SENIOR CENTERS CONNECT

Promoting social connection while practicing physical distancing

ncoa
National Institute of
Senior Centers

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Senior Center Professionals are Essential

NCOA's National Institute of Senior Centers (NISC) has reached out to senior center professionals to gather operating ideas during the COVID-19 crisis. We have found that much has changed in the course of a few weeks, but the one constant has been the ability of senior center professionals to think creatively, practically and decisively to continue to promote wellness for older adults in their communities.

Maintaining food security was an immediate and top concern they addressed. Senior center professionals have stepped up and into the roles held by volunteers for the congregate and home delivered meals programs. They have stood in line preparing meals, developed new drive-up meal programs and driven to participants homes to deliver food.

They've also reached out to check on their participants. Making thousands of phone calls to ask: How are you? Do you need anything? How can we help? And letting older adults know they are not alone and that someone cares.

And, if this pandemic has taught us anything it is that we are social creatures and that connecting to others is crucial. So senior center professionals are creating holistic ways to connect. They understand that not everyone is connected to the internet, so they've sought low tech and high-tech solutions. They've sent cards, newsletters, added puzzles to home delivered meals. And now they are improvising a virtual learning and social connection environment. They are providing virtual exercise, book clubs and support group through Facebook Live, Zoom and other technology platforms.

Senior center professionals have shown that they care deeply about the welfare of their staff. They value their paid staff and volunteers and they have addressed staffs concerns and fears with compassion and flexibility. They are experts at adding fun (an important stress reliever) and often include joyful elements into the programming attributes, as you'll see in this compilation.

We encourage you to use the ideas you find in this collection, enhance them with your own creativity and share the things that are working well in your community to add to this body of knowledge. Please send additional ideas to me or Scott's at our email addresses found below.

Senior Center professionals are essential in every community! Thank you for all the hard work you are doing during this crisis, Maureen & Scott

Maureen O'Leary, NISC Program Manager
Maureen.oleary@ncoa.org

Scott Harlow, Senior Membership Coordinator
Scott.harlow@ncoa.org

Providing Telephone Wellness/Reassurance Calls

Senior center professionals told us they are reaching out to their participants to offer telephone reassurance and to access who is most at risk. Older adults most at risk include anyone in these categories: those 80+ years old, living alone, experiencing food insecurity, have compromised health or multiple health conditions, are experiencing isolation or are financially at risk.

Your reassurance program might be a new program for your staff. This outreach can also be accomplished by trained volunteers.

In Illinois, one site told us they had a team of volunteers and staff making outbound wellness calls. They were offering home delivery of food pantry items, but most people just wanted to chat.

At a site in Minnesota they are calling over 1000 members with 3 basic questions
- Do you have food?
- Do you have access to your medications?
- Do you have critical health issue(s) that need attention?

Staff said that people are extremely appreciative and very excited to be able to talk.

Centers have also seen a huge surge of community people looking to help. Harnessing that resource would be very beneficial. Although sites may struggle with mobilizing the volunteer base at this time, since most staff are working from home. If looking for new volunteers for this purpose be sure to include training and getting background checks.

Call tips include:
- This may be the only check in call an individual is receiving. Staff in Florida told us that several older adults cried over the phone, they were so grateful that someone was checking in on them.
- Use a friendly tone of voice and identify yourself as soon as possible when making the call. Spend as much time talking as feels comfortable or appropriate.
- If a participant shares a problem or mentions a medical concern, be sure to follow up with referrals. Referral areas might include assistance with meals, chore services, transportation, grocery delivery, or case management.
- Schedule a pre-arranged time to call and include how often you'll make the call.
- Check on your participants basic contact information and ask who to call in the event that they do not pick up at their normal check in time call.
- If you do use volunteers, remember:
  - To have them trained on policies and confidentiality.
  - Be sure to conduct background checks on all prospective volunteers.

Asessing Risk

The Baltimore County Department on Aging determined who they needed to call first for a wellness check by using the data they had gotten from their annual assessment. They included the Adult Well Being Assessment as part of their yearly participant survey.

They segmented their 20,000+ senior center members by:

- Their social isolation score found on the Adult Well-being Assessment (anyone with a 3,4 or 5 was called)
- Those living alone
- Those with a high Determine Nutrition Checklist score
- Age – they started with 80 years and older and then went to younger age categories.

It was really helpful be able to identify those most at risk first and then move to those with other supports (i.e., living with spouse of family, not isolated/lonely, younger).

Adult Well-being Assessment Tailored for Aging Adults

Part of the 100 Million Lives Aging Hub project is a promising IHI survey tool, known as the Adult Well-being Assessment. The tool is a validated, self-reported survey that asks individuals to rate their overall well-being; finances; state of their physical, mental, and spiritual health; and social support. NCOA added a measure related to social isolation and loneliness, a common and significant issue among older adults. For a simple guide to using the Adult Well-being Assessment (AWA), download here.

Wellness Call Guide Script

Hi, my name is: _____ I am with the {your senior center} I am checking in to see how you are doing today?

1. We've all been asked to stay home due to the Coronavirus, how is that going for you?

2. How are you feeling? Are you experiencing any symptoms of a cold or flu (fever, cough, chills or shortness of breath)? *If yes, say "people who are not feeling well should call their doctor for guidance. Do not go to the doctor's office, Urgent-Care or Emergency Room unless you have been instructed to do so."*

3. Is there anything you need or do you have any questions? (Adequate food)

   Yes or No - *If yes, please elaborate! If you do not have and answer, tell them you will find out and get back to you.*

4. Would you like me to call and check in again?

   Yes or No - *If yes, please note frequency.*

5. Have you received your Census postcard? The form is completed on-line, do you need help with that?

   Yes or No - *If the answer is Yes, say "I will have X call you and he can help you get the form submitted"*

_____

Reminders:

2. Please follow the preventative guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control. (See CDC Coronavirus (COVID-19) Quick Reference Guide)
3. {include local senior center number or best local number]. Your call will be returned!
4. Remember to log all calls.

