Community Fall Prevention Exercise Program – Reducing Falls in Older Adults by participating in a Fall Prevention Exercise Program.

Interview: Russell Thorne August 12, 2020

This is an exciting time for our community. Each day I learn about another program or opportunity that presents itself. Today that opportunity is for our older adult population to get involved in a fall prevention exercise program. The Northern Health Region has created a community fall prevention exercise program that is ready to launch in our community once leaders are identified and trained. As an experienced fitness leader, I know how rewarding this career choice can be. I also appreciate the benefits of exercise and how it makes the body stronger, mind sharper, emotions stable, as well as the social component that goes along with any activity. Russell Thorne of the Northern Health Region has created an extensive combination of balance and strength exercises. Once the leaders are trained, the program will be offered to our older adults. The Northern Health Region have utilized The Pas Handi Van to bring older adults to the classes who may have barriers related to transportation. The Handi Van is a safe mode of transportation which provides for those who use walkers and wheelchairs or require some assistance with transportation. Social distancing practices must be respected so this will limit the number of seniors that can be in the program. However, it will not diminish the many benefits that the fall prevention exercise program will bring to the older adults involved.

Last year the Northern Health Region introduced our older adults to a program called “The Community Fall Prevention Exercise Program”. The older adults exercise program was delivered in The Pas three sessions a week, and two sessions a week in Flin Flon. Participant’s fitness was evaluated at the start and at the end of the program to see if there was any difference. In almost all cases, the older adults improved dramatically in all areas of fitness.

It has been documented that one in four older adults age 65+ fall every year. Many older adults experience unsteadiness when they are standing and walking and worry about falling. Falls are a serious threat to the health of our older adults. Fall prevention can help with maintaining independent living and education of how you can reduce falls in your own living space.

Balance and strength are the two key factors in staying upright on our feet as we age. Older adults are taught the importance of safe exercises that support strong bones and muscles, progressively adding more resistance and finding their balance with a structured, supported program that has been proven to be effective. Older adults also love to socialize and interact with the world. This program provides the opportunity for older adults to get out and do something that is going to move them towards a stronger, healthier body. The positive results that older adults experienced in The Community Fall Prevention Exercise Program proved to be exactly what older adults need to stay mobile and living independently.

There is documented evidence that proves that older adults who practice balance and movement will stay healthier. As we age and particularly after the age of 65, a fall can be a serious health concern and can lead to loss of independence, pain, suffering and in some cases death. The good news is that falls do not have to be your reality. They can be minimized and often prevented. Fall prevention education and a fall prevention exercise program has been designed specifically for building balance and strength in older adults. It will be offered at three different levels to include those who need to be supported seated. The other options for older adults are standing alone or standing with supports close by. This program will also provide educational information on how to stay healthy and fall free.

If you are looking for a change and want to become involved in leading or assisting with the fall prevention program this is the time for action. Russell Thorne is excited to train others the movements and exercise, as well as modifications for a safe training program. Russell Thorne has a strong background in exercise physiology and movement and years of experience in the fitness and wellness field. In his position with Northern Health Region he will be recruiting and training local community people who are interested in learning, leading and working with older adults.

Russell showed me the extensive training manual, which showed how to perform the exercise from a seated position, using balance equipment, standing, and standing with minimal support. The manuals have been created to assist the leaders. The positions will involve a group leader and possibly an assistant to the leader. The training will be taking place this fall. If you want to learn more about this program either as an older adult participant or are genuinely interested as a fitness leader to join the program please contact Russell Thorne at 204 627-6419 or email at rthorne@nrha.ca.