

JHF approves \$300K grant to boost senior exercise and recreation options

JEWISH HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION

Since its establishment in 1990, the Jewish Healthcare Foundation (JHF) has demonstrated a commitment to the physical, psychological and social well-being of seniors, as well as their caregivers. In 2016, the Foundation launched its Senior Connections initiative, which aims to strengthen a suite of service opportunities for older adults, including transportation and housing, exercise and recreation, geriatric-friendly health care, nutrition and caregiver supports.

To advance the goals of Senior Connections, JHF recently approved a two-year, \$300,000 grant to increase opportunities for local seniors to meaningfully engage in a variety of exercise and recreation programs throughout all four seasons. The exercise and recreation initiatives are the result of a community-wide charrette, or planning event, that JHF convened in summer 2016 with more than 100 individuals representing health providers, foundations, environmental and recreational groups, aging organizations, insurers, community service providers and activist groups. The Foundation will convene future charrettes focused on other components of Senior Connections, translating the ideas uncovered and partnerships formed during those events into various in-person and virtual program-

ming to enhance health and quality of life for older adults.

The multi-faceted approach to help seniors engage in exercise and recreation will include:

- Launching a pilot project to allow seniors of varied abilities to engage in health-focused, guided outings in South Park and Frick Park. The programs in both parks will be designed to appeal to older adults with a wide **range of fitness levels and interests**.

Venture Outdoors and Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy are the lead partners in developing programming for the pilot project. JHF also has partnered with AARP to recruit park ambassadors, who will help raise awareness of exercise and recreation opportunities and accompany seniors on such outings.

- Developing a mobile-friendly, senior-friendly application that uses maps, text and images to highlight curated walks, events and other attractions focused on a senior audience of varied abilities. The application can be used directly by seniors, as well as by health care and social service providers. The Allegheny County Parks Foundation and GreenInfo Network will develop the application. These materials also will be available in print.

- Engaging members of the medical community to hold guided walking tours with seniors and their families. Physicians, nurses, physical and oc-

cupational therapists, and many other types of health care professionals will be recruited to lead the walking tours in conjunction with a Venture Outdoors staff member. The Allegheny County Medical Society (ACMS) and UPMC Rehabilitation Services will assist with recruitment efforts.

- Developing online exercise and recreation programming that seniors can use to stay active during the winter and during inclement weather, and if they are unable to attend in-person activities. The online programming will be housed on JHF's soon-to-be-launched Virtual Senior Academy, a platform which connects community-dwelling seniors to interactive online classes and a peer network.

- Creating communications materials that emphasize the importance of exercise and recreation on the health and well-being of older adults. JHF will partner with the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) and its Live Well Allegheny campaign to develop the senior-focused health messaging.

JHF will serve as the convener for all Senior Connections recreation and exercise activities and also will establish an advisory board of local experts to guide the initiative.

If you are interested in becoming involved in the Senior Connections initiative, please contact JHF Chief Operating Officer/Chief Financial Officer Nancy Zionts at zionts@jhf.org.