Requests for supp[1]ort may be referred to:

➢ United Way – 211, a free, confidential service to find local resources 24 hrs. a day at **211.**

[Include local support information]

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[1] Script from the Better Choices, Better Health Program.

Senior Centers Virtual Programming

Senior Center professionals shared these ideas during two recent NISC meetings. Programming ideas range from low-tech for those without computer capability to online programs.

No Technology

In Wabash County Indiana, they have reinstituted mailed newsletters. Their first issue contained a listing of all the resources available in the community. Their next issue will have some virtual programming in place.

At Jewish Family Service in San Diego they are asking participants to write encouraging letters to senior center staff, meal staff, grocery store workers, etc. to show their gratitude. They are also matching participants to be pen pals.

Sunshine kits are being added to home delivered meals packages. In Illinois, senior center staff are going to local Facebook groups to ask for donations of puzzles and other fun items to make the kits. The items are delivered to the center where volunteers pack up individual kits.

Purpose driven programming

Kernersville Senior Enrichment Center, NC and Jewish Family Service in San Diego, CA shared this great idea to activate all those older adults that like to sew. They asked their participants to sew masks. In San Diego the masks are being used for food distribution workers and for their drivers.

As you know, the supply of face masks are at a critical all-time low throughout the entire nation. As a community, this is a great way we can band together and make a huge difference in this time of need!

According to the CDC website "Fabric face masks are NOT a substitution for N95 masks and while wearing homemade face masks will not prevent catching a respiratory illness, they can help reduce the spread of large particles when someone sneezes or coughs." In addition to helping medical staff during critical shortages, these masks can be used at home as well.

Joann's Fabric Stores has free kits to make 5 masks (first come first served). You must pick the kits up and return completed masks. The stores will donate to local hospitals.

Below you will find some links for DIY Face Masks:

- How to sew a bias tape surgical face mask with flexible nose
- How to SEW a Medical FACE MASK // TUTORIAL
- Picture tutorial

<u>Minimal Technology</u>

For those without computers, videos that were developed by senior center staff during a Facebook live session or with a smart phone are also planned to be shared with the local TV station to be shown in the community. Participants enjoy seeing familiar faces.

Rufty Holmes Senior Center, NC is using conference calling to connect their small groups. The crocheting group is chatting, and book group discussion are being connected. This is especially important for those without computers or Facebook. They are using a conference call program through Elevate called GoMeet, another platform mentioned was FreeConferenceCall.com.

Phone trees have been developed within senior center groups to encourage wellness checks within participants.

<u>Technology Needed</u>

Senior Center professionals are connecting to participants virtually using Facebook Live, Zoom and other online platforms. Here are a few scheduling ideas:

Use Facebook Live

Georgia has a great example of a **Facebook Live** program. See the description of an NISC Award of Excellence winner **Yoga with Yoni on Facebook Live.** It is a weekly yoga program offered at the Kinship Care Resource Center, Jonesboro, GA.

Create a Facebook Group

One local community created a Facebook group **"Helping Neighbors Around Palatine."** It's only been around for one week and already has over 1,000 members. They receive requests of people in need and their "neighbors" are dispatched to help – walk a dog, pick up a prescription, make a friendly phone call. It's been amazing to see. This may be cropping up in many communities nationwide.

Senior Center staff are tapping into this resource to solicit donations and build good will with other community members for long term assistance. We received many donated care packages as a result of the group

Connecting with Zoom

North Shore Senior Center, Illinois has started online presentations, clubs, and discussion groups using Zoom. They report "It is working great!" They did their first Current Events discussion group yesterday with 30 people, and just finished with a History of Singing in the Rain with 135 people attending. Mary Staackmann, Director of Lifelong Learning said, "Everyone has been so grateful to reconnect with other members and their favorite instructors."

They are trying to schedule at least one activity or class each weekday. Instructors have been very willing to work this way, and members have been eager to do this, and have mustered all their tech skills to take part. She said, "It's not too complicated for most people".

At the Friendship Center in Winona, MN, their virtual programming is held daily using Zoom. Their programming includes:

- 1 exercise program each day (Zumba, Yoga, Strength & Balance, NIA, Tai Chi).
- Fitness Center is doing daily Zoom room reach out to members for strength training, cardio, etc.
- They have set up our Memory Café' and Dementia support groups in Zoom room as well.
- They conduct a test run prior to the actual program so that kinks can be worked out (people don't realize they don't have a webcam or microphone, where the mute is, etc.)
- They use Facebook Live for outdoor events (hiking, biking) with our GoPro

The Baltimore County Department on Aging is using **BurnAlong** – This site has a wealth of exercise and wellness programs that people can participate in with their friends. Instructors can upload their classes so members can follow. A small fee applies but the program includes a way that your instructors can get paid.

A few free national online classes include:

Planet Fitness offers a free 20-minute class daily at 4 pm PT, 5 pm MT, 6 pm CT, 7 pm ET for 20 minutes, streamed live on Facebook.

Share the Yale Science of Well-Being Class
One of the big ideas behind "The Science of Well-Being," Yale's most popular class of all time, is that true happiness doesn't come from your circumstances or your achievements. It comes, professor Laurie Santos, PhD, told CNN, from simple daily practices like being grateful, living in the present moment, and connecting with others.

Now might be the best time to tune in to her massively popular course, which has been available online for about two years via Coursera. It's free to audit the classes, and costs $49 for access to the full course materials and assignments (plus a certificate of completion). Over one million people have already signed up for the next semester of the class, which started March 24.

Be sure to go to the last page for an extensive list of **Online Resource** opportunities to share.

Schaumburg Township, Illinois
<u>Virtual Programming Options – Adults</u>

Please note, Schaumburg Township does not recommend or endorse any referral or program. We have not checked or verified content. Please use discretion before viewing. Every effort has been made to check accuracy; if you notice something is not working, please contact us at 847-884-0030

ARTS AND CULTURE

Broadway Plays and Musicals
https://tinyurl.com/wyq8vsx
15 Broadway Plays and Musicals you can watch on stage from home

Public Library Free Access
https://tinyurl.com/vfzuern
Anyone with a library card and iOS or Android phone can loan an e-book in the collection. There may be waitlists for popular titles. Must download app SimplyE.

