

Marquette University College of Nursing Pilots Senior Fitness Program

Marquette University's College of Nursing is partnering with St. Camillus Life Plan Community on a functional fitness project called Physical Activity for Life for Seniors (PALS). The project is being implemented by College of Nursing students along with St. Camillus staff, and incorporates specific physical activities for the residents of St. Camillus.

The PALS program, developed by Kimberlee Gretebeck, Ph.D., RN, associate professor and interim associate dean for research in Marquette's College of Nursing, is a 10-week physical activity program geared toward helping older adults maintain their physical function and independence. Individuals participate in 60-minute sessions, three days per week, circulating through various exercise stations using equipment such as steps, hand weights and medicine balls. Participants also attend a 30-minute group class to learn strategies to stay active once the 10-week exercise class is completed.

"We are proud to collaborate on a program that matches strongly with our mission to keep residents aging successfully and as independently as possible through a variety of wellness avenues," said St. Camillus Revitalize Wellness Program Manager Maggie VerBrugge.

Each session is led by an exercise leader, typically St. Camillus' Revitalize Wellness Program Manager, Maggie VerBrugge, and Research and Life Enrichment Director, Bridget McNair, with assistance from Marquette nursing doctoral students Margaret Salinas and Jeannie Hlebichuk.

"The PALS program empowers older adults to stay healthy and strong by increasing strength, flexibility and balance, which in turn helps manage or prevent chronic illness, enhance mental health, and remain as independent as possible," said Gretebeck.

The PALS program offers College of Nursing students an opportunity for research. Participants at St. Camillus were assessed prior to the start of the program to record their baseline level of physical function and will continue to monitor progress throughout the program. Dr. Gretebeck and the students will then reassess the participants after completing the 10-week PALS program and again six months after the program.

The partnership is made possible by a \$5,000 grant from the Marquette University Office of Community Engagement, offered to university entities proposing collaborative programs with community partners.



▲ Marquette University's College of Nursing has partnered with St. Camillus on a project for functional fitness for seniors. (Submitted photo)