



Making a Difference

2016 – 2017

Nutrition, Food Safety, and Health Program Focus Team **Kansas Stay Strong Stay Healthy: A Strength Training Fall Prevention Program for Older Adults**

Grand Challenges

K-State Research and Extension: providing education you can trust to help people, businesses, and communities solve problems, develop skills, and build a better future.

Gayle Price
 Extension Specialist
 620-820-6123
 gprice@ksu.edu

Sharolyn Jackson
 Extension Specialist
 785-532-2273
 sharolyn@ksu.edu

Ashley Svaty
 Extension Agent
 785-524-4432
 asvaty@ksu.edu



Kansas State University
 Agricultural Experiment
 Station and Cooperative
 Extension Service
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Situation

Despite compelling research about the benefits of muscle strengthening, the majority of older adults, particularly women, do not currently perform these exercises. Reasons include: fear of injuring themselves, no experience with lifting weights, lack of access to a professional experienced with older populations, expense of fitness centers, and few community programs. Stay Strong, Stay Healthy (SSSH) addresses these challenges by providing a safe, welcoming environment where certified instructors teach older adults how to strengthen their muscles.

What We Did

Stay Strong, Stay Healthy is an eight-week 16 class program for older adults. The program goals and objectives are:

- To reduce the number of falls among older adults and increase their ability to continue living independently by improving their balance, flexibility and muscle and bone strength.
- Provide training, educational materials and support to certified instructors to ensure successful implementation and management of the SSSH program.

K-State Research and Extension agents, who are certified instructors, provided 48 SSSH courses totaling more than 768 classes reaching 647 participants. Two SSSH Level 1 certification trainings were held resulting in 22 additional certified instructors. One SSSH Level 2 certification training resulted in 17 certified instructors. Fifty-five SSSH certified instructors maintain current CPR first aid certification and participated in instructor updates to maintain required certification.

Outcomes

A pre- and post-assessment was conducted on each participant which assessed agility, balance, upper and lower body flexibility, and strength. Program impacts from 467 participants indicated that they improved or maintained on the following skills:

- Chair stand (lower body strength) – 91.5 percent
- 8 foot up and go (agility and dynamic balance) – 92.7 percent
- Sit and reach (lower body flexibility) – 85.2 percent
- Back scratch (upper body flexibility) – 76.6 percent
- Balance tests - 76.9 percent

A three-month follow-up survey of SSSH participants indicated they continued to exercise one or two times a week. Based on a 2015 CDC report, the average hospital cost of a fall injury is well over \$30,000. This evidenced-based program prevents falls while improving health and quality of life for participants.

Success Story

“I walk better and longer. Everyday life is easier and I feel more independent.”

“I have had to wash my hair by bending over because I couldn’t lift my arms. I caught myself by surprise when I realized I was washing my hair standing straight up. I haven’t been able to do that in 20 years.”