Virtual Museum Tours
https://tinyurl.com/wp2gmtw
12 Famous Museums offer virtual tours of their galleries.

Virtual Opera Performances
https://tinyurl.com/qvvbtvv
Metropolitan Opera announced it would stream encore presentations on their website each night at 7:30 PM. You can also stream through the Met Opera's on-demand app.

EXERCISE
Unfold Yoga and Wellness - Digital
https://tinyurl.com/yx36bem5
A series of FREE, live, web-based, 20 minute movement and meditation classes. Recorded sample classes also available anytime.
The first Thursday of every month at 1:30 PM

Planet Fitness Home Work-Ins
https://tinyurl.com/ukxdgye
Free in-home workouts for Planet Fitness members and non-members. Recorded classes available anytime. Streamed live daily at 6 PM.

MISCELLANEOUS
Chatter Pack
https://tinyurl.com/tr9j5jz
A variety of online resources for enrichment: Virtual tours, online learning, geography & nature, music, arts & culture, literature, entertainment, anxiety & mental health, prayer

Ivy League Online Classes
Freecodecamp.org/news/ivy-league-free-online-courses-a0d7ae675869/
Over 450 online courses are available for free through all eight Ivy League schools

VIRTUAL SENIOR CENTERS

Programs listed below allow people to call a conference call line using their phone or log into an internet connection to access fun and interesting enrichment and education sessions. Each program is open to all US residents; there may be small fees, but we suggest reaching out directly for more information.

Covia Well Connected
https://covia.org/services/well-connected/
Program guide:
https://covia.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Well-Connected-Winter2020-FINAL.pdf
Register for programs: 877-797-7299

Lifetime Connections Without Walls
https://www.familyeldercareorg/programs/lifetime-connections-without-walls/
Program Guide: https://www.familyeldercare.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/LCWW-Winter-2020-Catalog.pdf
Register for programs: 888-500-6472

Dorot USA University Without Walls
https://dorotusa.org/our-programs/at-home/university-without-walls
Program Guide: https://dorotusa.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/DOROT_UWW_Brochure_20_SINGLES_0.PDF
Register: 212-769-2850

Mather Lifeways
https://www.mather.com/neighborhood-programs/telephone-topics
Program Guide:
https://www.mather.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/TeleTopicsMARCH20webemail.pdf
Register: 888-600-2560 or email teltopics@mather.com

4 Programming Ideas from the NISC Programs of Excellece Competition

Yoga with Yoni on Facebook Live

KINSHIP CARE RESOURCE CENTER, JONESBORO,

Yoga with Yoni on Facebook Live is a weekly program offered at the Kinship Care Resource Center, in the caregiver's home or anywhere with an internet connection. Kinship Care participants can come to the center for Yoga class or they can follow along in the privacy of their own home. Yoga instructions are broadcast on a live feed on Facebook.
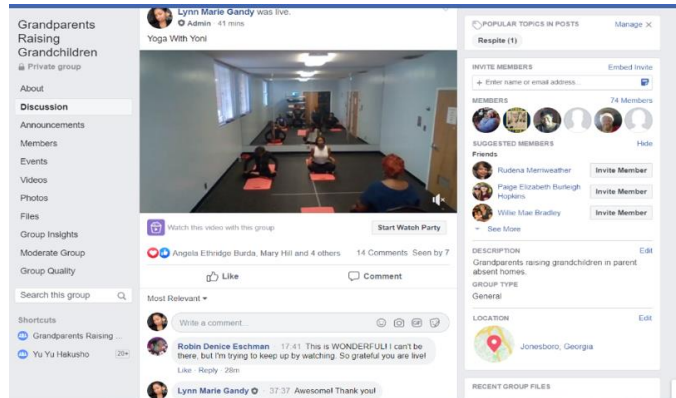
The center's yoga instructor, Yoni, hosts a traditional exercise session in the center on a specific date and time. A second staff member will connect to Facebook, position the webcam and begin live streaming the class. During the live feed, off-site participants are encouraged to "check-in" by commenting or liking the feed. They were also asked to participate in a brief five question survey at the end of class. A link to the survey was provided during the class.

The use of technology makes this program delivery possible to all who have a computer, tablet or smartphone with internet capabilities. By logging into Facebook, they can participate in class real time or at a later hour, when it may be more convenient. Technology is here and multi-site simulcasts of classes are the next wave of the future for seniors. We at the Kinship Care Resource Center stand ready to conquer this challenge with fierce determination.

This innovative program is significant because it allows classes that have been primarily held in the center to now be taken at home. It also encourages the use of technology to obtain services.

In the 70's and 80's the current generation of older caregivers would exercise at home with television shows like "Jane Fonda's Workout" or "Wake up with Joni". Now caregivers can "Yoga with Yoni" anywhere with an internet connection.   Through the use of technology, service provision of healthy programs in a forum similar to the past, can reach a diverse audience of seniors without transportation or self-consciousness barriers.

Outcomes: Participants benefited from this class by strengthening their flexibily and balance. By offering this program both in person and online, clients are able to participate more often.

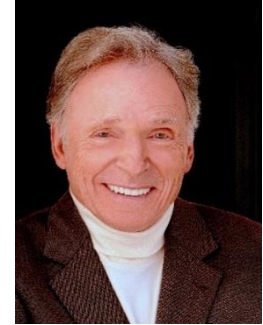**Evaluation:** A short survey was administered online, to participants to gauge program success.

Number of staff or volunteers needed: 2
Cost: Expense: 0 Revenue: 0 Net: 0
Contact: Angela Burda, Kinship Care Resource Center
849 Battlecreek Rd, Jonesboro, GA
angela.burda@claytoncountyga.gov

Program Sharing: An Interview with Dick Cavett

MATHER LIFEWAYS, EVANSTON, IL

We wanted to explore the possibility of sharing a single lifelong learning program, using videoconferencing technology, at all of our various Mather locations.

