Episcopal Homes’ community members actively improve their physical, social and emotional wellbeing through our Active Living program. We see it in their confident steps, their courage to explore new activities and the sustained friendships they form in the process.

We believe that every older adult has the potential to thrive—to live an optimal life. Active Living supports this endeavor, helping older adults to stay active and socially connected regardless of physical challenges that may emerge later in life.

**Fostering healthy aging**

Education is a first step on the path toward wellbeing. We welcome older adults where they are and offer education to promote health. Our offerings underscore the important connection between nutrition and fitness and their role in optimizing health and functional ability. We don’t just keep people busy, we help elders thrive.

Uniquely, elders co-create offerings with our personal trainers, physical therapists and other staff members. For example, we encourage elders to co-create yoga, dance and group fitness offerings to serve their community.

In the process, they inspire neighbors and friends to stay active and connect—while they strengthen their own sense of purpose. Together, our resident-volunteers, participants and staff foster a social connectedness that benefits health and resiliency.

“Major findings from a decade of new health and fitness research emphasize that regular, moderate to vigorous physical activities reduce the risk of many diseases and chronic conditions that are created or exacerbated by sedentary lifestyles.”

—International Council on Active Aging
Guiding the way
Co-created classes complement staff-led wellness offerings. With a passion for serving others, our fitness staff:

- work closely with older adults to explore their challenges;
- set goals and develop individual plans to achieve them; and
- design fitness and education offerings to help maintain health, prevent age-related decline and sustain functional ability so crucial to independence.

Staff-led fitness focuses on aquatic therapy, balance and falls prevention and strength and cardio. We offer programming for elders with Parkinson’s disease and their spouses. We also foster wellbeing through intergenerational programming, like grandparent-child swimming programs that offer unique ways for elders to connect with families and one another.

Specialized facilities
Episcopal Homes' facilities are designed to support wellness programming for older adults. For example, Wyman Pool, at 93 degrees and with its hydraulic chair lift, enables elders with sustained physical limitations and those managing short term recovery from injury to remain active. In addition, air-resistance fitness equipment allows for minute weight adjustments uniquely suited for weight training with older adults and individuals recovering from injury. This technology also stores participants' fitness program and tracks progress. Our staff work towards extended community engagement through partnerships, such as with local gyms.

Providing broader benefits
When we invest in our elders’ physical health and wellness, we enhance quality of life, promote optimal living and reduce medical costs. In fact, research shows that regular, moderate exercise:

- reduces the onset of and disability from chronic disease;
- decreases risk of falling, a leading reason older adults may require skilled nursing care; and
- combats cognitive decline (e.g. dementia) when exercise is combined with intellectual and social stimulation.

Episcopal Homes' wellbeing programming is funded through your contributions to the Episcopal Homes Foundation.

"Bringing a program of wellness to an organization like ours is critical to fostering relationships and environments that promote resiliency in order to help face the adversity that comes our way as we age."

—Julie Niewald
Wellness Director, Episcopal Homes
Boxing a better life

Fred Emmings, a former St. Paul surgeon, was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease at the age of 68. Anticipating the need for advanced care, Fred and his wife Judy moved into Episcopal Homes’ Cornelia House about seven years ago. After three years, independent living became too much as Judy’s Alzheimer’s Disease required more care than Fred could provide. Now, Fred lives in Iris Park Commons, an assisted living community, just one floor below Judy, who resides in the memory care community, Katy’s Cottage.

Life impacting health conditions could be cause for isolation and further decline, but Fred remains an inspiration to others across the Episcopal Homes community. To maintain his wellbeing, Fred invests time in his own fitness and, in the process, strengthens his own social support structure. That support comes from Episcopal Homes’ Active Living offerings.

Once a week, Fred boxes with other community members who have Parkinson’s in a recurring group led by Episcopal Homes' staff. Boxing helps participants improve their strength and balance, and naturally releases Dopamine—essential for those with Parkinson’s.

Fred compares his boxing program to taking a dose of medicine. At times, he feels so well he leaves his walker behind. “Being active in the fitness center has improved my outlook on life,” says Fred. “It’s made a clear difference. I notice my balance has improved and I feel a certain energy in my walk.”

In addition to physical health gains, wellbeing programs like Active Living focus on strengthening social supports. This is particularly important as loneliness impacts more than a third of American adults and is most common among elders facing life circumstances like loss of a loved one or chronic or catastrophic illnesses like Parkinson’s.

“I feel much better during a day after a workout than I do on the days when I don’t workout. It’s like taking a dose of medicine... Being active in the fitness center has improved my outlook on life, period.”

— Fred Emmings
Episcopal Homes Community Member

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