A cocky U.S. Department of Agriculture representative stopped at a farm and talked with a farmer. “I need to inspect your farm,” he said. The farmer, who was in his mature years, said, “OK, but don’t go in that field right over yonder.”

The farmer nodded politely and went about his farm chores. Later, the farmer heard loud screams and saw the agriculture rep running for the fence and close behind was the farmer’s huge-horned prize bull. The bull was gaining on the agriculture rep with every step. The rep was clearly terrified, so the farmer immediately threw down his tools, ran to the fence and shouted out….”Your card! Show him your card!”

As we get a little older, all of us notice that certain everyday, physical tasks become a bit more challenging. There are many potential reasons behind this, ranging from changes that occur as a result of normal healthy aging to a decrease in our physical activity levels to even injury or disease. Although there are many documented changes that have been attributed to aging such as reduced muscle strength and a decrease in balance, many of these factors are likely more impacted by decreased physical activity levels than simply aging. One such physiological adaptation that occurs as we get older relates to flexibility and range of motion (ROM). Although it has been shown that our muscles and tendons may eventually lose some of their pliability, we do maintain the ability to slow down this loss through regular physical activity and by including often over-looked flexibility (“stretching”) exercises. The goal of this article is to stress the importance of a regular stretching routine.

According to Richard Miller, noted singer and vocal pedagogue, one cannot control all aspects of aging in the vocal mechanism, but exercising the voice daily should extend its years and quality of use. (However, no new activities should be started without the advice of your medical doctor.)

Activities that encourage flexibility and movement are especially helpful for singers. Aerobic exercise is often encouraged by voice professors: swimming, running and especially walking. As the breath is the power source of the voice, these and other aerobic activities will help maintain optimum respiratory ability. (However, no new activities should be started without the advice of your medical doctor.)

Use it or lose it! The vocal chords need use to keep them in shape. They also need good nutrition, plenty of fluids and gentle care. What is good for your general health is also good for your voice.

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Female singers should be aware of the inclusion of any andro- 

cgens in their replacement therapy as these can cause irreversible 

A few types of commonly utilized stretching techniques are described below. It is recommended that one attempt 

bending over to tie your shoes, picking up an object from the floor or reaching for objects on a shelf. 

A static stretch is the gradual lengthening of a muscle to a point of mild stretch (not pain) and held for between 15 and 60 seconds. An example of a static stretch for the hamstrings (back of the thigh) would be the classic “toe touch,” where you sit on the floor with legs straight out in front and reach slowly towards the toes until you reach a point of mild stretch.

Isometric stretching is the contracting of muscle(s) and exerting light force against a fixed object so as not to short- 

Aim to keep your back heel on the floor, to a point toward your head until a point of mild stretch.

For example, before stretching the legs, take a short walk or pedal on a stationary bike. This makes the muscles and tendons more pliable.

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Finding My Future

Knowing What I Want as My Life’s Work

By Kristen Haberland, Coastal Carolina University

When entering Coastal Carolina University in the fall of 2002 I had the same major that most freshmen do — Undeclared. I knew that my major would inevitably end up being psychology, but I was hesitant to declare because I was waiting to find my niche, that spark that would give me a feeling of passion for my work, so that I might one day have a career that I love, instead of a job where I work. In the fall of my sophomore year and thanks to my academic adviser, Billy Hills, I ended up right where I was meant to be, in a class called gerontology. In this one class I discovered the spark and passion for a subject I was looking for. The next semester I enrolled in “Psychology of Aging,” and it cemented my love for the subject. I knew I had found my niche. From there, I declared my major and decided to pursue a bachelor’s degree in psychology with a certificate of gerontology that would allow me to work with the ill, the dying and the bereaved. Through the Gerontology Certificate program I started my internship for Coastal’s Center for Active Aging and Retirement. This has opened up possibilities that never would have been accessible to me otherwise and has made me realize that there are more aspects of aging than just retirement homes and hospice.

In the spring of 2007 I attended the Aging Leadership Summit where Lt. Governor Andre Bauer and the U.S. Assistant Secretary for Aging, Joselina G. Carbonell, discussed and answered questions about the radical demographic changes that are happening in our area and across our country. They also discussed how the government is planning to prepare and handle these changes. During the summit’s reception, I was also able to meet and interface with the leaders of the geriatric community from all across the state. Another event that will remain dear to my heart was the Internet telecast “Living with Grief, Before and After the Death” sponsored by the Center for Active Aging and Retirement. This telecast was directed at hospice employees, counselors and all others who have dealt personally or professionally with grief and dying. For the first time, I was able to talk with people who do exactly what I want to do, help and counsel the dying and bereaved. My internship has also allowed me to sit in on meetings with contractors and intelligence technology companies who are creating the ground floor for the construction of “smart homes” in the Horry County area. These homes will make it possible for people to “age in place” regardless of disabilities or illness, because all these homes are built with universal design, smart technologies, green sustainability and hurricane proofing. I have also seen the plans for the changes that will be made to the Coastal campus to accommodate its growing numbers. The Center for Active Aging and Retirement is currently trying to include in those changes Coastal’s own “smart home.” If
I was 27 years old, working in the snack bar of a Myrtle Beach area golf course. Business was slow as I sat at the counter studying a college textbook, something I often did when time permitted.