In order to make the program successful, we decided to choose an older adult celebrity guest who might appeal to all our audiences. We decided to conduct an interview with former talk-show host Dick Cavett and stream the interview with Zoom videoconferencing technology to nine different Mather locations: our three Mather cafes in Chicago; our three life-plan communities in Evanston, Wilmette, and Tucson; two of our Chicago neighborhood locations in Skokie and Morton Grove; and our telephone program called Telephone Topics.

Our interviewer, Walter Podrazik, who teaches television history at UIC, was located in Evanston, and Dick spoke to us from his home in Montauk, New York. The program ran for about an hour, and the interview included six delightful video clips of celebrity guests from Dick's shows, including people like Robert Mitchum, Bette Davis, Katherine Hepburn, Jack Benny, Groucho Marx, and Salvadore Dali. Dick was his usual charming, urbane, and witty self, and the program was a complete success with approximately 150 participants altogether organization-wide. This kind of a program was relatively easy to conduct and could be easily replicated by other organizations.

This successful program demonstrates that we can do much more in the way of sharing programs using videoconferencing technology. This will reduce the amount of time that staff at all of our locations have to devote to program planning and at the same time bring together all of our communities by sharing in a common experience. This kind of program sharing is also good for our presenters because it enables us to offer them a much larger audience than they would have at any single location, and it enables them to give a presentation without the additional time spent traveling to and from a certain location.

Outcomes: Our program participants were thoroughly delighted with the experience and enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about a person with whom they were all quite familiar. They also came to recognize that long-distance programs using videoconferencing technology can be quite as engaging as having a live speaker. Our Mather organization benefited by learning how videoconferencing technology can help create an extraordinary experience for our customers and residents.

Evaluation: No participant survey conducted – participant interviews indicated a tremendous success.

Number of staff or volunteers needed: 12 people. One staff person at each of the nine locations, one interviewer, one program coordinator, and one director.

Cost: Expense: 0 Revenue: 0 Net: 0

Contact: Chuck Freilich, Mather Lifeways
1603 Orrington Avenue, Suite 1800
Evanston, IL, cfreilich@matherlifeways.com

The Westshore Collaborative Website: "Casting a Wider Net"

WESTLAKE SENIOR & COMMUNITY SERVICES

Recognizing that "alone we can do so little, together we can do so much", 8 municipal senior centers from Greater Cleveland, spanning 2 counties, came together to share resources in a unique way. Together, we secured funds to help us build www.westshoreseniors.org, a website that combines our 8 senior center activity calendars, as well as information and resources, in an easily searchable, modern, but senior-friendly way.This helps our current patrons, many of whom we already share. They do not have to subscribe to or rifle through 8 different newsletters. More so, it helps us "cast a wider net", reaching people who would not normally think about using a senior center.

Our website comes up in a Google search, which is how younger seniors, as well as adult-children of seniors, and senior professionals would be looking for information. In this way, we are forging ahead in making our information and services available and known to more people, without increasing our size. We see this as a viable way to manage the demographic growth. One of the functions of our website is the ability to search a topic, "chair yoga" for example, and in an instant learn of all the different options "time, day, location" available in all 8 senior centers. Other functions include tabs for social service resources by city and county, information about volunteer opportunities, blogs on senior-centric topics, contact emails and photographs. It is a "one-stop-shop", but not a "one-size-fits-all" approach to service delivery.

The Westshore Collaborative Website is significant because 8 communities moved from competition to collaboration. It required cooperation from 8 mayors, 8 city councils and 8 senior center staffs. The primary benefit to our participants is accessibility to:

- A one-stop-shop of program information for 8 centers, eliminated8 separate newsletters.
- A senior-centric website, westshoreseniors.org was designed for and tested by seniors..
- Senior-centric content. In addition to programming, the website also offers social services available in all 8 communities, as well as 2 counties, and a blog that features a variety of topics written by a variety of regional organizations.

Observable Measures:Our primary measurement is data provided about the website via Google Analytics. We track unique visits and total visits, time spent on the site, page views and average visit duration, among other metrics.

Number of Staff/Volunteers: 4 staff hours per month x 8 senior centers is what is required to maintain the website on a monthly basis. Costs:Expenses: We received funding $26,000which paid a web-designer and project manager to construct the website. Annually we will owe $200 to maintain the licenses for the site.

Contact: Lydia Gadd, Westlake Senior & Community Services
29694 Center Ridge RoadWestlake, OH lgadd@cityofwestlake.org

The Selfie Project

OLD BRIDGE TOWNSHIP, OLD BRIDGE, NJ

It's amazing to see how a single technology can empower seniors. However, learning and adapting to new technology is not only challenging but also frustrating for an older adult. Anxiety, resistance, anticipation, confusion, stress and uncertainty are common feelings when trying to overcome a learning gap. In order to make this process fun for our seniors at the Old Bridge Senior Center, we introduced a "technology" program entitled "The Selfie Project". To eliminate resistance to learning something new, we encouraged our seniors to get out their smart phones and take photos and "selfies" that they could then text and share with their family and friends.

During this month-long project, seniors were asked to take selfies doing a variety of activities from exercise to dancing, to riding on our bus, shopping and at special events. The selfies were then sent to our staff via e-mail or text, which were then imported into an old fashioned Polaroid photo. The selfie had to include a hashtag as well. While some did not know what the hashtag was for, we were able to explain what Instagram is, hoping that some might pick it up.

Seniors should be able to use their cell phones in a fun way to communicate with family and friends instead of just calling a doctor or for a ride. Opening this door to visual communication provides them with the ability to go from a basic cell phone skill to advanced uses such as Facebook, Instagram, Snap Chat to continue to be engaged with ever changing technology.

Outcomes: The participants learned a basic cell phone skill and had fun doing it.

Measurement Tools: The amount of photos we received, the daily questions and answers for help, and the energy and effort put into the project by the senior.

