

Community Journal –by Jill May Chadwick

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“Help! I’ve fallen and I can’t get up!”

I remember this line from a Med-Alert bracelet commercial eons ago, never dreaming that some day it wouldn’t sound so funny. When we’re young, flexible, and bouncy, falling down might be embarrassing, but it isn’t frightening or dangerous. As we Baby Boomers age, more and more of us are living longer, yes, but are we living strong?

Kim Davis, Director of Steady for Life: Building Blocks for Healthy, Graceful Aging, had been working in the health care field for 23 years when she and several colleagues became increasingly concerned about the number of falls they were seeing in the Senior community. At the same time, the Center for Disease Control petitioned for help from medical communities for fall prevention. That spurred Kim Davis and four of her friends who worked with Seniors to create Steady for Life, Inc. – a 501 (C) (3) non-profit in January of 2014.

Since then, Director Kim Davis says, “Steady for Life has grown to include eight satellite locations in our county and is serving close to 350 senior adults.” Davis is proud of her “12 dynamic instructors” who lead classes in gentle yoga, balance exercise at three levels, Tai Chi, line dancing, and a relatively new class called ‘Rev It Up! Balance’ for students who have improved their fitness level and need a new challenge.

One such student is Jean McCrady, who joined the program in the Fall of 2014. McCrady says, “I can attest to the benefits of the program as measured by my running and trail climbing performances. It was about the time I enrolled in 2014 that I decided to attempt the Liz Hurley 5K Ribbon Run, and to my surprise, set a new 5K state record for Women, age 81.” McCrady has 5K times of 39plus minutes, a respectable pace for any age! Since that time, McCrady has “shaved 2 to 4 minutes off [her] trail ascent time and 4 to 6 minutes from the trail descent time” on her favorite mountain path in Colorado. She says, “I attribute these improvements to the Steady for Life workouts 2-4 times per week.”

Not all the Steady for Life students are athletes; many of them have rarely had time for exercise as they raised families and nurtured careers and now find themselves growing weaker, prone to tripping or falling and insecure about their health. Steady for Life has four levels of exercise, including beginner classes that can be done while sitting or supporting oneself with a chair. As participants grow stronger and more confident, the classes progress. Steady for Life, in fact, has a level for almost anyone.

Ed Ricks heard about the program from his friend Rajinder Mehta, who invited him to participate a little over a year ago. Ed is in decent shape, but has suffered injuries to his back for most of his adult life. Ricks says, “The classes’ emphasis on working the core seems to be very good for maintaining strength in my back. I have never been one to participate in

organized work outs (I stay pretty active outdoors), but I have been pleasantly surprised in this Steady for Life program.”

Jean McCrady and Ed Ricks appreciate the strength training, balance, and fitness aspects of the program – but both go further to praise the mental and social benefits of Steady for Life. McCrady says, “We enjoy traveling together as a Steady for Life group, dining, attending events locally and out of town, health seminars, screening, and much more. We look forward to seeing each other and encouraging one another in class, sharing experiences, and laughing together as we attempt moves and motions new to us. We have a variety of super instructors, all of whom are trained professionals with wide ranging experience, certifications, and training in physical fitness.” Ed Ricks adds, “I also participate in the Line Dancing class that meets every Friday, which is useful in developing the mental and physical coordination we require as we age. And the steps I learn have come in handy at weddings and parties.”

So come, all you Baby Boomers, who need to get out and move!

You can find the specific class schedules, locations, and the minimal monthly fee at www.steadyforlife.org. By the way, I was so impressed with the classes I observed that I wanted to be involved; with certification requirements completed on July 28th, I will be leading that Zumba class – come and join the fun!