An older member, but young at heart, noticed and said, “I didn’t know you were going to college, Heather, but it’s good to see someone who studies hard.”

“Actually I’m trying to help my boyfriend with his lessons,” I replied.

“You mean you’re already graduated?”

I explained that I attended college several years back but dropped out close to graduating because I could no longer afford it. He asked if I’d return to finish if given the chance and, if so, how much money would be needed. I said I’d gladly go back and since my previously accumulated credits couldn’t be transferred. I learned that it would take several more years and many more thousands of dollars to complete my degree. So I went to the member and told him what had happened and said that the extra cost made it impossible for me to accept his generosity. I tried to give the check back.

“No, Heather, I won’t take it. If you’re willing to spend extra years of study, while continuing to work, I’ll pay your college bills. I’m with you right to graduation day. I know from your attitude and maturity that you are an exceptional person. Further it gives me great pleasure to help.”

My angel was good to his word. We set up a separate bank account to keep track. In addition to my tuition and books he’s also paid for all other college-related expenses including a needed computer and its Internet online service. I’ve been a serious student majoring in sociology and am completing the gerontology certificate program. My cumulative GPA is 3.67. It’s been three years since I went back and I should graduate in December 2007.

I am grateful to my angel, who has asked to remain anonymous. Because of his generosity and kind heart I have been inspired to seek a career in the gerontology field where I too can help others along their life journey.

Active Adults Bring New Expectations

With more than 10,000 American baby boomers reaching age 50 each day, there has come a shift in the mindset of how these active adults are defining their middle and later years. Most will say that their retirement from the labor force is out of the question. In comparison to previous older generations, aging boomers tend to be better educated, wealthier and healthier. They expect and will pay for services to help them remain self-sufficient and independent as long as possible, especially within their own homes and communities.

While census projections indicate growing numbers in aging populations, the southeast region of the United States is experiencing exponential growth of aging boomers and retirees relocating to the area. In fact, South Carolina ranks as the sixth most popular destination for retirement in the United States. The Myrtle Beach area is leading the state with the in-migration of active adults relocating in the area. According to a 2007 Census Bureau report, Horry County (i.e., Myrtle Beach area) is ranked the fourth fastest growing area in the nation.

Study of Retirees in the Myrtle Beach Area

In order to assess the likes and dislikes of the thousands of new retirees moving into the region each year, the Center for Active Aging and Retirement conducted a research study. One thousand residents 55 years of age and older responded to the survey.

Major factors that attracted the active adults to the region were the weather, social relationships, recreational amenities and entertainment attractions, the beach and ocean, and economic factors such as lower property taxes.

Major dislikes included a lack of master planning for the infrastructure of the region (transportation problems), followed by high cost of living and high insurance rates. Another concern is the rapid growth and development in the region. When asked to rate their overall quality of life here on a scale of 1 (very poor) to 6 (excellent), the survey respondents were pleased as indicated by the high overall rating of 5.41.

Qualitative information also showed concern by the retirees that the region was growing so rapidly that it lacked overall support services to enable persons to remain independent in their homes and in the region. This was particularly apparent if they experienced health problems.

Implications

Recognizing the long-term population growth projected for the area, the Center for Active Aging and Retirement at Coastal Carolina University is working closely with the academic community at CCU in addressing comprehensive “smart” community planning and design that enable persons of all ages to remain independent and active within their homes and within their communities.

This initiative will lead to active adults being able to occupy their homes for as long as they wish without having to make major modifications to their homes should there be any change in their health. Thus, people will be better able to control their health care costs; reduce strains on caregivers; reduce the potential of moving to assisted living and long-term care facilities; and decrease the likelihood that they will need to return to their families and/or native communities.

CCU is Partnering with the Community

To stimulate local interest and support for developing ‘smart’ community development and design, the Center for Active Aging and Retirement is promoting livable community research, application and implementation within the university in partnership with business and community leaders. These partnerships include university academic and research programs and centers, healthcare providers, smart technology firms, communication businesses, architects, developers and homebuilders, to name a few. At this time there is keen interest from all stakeholders in working with Coastal Carolina University in developing a model “smart” home incorporating universal design, green sustainability, hurricane proofing, and ‘smart’ technology.

Universal Design Lowers Long-term Care Costs; Increases Independence

According to AARP’s Public Policy Institute, it is estimated that the direct cost of falls in 2000 was $16.4 billion. It is estimated that by 2020 the annual cost of fall injuries by persons 65 and older will escalate to $43.8 billion. Universal design features can help curtail falls within the home and provides wise design features for persons of all ages. Examples of universal design include: open space floor layouts that have an accessible bathroom; sinks, controls within easy reach and easily operated such as ‘smart’ community planning and design.