Number of Staff/Volunteers Required: Two

Contact: Diane Amabile, Old Bridge Township,
1 Old Bridge Plaza*,* Old Bridge *NJ*,
damabile@oldbridge.com

Bingo with a Twist

[Insert your center's name] BINGO

B	I	N	G	O
List 3 things: you love about your favorite TV show or movie	**Complete:** 20 arm curls 20 knee lifts 20 ankle rolls	Take a Walk **OR** Get some Sun!	**Take 3 deep breaths!** • In through your nose, count 1…2…3… • Hold, count 1…2…3… • Out through your mouth, count 1…2…3…	**Clean out your junk drawer!** Throw away garbage, wash the drawer and share the weird items you find with us.
List 3 things: that you are grateful for today!	**Call:** a senior center friend or a family member!	**Clean out your pantry/cupboards.** How many expired items do you have?	**Share:** an easy recipe on Thursday's (3/19) recipe Facebook post!	**Name all 50 States!** NO CHEATING!
Drink 64 oz. of water in one day! Daily Suggestion Source: webmd.com	**Stimulate your mind!** Complete one crossword, word search, Sudoku or other puzzle	★	**Reminisce!** Look through old photos	**Listen to music that makes you happy!**
Take a selfie! Send to a friend or the WCCOA Facebook page	**Write about:** A positive & memorable time in your life.	How many words can you come up with in two minutes using the letters from: **CORONAVIRUS**	**Mail:** a friend or family member a letter	**Play a Card Game!**
Make something creative (Ex. Cooking, drawing, craft, etc…)	**Pay it forward!** Give someone a compliment	**List 3 things:** you love about your local Senior Center!	**Write down:** a piece of advice you would give to younger generations.	**Purge!** Go through your phone and clean out apps/pictures that you no longer want or use.

HOW TO PLAY: Complete a row vertically, horizontally or diagonally. Let us know when you have achieved a BINGO and we will enter one ticket into our raffle with your name on it! Contact us via email at [insert an email address] or through Facebook Messenger.

FIVE BINGO MAXIMUM = 5 RAFFLE TICKET MAXIMUM

Winner will be drawn on Facebook LIVE, [add date]!

Wood County Committee On Aging, Bowling Green, Ohio shared this engaging way to play virtual Bingo on Facebook

HOW TO PLAY: Complete all of the activities in a row vertically, horizontally or diagonally. Let the center know when you have achieved a BINGO and they will enter one ticket into their raffle with your name on it! Contact them by email.

Five Bingo Maximum = 5 raffle tickets.

Winner is drawn on Facebook Live at a set time.

Two NISC partners, Barrie Atkin, who worked with NISC to produce Marketing for Any Senior Center resource guide and Ruthann Dobek, Executive Director of the Brookline MA Senior Center, who is a NISC member and a pilot site partner that implemented Lyft ridesharing at their center, co-wrote this thoughtful article on maintaining and strengthening connections within your community.

Closed due to COVID-19? –
How to make your senior center stand out
in your community during the crisis

By Barrie Atkin, MBA & Ruthann Dobek, LICSW

Yes, the Covid-19 virus is dangerous and disruptive. Your Senior Center is probably closed – or at least off-limits to groups and gatherings. You may be working from home.

Even with so many events cancelled, you still have opportunities to increase community awareness of your Senior Center and the value of your organization.

Here are some strategies for how you can maintain – and perhaps enhance - your Senior Center as a vital community resource during this virtual time when you're not meeting with people directly.

[Note: we do not have any affiliation and are not receiving any revenue from any of the programs or services we mention in this article.]

2. Set up a Virtual Meeting Platform

Many of us will have to do our meetings, networking, and work sessions virtually. Set yourself up with an app or platform that allows for conferencing and meetings online.

A Virtual meeting platform is a way to be in meetings with others – with audio and/or video. You've probably already been a part of virtual meetings. If you want or need to be in contact with others, and especially with groups, or managing meetings, having your own virtual platform will allow you to host your own meetings.

For very basic needs, FaceTime (for Apple products) works and Skype is also good for 1:1 or a small group.

For more robust needs, a professional video conferencing software is imperative, one that offers both audio and video – so that you can both hear and see the other members in the meeting. Also look for a platform that provides a way to record the conversation. This provides you with a document of what was discussed. If you or your team require a written version, you can upload your audio file and have it transcribed or transferred to text.

Many municipalities will have a license for such platforms. If your Senior Center is a municipal organization, check with your IT department. The Town of Brookline uses Cisco Webex.

Zoom and GoToMeeting are two additional popular platforms. The Free version of Zoom limits sessions to 40 minutes. A Premium subscription does not have this limit.

2. Use FaceBook (and other Social Media Tools) for Greater Visibility

You can use your FaceBook page and your website to:
- Post emergency information.
- Share resources for people in need.
- List phone numbers to call for help.
- Remind your community that you are available and are practicing social distancing.
- Collect names of community volunteers.

Be sure to post such information on community websites as well. Submit articles and updates to your local media, including newspapers, community websites, list serves, etc.

Check if your local Public Access TV station is open. Ask them to show some of your past interviews or programs that may be relevant or helpful to people at home. Arrange to be interviewed remotely to give important information and support.

Partner with other organizations that are responding to the crisis such as healthcare organizations, civic and religious institutions, local social services, your Area Agency on Aging or ASAP. Remind them of your availability and your critical role as an expert on older adult issues and needs.

3. Keep Your Older Adults Engaged

Look for ways to reach out to your older adult community. Most of your participants are at home. If you are a municipal agency, use your town system to make a call to everyone.

- Remind them how to call to get help.
- Remind them to reach out to friends and neighbors who may live alone.

Use your newsletter to give your participants resources that you may not normally have space to include. Also suggest ways to stay active at home and in touch with others. MySeniorCenter's most recent FunFacts "Keep Socialization Alive" offers creative ideas for how to prevent loneliness. http://www.myseniorcenter.com/funfacts/March192020.html

This can be an opportunity to expand your reach. Offer a special email where residents can send non-urgent messages and concerns. Ask them to provide their emails so they can get email updates from you.

