Among older adults, falls are the number one cause of fractures, hospital admissions for trauma and injury related deaths. With a large number of our DeWitt Fitness Center members being senior citizens, we wanted to offer a fitness class that would directly benefit this portion of our membership.

Our program is called “Senior Stability” and is a 60 minute class involving low impact cardiovascular exercises and strength training. The class is offered twice a week and is available to both Fitness Center members and walk in customers. The goal is to reduce the chances of falls for our seniors. Half the class time is spent standing and half the time is spent seated in a folding chair. Taught by certified personal trainer, Sarah Gravert, the class is accommodating to persons of all fitness levels. Goals of the class include: increasing muscle strength and endurance, improving balance, coordination and joint mobility, educating the participants on muscle function and encouraging social activity.

Research verifies that older adults are at greater risk for falls than any other age group. The consequences resulting from a fall are serious—hip fractures, head trauma and even death. As we age, muscles in our bodies may weaken. Because of this, your balance can become compromised. A person’s balance can also be affected by medications that we take, the amount of sleep that we get or various other problems.

Lack of lower body strength is a leading risk factor for falls in the older population. Seniors can develop a loss of independence as a result of inactivity and a sedentary lifestyle. The good news is that a mild to moderate program of strength training have proven to be effective at reversing the loss of muscle mass and have been associated with improved functional fitness and reduction of falls.

Our senior stability class focuses on training with resistance bands and light hand weights to strengthen the muscle groups in the legs, abdominals, back and upper body. Each participant works at a rate that they are comfortable with. Results show that participants in our senior stability class experience increases in their agility, coordination, strength and standing balance. As the participants attend classes, the exercises become easier and their personal gains become more frequent.

To offer a class like our senior stability class you need very little. An energetic instructor who has some knowledge on the human body and how it works, folding chairs, hand weights, resistance bands & willing participants. This class is one of our most popular fitness classes for our older members. This program is easy to operate and provides

tremendous benefits for all that participate. We are happy to provide additional information to any department that may want to offer a similar program.

Participant quotes:

"I like the class because I feel I'm gaining strength and flexibility. Sarah works with us until we do a movement the correct way."

Barb

"I enjoy the class because you do the exercises the correct way and not too fast."

Sue

"Exercising all the muscle groups gives me more energy as I age. Areas where stress accumulates are removed."

Marlin

"This class gives me more flexibility and muscle tone. It helps with such simple activities like cutting my toenails."

Evelyn

"I take this class to improve my strength and balance."

Joyce

Kevin Lake
Director
DeWitt Parks & Recreation