

## **MAY IS OLDER AMERICANS MONTH**

For many aging Americans, May is a month to be celebrated loudly and proudly. Since 1963, when President Kennedy declared the month of May as Senior Citizens Month (later renamed Older Americans Month) the meaning of the celebration has changed drastically. Since then, the average life expectancy has increased from 66-73 to 76-81. This means that on average, people are living at least 10 years longer than their parents did, and if you look around the Senior Activity Center, you'll see that many are easily and healthfully exceeding the current life expectancy. Eliminating outdated perceptions and living a long, quality life has become a mission for the aging population.

For many, the post-retirement stage is one where interests, goals, and dreams can get a new or fresh start. Reinventing oneself can be fun and rewarding, and this stage of life is a great time to do it! For example, volunteerism is a great way to stay connected and get involved in the community, giving many retirees a sense of purpose. Research has also shown that volunteering can improve mental health, and can help develop and maintain new relationships. Some research even suggests that those who volunteer are more likely to live longer.

We see daily examples of redefining what it means to be in the "aging" population at the Senior Activity Center. Our health and wellness class sizes are bigger than ever before, but of course this isn't all about exercise. The investment we see our seniors putting into their overall wellness is exceeding our already high expectations.

New semi-retired and retired folks are coming to all sorts of art classes, and volunteering both at the Activity Center and for our partners at John Michael Kohler Art Center and RCS. Attending special events such as our Aging Mastery Program, Olivia and Gertrude Andersen Wellness Summits, and traveling on one of our many trips are other incredible ways our seniors stay connected and ensure that this stage of life is a happy, healthy one.

The Senior Activity Center of Sheboygan will use Older Americans Month, 2017, to focus on both our commitment to community engagement and on our community's ever-growing aging population. This year's theme is "Age Out Loud", emphasizing the ways older adults are living their lives with confidence, self-efficacy, and exploring their potential while serving as an inspiration to people of all ages.

Throughout the month, we will participate in different activities. For instance, we will be celebrating the 24<sup>th</sup> annual National Senior Health and Fitness Day on Wednesday, May 31 at Fountain Park. Our fitness classes will be moved to the stage at the park for the morning. We will also be making sure to share information to highlight different ways we at the Senior Activity Center can help YOU to live a healthful, quality life. One way you can make sure you get involved in the month long celebration is to check our Facebook page for posts with the tags #OAM17, #AgeOutLoud, and #NSHFD17. Or, just stop into the center and explore YOUR potential!