For emailing to groups, consider using an email platform such as Constant Contact or Mail Chimp that allows you to brand your message and provide a professional look and feel to your communications.

4. Advocate for your Community's Older Adults

Be in touch with your community's emergency management team, your town government and other local leadership. Remind them of your expertise and wealth of information about older adults and the resources you offer.

Evaluate and identify where you might have gaps of services. At some point, life will return to "normal". What can you do now to plan and strengthen your service and program delivery at that time?

5. Update your Brand Identity

In the short-term of this crisis, focusing on your brand may not be your primary priority. However, as the weeks go on and you have established new routines, consider evaluating your brand identity. This could provide a creative distraction! Research shows that organizations that plan ahead during a market downturn do better when the environment returns to "normal". If you can, take this time to strengthen your brand and your presence in your community.

Perhaps you've been meaning to upgrade your Senior Center's FaceBook profile or website. Often these are low priority tasks compared to keeping your Senior Center going on a daily basis and interacting with your participants.

Think about your available brand elements – your logo, tagline, use of color palette and fonts, your visuals and videos on your website, your testimonials, your newsletter. Do they reflect your most current thinking? Are they consistent with each other? Is it time to update the brand tools you are currently using, or do you want to develop new ones?

Perhaps one of your staff members has the time to work on this now. Or use your community websites to search for a volunteer.

For new graphics, you can use a DIY creative tool like Canva, source brand identity from online creative sites like 99design or work with a graphic designer.

Concluding Comments

As you're dealing with this unprecedented crisis, be sure to take care of yourself. It's hard to take care of others if you're worn down by the news and barrage of demands on you. Practice some self-care, whether it's going for a walk, escaping into a TV show, movie or book, or using mindfulness/meditation.

Stay connected with your friends, family and colleagues.

Whatever you do, stay safe – and look out for the more vulnerable and isolated individuals in your community.

About Us

Barrie Atkin, MBA is a marketing, strategy and fundraising consultant for mission-driven organizations. Barrie's clients have ranged from ESPN, Rodale and The Nature Conservancy to Massachusetts Medical Society, the Massachusetts Council on Aging and many senior centers. She is the co-author of "*Marketing Tools for Any Senior Center*" and has helped many organizations with rebranding. She can be reached at Barrie@AtkinAssociates.com; 781-788-6600
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Ruthann Dobek, LICSW has been Executive Director of the Brookline MA Senior Center and Council on Aging since 2002. She is also co-Chair of the Brookline Community Aging Network. Ruthann has been recognized by the Massachusetts Council on Aging as an Innovator of the Year and was named Social Worker of the Year by the Massachusetts NASW. She has piloted many innovative programs in caregiving, transportation and homecare for older adults. She can be reached at Rdobek@brookolinema.gov

Tips & Tools for Serving Your Participants
From NCOA

Have a participant who needs emergency assistance? Find our resources for urgent relief on our older adults/caregiver's page.

- 4 Coronavirus Scams to Avoid, March 19
- Encouraging Older Adults to Stay Active and Safe During the Coronavirus Pandemic, March 18
- Do Your Part to Stem COVID-19: An Intergenerational Call to Action, March 16
- Coronavirus: What Older Adults Need to Know, March 11
- COVID-19 Resources for Senior Centers, March 10

Archived

- NISC Leaders for a Conversation about Your Senior Center and Coronavirus, held Thursday, March 19, 1 pm ET
- Offering Evidence-Based Programs During the COVID-19 Pandemic, March 25
- Delivering Aging Mastery® Online, March 20: This webinar offers suggestions for holding classes virtually and using the self-directed Aging Mastery® Starter Kits. (The Aging Mastery Program is not included on the Approved Evidence-Based Health Promotion/Disease Prevention Programs, but some states offer it locally.)
- Responding to COVID-19 and CDSME Workshops, March 18

From Our Partner Organizations

- Resources for working remotely, including how to use different technology platforms, at LinkedIn
- FAQ on Medicare Coverage and Payment for COVID Testing and Treatment from the Kaiser Family Foundation
- Get a comprehensive listing of links to state protocols, proclamations, and materials compiled by ADvancing States
- Media templates and crisis communications resources from LeadingAge
- Preparedness checklist for events from the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases
- Toolkit: Senior nutrition network COVID-19 response townhall from the National Resource Center on Nutrition & Aging

Where to Get Food Help Now

Share this information with your colleagues!

Affording healthy food is a challenge for many older Americans, but the spread of COVID-19 has made matters worse. Whether you're facing difficult financial times or are unable to leave your home, there are resources that may be able to help.

Meals on Wheels
With a network of over 5,000 programs, Meals on Wheels is offered in nearly every community in America. Meals on Wheels volunteers are committed to continuing delivery of nutritious food to homebound older adults and ensuring their health and social well-being.
Enter your zip code to search for your local program.

Food Banks
Feeding America operates over 200 food banks and 60,000 food pantries across the United States, each serving a large area. Many food banks are adapting the way they serve their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic to follow physical distancing guidelines, such as setting up smaller community drop-off points.
Use the food bank locator tool to find one in your community.

SNAP/Food Stamps
The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps people to afford food at over 250,000 participating grocery stores and shops across the country. While you must have limited income to get SNAP, many older adults and persons with disabilities can deduct medical expenses above $35/month to help get SNAP and increase the amount of monthly SNAP benefits. Find your state's SNAP application.

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service, which runs SNAP, has given states options to make it easier for families to get SNAP during the coronavirus pandemic, including not requiring a face-to-face interview, and temporarily raising the SNAP benefit to the maximum amount. Call your state hotline to see what may be offered in your area.

Remember: SNAP can only be used for purchasing food and seeds for growing food. It cannot be used to buy pet food, paper products, and other toiletries. However, changes to broaden what SNAP can be used for are being discussed at the state and federal level.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)
This program provides food and nutrition help at no cost. If you meet the program guidelines, you can pick up the food from your local food pantries or soup kitchens.

The types of food you can get are different depending on where you live, but usually include a lot of shelf-stable items such as pasta, dried beans, canned fruits and vegetables, and soups. To find out how to apply for the program, please contact your State Agency. They can let you know if you meet the program guidelines and where you can get the food.

