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Senior center acts to dispel myths

OPEN HOUSE: Not a residential facility, but a place full of activities.

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Anchorage Daily News
Staff

The biggest misconception about the Anchorage Senior Activities Center is its very nature. "We have a number who think it's a residential center," said Charles Osborne, program coordinator for the center. "They'll call and ask if we have openings for another resident."

In an attempt to dispel myths and to introduce the community to what it has to offer, the center is hosting its first open house, with hopes of making it an annual event. "Despite the fact that the senior center has been here 20 years, we still need to get the word out and let the community know who we are," Osborne said.

The open house, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday, will give visitors some idea of what goes on daily at the center through fitness room orientations, dance presentations, guided tours, art classes and demonstrations, card games, computer lab demonstrations and a visit with the center's writing group, the Living History Writers. Osborne said visitors will be greeted, given a tour and then allowed to wander to rooms and groups that interest them.

In addition, blood pressure and glucose level checks will be offered by the facility's nurses throughout the day.

According to Osborne, the center serves many purposes.

"We are a contact point for senior assistance like the Food Bank and helping with Medicare D. We have our own Lions Club unit and do a number of community service projects," he said. "The whole reason we exist is to improve the quality of life for seniors in Anchorage."

Membership at the center is \$35 per year. Membership for ages 55 and older includes voting rights; people younger than 55 can be associate members, with no voting rights. All members receive a monthly newsletter with articles focused on seniors and their concerns as well as a calendar of events.

Members may use the facility's fitness room, with rows of treadmills, stationary bicycles and weight machines, for \$25 a month. The fee helps maintain the equipment and allows users to attend group fitness classes as often as they wish.

Hallways lined with framed artwork and hanging quilts lead to the center's busiest wing -- the arts and crafts rooms. Equipped with several sewing machines and a \$20,000 Gammill quilting machine that center members purchased, the room buzzes with constant activity. Knitters, crocheters and quilters gather to work on projects several days a week. Many of the projects are done for the greater good, such as caps, gloves for the homeless and blankets donated to newborns at area hospitals. Some items are donated to the center's gift shop to help raise money for more activities. Betty Anderson, a member for 15 years, said the crafters are a close group who always welcome more.

"We'd love to see more people and see different skills," she said. "We also try to get together socially and meet for lunch or to celebrate birthdays."

"A lot of what makes this place what it is are the friendships," said Betty Russell, a member for two years. "We're like a family. We share the joys and sorrows in our lives with each other."

Crafts and fitness aside, the center also boasts the Arctic Rose Restaurant, which serves lunch from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Friday in its dining room. The restaurant is open to the public and offers a regular menu of entrees, sandwiches, salads and daily specials priced with a senior's limited income in mind.

"We try to give them as many options as we can," Osborne said. "And we're always open to new ideas. We're more than willing to develop programs that people want to see."

A prime example? Poker.

"After a number of requests, we're starting up a new card group that will teach members to play Texas Hold 'Em," he said. "It's a lot of fun around here, to say the least."

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IF YOU GO: The Anchorage Senior Activities Center open house will be from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday at 1300 E. 19th Ave. For more information, call 258-7823 or visit www.anchorageseniorcenter.org.

Illustration:

Graphic 1: SeniorCenter_051406.eps

ERIK HILL / Anchorage Daily News

Seniors taking the Muscle Power II class are put through their paces by instructor Bonnie Murphy in the new aerobics room Friday at the Anchorage Senior Activities Center. A center expansion has added 8,500 square feet to the facility, creating new space for exercise programs, the library, computers, crafts and storage.

Read more here: http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=doc&p_docid=111A4B1ACA6E4DA8&p_docnum=41&s_trackval=&s_subexpire=05/25/2014%2014:05%20PM&s_dlid=DL0114042518160710256&s_accountid=AC0114042518005509700&s_referrer=&s_siteloc=&s_orderid=NB0114042518050609833&s_docsleft=4&s_docstart=10&s_docsbal=docs%20remaining:%204&s_subterm=Subscription%20until:%2005/25/2014%2014:05%20PM&s_ecproduct=SBK-M10&s_docsread=6&s_ecprodtype=TEST&s_upgradeable=no&s_username=mapplegate#storylink=cpy