You can also find out whether you can get TEFAP, SNAP, and other food benefits by going to BenefitsCheckUp.org and completing a free, confidential screening.

Other Resources

Many communities are mobilizing local volunteers and resources to assist those in need during this pandemic. To find out what additional help may be offered in your area we encourage you to contact the following:
- Please call your state or local 211 service (or visit 211.org)
- The Eldercare Locator can connect you with a variety of services, including transportation and benefits. Dial 1-800-677-1116 (weekdays, 9 am – 8 pm EST)
- BenefitsCheckUp.org can help you find benefits that cover a variety of needs, not just food. Support your receive can free up room in your budget for food, too. Make sure to complete a full, confidential screening

Online Resources

Share these resources with your participants so they can take a virtual tour of the Louvre, learn about the moonshot at the JFK library, create "science experiment" snacks with your grandchildren, all this and a hundred experiences are available online.

Note to participants: Feeling isolated and lonely! Missing your exercise or continuing education classes? Check out some great online resources to help you stay active while at home during the COVID-19 Outbreak.

Arts
Google Arts & Culture: +2000 partners from +80 countries
Heritage on the Edge: A project of Google Arts & Culture
Europeana: 50,000,000 European works of art, books, music, and more
Smithsonian Open Access: Search 2.8 million images and 3D Models
ArtUK: Art collections from 3,200 UK organizations
Mexican Ministry of Culture: Short films, books, radio, paintings, from all cultural orgs
Memorica: Open access Mexican culture content portal
China's National Cultural Heritage Administration: Virtual portal of 100 institutions
OpenGLAM: Aggregates 88 unique open collections
NASA Image & Video Library: All NASA content is in the public domain
DPLA: Digital Public Library of America
MIMO: Musical Instrument Museums Online (64,000+ instruments)
BioExplora: Natural science open collections portal (3D images, bio diversity)
Science Museum Group: Collections from five UK science museums (325,000+ objects)
York Museums Trust: Collections from various museums in Yorkshire, UK
Archaeological Analytics: Archaeological Open Access Collections
Digital Agnes: Canadian portal for curatorial research and online exhibitions
English Heritage: Variety of mediums of British content (Podcasts, videos, etc.)
Creative Commons: Aggregates all CC-licensed content and collections globally
Wikimedia Commons: Over 20,000,000 open images
Wikidata: "The Sum of all Paintings" metadata initiative via Wikimedia
Open Culture Coloring Pages: 113 museum coloring books
Global Museum: Portal for museum news, jobs, and resources
V21ArtSpace: Over 100 exhibit virtual tours
Arte.tv: Cultural documentaries, films, and more.

Connecting With Others
YouTube - https://www.youtube.com/
Instagram – https://www.instagram.com/
Facebook – www.facebook.com
Pinterest - https://www.pinterest.com/

Continuing Education
Ted Talks - https://www.ted.com/talks
Talks at Google - https://www.youtube.com/user/AtGoogleTalks
BigThink - https://bigthink.com/videos/
Luminosity - https://www.lumosity.com/en/
LearningRX - https://www.learningrx.com/what-is-brain-training-/

Exercise Classes
Link- https://forms.gle/5qVScXzKHWw41c176 - BCDA Stepping Challenge
https://youtu.be/qXlrMY-rUJ8 Teresa Reed Aerobic Video
https://go4life.nia.nih.gov/

Food Services
Grub Hub: https://www.grubhub.com/
Door Dash: https://www.doordash.com/
Postmates: https://postmates.com/
Food Pickup Locations in Baltimore County: https://bc-gis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Nearby/index.html?appid=2f9aa91a53c34f26afda8798024bfa75
Food to go Locator in Baltimore County: https://bc-gis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Nearby/index.html?appid=9f204a7f67cd433f9e38c67ba402757e
Amazon - https://www.amazon.com/
Target - https://www.target.com/
Walmart - https://www.walmart.com/

Libraries

US National Archives Catalog
Library of Congress
The National Archives, UK
Trove: National Library of Australia images, books, newspapers, maps, etc.
Biodiversity Heritage Library
Endangered Archives, British Library
Cambridge Digital Library
National Archives of Japan
Amsterdam City Archive
Louisiana Digital Library: 400,000+ digital items from archives, libraries, museums
Internet Archive: The Wayback Machine, digitized film, books, music, etc.
American Literature Portal, WikiSource
English Literature Portal, WikiSource
New York Public Library: 880,000+ digitized prints, manuscripts, videos, etc.
Villanova Digital Library
British Library of Illuminated Manuscripts
Arctos Database: Access to 3 million specimens and observations in 210 collections
https://maryland.overdrive.com/
https://www.bcpl.info/books-and-more/downloadables.html

Virtual Tours

Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford: Virtual Tour
Dalí Theatre-Museum, Catalonia: Virtual Tour
The Vatican: 360-degree Museum Tours
The Palace Museum: The Forbidden City, China, 360-degree Virtual Tour
Hallwyl Museum, Stockholm: VR Tour
Byzantine and Christian Virtual Museum: Virtual Tour
The Louvre, Paris: Virtual Tour
Vatican Museums: Virtual Tours
The Hermitage, Russia: Virtual Tour (YouTube)
Westminster Abbey, London: Virtual Tour
Canadian Museum of History: Virtual Tour
The Science Museum, London: Shipping Galleries Virtual Tour
Museum of Flight: Virtual Tour
Florence as it Was: 3D models of Florentine buildings, artworks, and squares
The Kremer Museum: VR Tour
Mexican National Institute of Anthropology & History: Virtual Tours (Flash)
National Museum of Natural History, US: Virtual Tour
National Archaeological Museum, Spain: Virtual Museum
São Paolo Museum of Art: Virtual Tour
The Frick, Pittsburgh: Virtual tours, online collections, activities
Cranbrook Art Museum, Michigan: Exhibit Virtual Tours
American Battlefield Trust: 360-degree Battlefield Tours
National Museum of the Great Lakes: Virtual Tour
Thomas Jefferson's Monticello: Virtual Tour
George Washington's Mount Vernon: Virtual Tours, timelines, etc.
Yellowstone National Park, US: Virtual Tours

Yosemite National Park, US: Virtual Tour
Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum: Virtual Tour
Cliffe Castle Museum: Virtual Tour
National Museum of the U.S. Air Force: Virtual Tour
Arizona State Museum: Virtual Tour
Vizcaya Museum and Gardens: Virtual Tour

Online Museum Exhibits
Girl Museum: Online Exhibits
Virtual Migration Museum: Interactive Online Experience / App
JFK Library: "Moonshot" App and Online Interactive
Virtual Museum of Canada: Virtual Exhibits and Cultural Content
Museum of Ontario Archaeology: "History of Ste. Marie II" Online Exhibit
Monterey Bay Aquarium: Animal Live Cams
Canadian Museum of History: Online Exhibitions
Remembering Lincoln, Ford's Theatre: Interactive online exhibit
M Woods, Beijing, China: Experimental Online Exhibition
Second Canvas Apps: 30 Museum Apps (Google Sheet)
Reina Sofía Museum Radio: Audiovisual resources; an acoustic museum experience
Smithsonian Latino Virtual Museum
National Museum of the U.S. Navy
National Women's History Museum
Smithsonian Learning Lab
MoMA Learning
Speed Art Museum: At-home art-making videos
The Field Museum: The Brain Scoop (YouTube)
North Carolina Museum of Art: Learn, (collections, videos, curriculum)
Sketchfab: 3D Models (link goes to cultural-specific search)
The Hammer: Contemporary Art programs, (YouTube)
Royal Albert Memorial Museum: Exeter Time Trail (Interactive timeline)
Les Fruits de Mer: Activities, books, films about Caribbean wildlife
Museum of Early Trade and Crafts: Recipes, Games, Coloring Pages, etc.
Museum Strathroy-Cardoc: Sydenham River Discovery online exhibit (Flash)
Denver Art Museum: Artist videos
Thomas Cole National Historic Site: Videos
Virginia Museum of History & Culture: Lecture series videos
Better World Museum: Draw Together in VR, Bob Ross-style videos
Discover XR: The Future of Social Media & Online Learning (YouTube)
KaiXR: Free Museum VR Field Trips (no VR gear needed)
HistoryView.org: Virtual Reality Tours
Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum: Activities, Coloring Pages
Paleontological Research Institution: Resources for Families, K-12 Students, College Students
Tate: Tate Kids (Games and quizzes, videos, kids' art, etc.)
Metropolitan Museum of Art: MetKids
Exploratorium: Science Experiment "Snacks"
American Museum of Natural History: Ology science website for kids
Shedd Aquarium: Sea Curious- Kid Questions, Animal Answers (YouTube)
Glazer Children's Museum: Online Activities

Children's Museum of South Dakota: Recipes for Play
Suzhou Museum: Online Mini-Games
Pittsburgh Children's Museum: The MAKESHOP Show (Makerspace Blog)
The Children's Museum of Indianapolis: Museum at Home
Long Island Children's Museum: Play Outside Ideas
Norton Simon Museum: Art Projects for Kids (scroll to section)
The Kennedy Center: ArtsEdge, art education resources
Canadian Museum of Nature: Coloring Pages, Arctic, Garden, Dinosaurs
MCA Chicago: "Art Like Me" Culturally-Relevant Art Workbook for Kids
National Museum of Australia: "Fun at Home" DIY activities
Smarthistory: Source of history content for Khan Academy
Frist Kids: Art activities and videos
iCivics: Virtual games (free beginning with Covid-19)
International Association of Children in Museums: Coronavirus Guide
Rijksstudio: Remix collections from Rijksmuseum
Naturalis: 40,000,000 natural science collections objects
SMK Open: National Gallery of Denmark Collections
The Belvedere, Vienna, Austria
Canadian Museum of History
UK Postal Museum
South West Collections, England
Brooklands Museum, Surrey, UK (cars, motorcycles, aircraft)
Birmingham Museums Trust, Birmingham, UK (art and history)
Paris Museums: Over 300,000 works
Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
Kröller-Müller Museum, The Netherlands
Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid, Spain
Munch Museum, Oslo, Norway (art by Edvard Munch)
Mori Art Museum, Tokyo
Museum of New Zealand
Open Access at the Met
New York Archaeological Repository: Nearly 1,000,000 objects
Cooper Hewitt, New York (historical and contemporary design)
Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio
Albright-Knox, New York
The Barnes Collection, Philadelphia
The Westmoreland Museum of American Art, Pennsylvania
Corning Museum of Glass, New York
The Guggenheim, New York
Delaware Art Museum
McMaster Museum of Art, Canada
Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Arts, Arizona
The Henry Ford, Michigan
Eskenazi Museum of Art, Indiana University
Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library & Museum, Virginia
Akron Art Museum, Ohio
Oakland Museum of California

National Museum of African American History & Culture
Chicago History Museum, Illinois
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (visual, performing, media arts)
The Hammer, LA (contemporary art)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA)
Crocker Art Museum, California
The Walters, Baltimore
Davison Art Center, Wesleyan University
Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois
The Khalili Collections: 35,000 works of art
M+ Collections: 5,000+ Cultural Objects
Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture
Latino Cultural Arts Center, Denver
Digital Cleveland History
New Museum Digital Archive
Royal Armouries Collections
The Latin American Art Museum of Buenos Aires (MALBA)
Xul Solar Museum, Argentina
National Museum of Fine Arts, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Chilean National Museum of Fine Arts

Music
Spotify - https://open.spotify.com/
iHeartRadio - https://www.iheart.com/playlist/
SoundCloud - https://soundcloud.com/
Radio.net - https://www.radio.net/
Mashable - https://mashable.com/2007/07/06/online-music/
Music on YouTube - https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-9-kyTW8ZkZNDHQJ6FgpwQ

Spiritual Resources
www.churchnativity.com
www.gfc.org

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