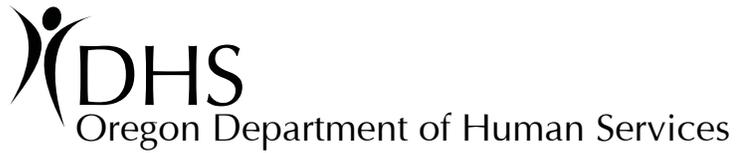


Healthy Aging

Programs that make a difference





For more information on use of evidence-based healthy aging programs:

**Oregon State Unit on Aging
Seniors and People with Disabilities**

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For health-related data on older Oregonians, see the Healthy Aging in Oregon Counties 2009 data report at:

www.healthoregon.org/hpcdp



Healthy Aging

Programs that make a difference

Oregon's population is aging. Effective evidence-based community programs successfully enable older adults to live safely and independently in their own communities.

A person turning 65 years old today will live an average of 17 more years. Yet we know that 80 percent of older adults are living with at least one chronic condition.

Well-researched programs, offered in collaboration with diverse partners, are critical to our aging population's health and quality of life. Research clearly demonstrates that it's never too soon nor too late to promote older adults' health. Investing in evidence-based health promotion is a cost-effective approach to lowering overall health care costs.

Oregon was among 16 states selected in 2006 for a three-year grant from the Administration on Aging to develop and pilot evidence-based prevention programs. As the grant ends and programs continue to grow, this report shares some key lessons we've learned.



My husband attended the Living Well class with me in order to better understand the pain and side effects of my two conditions. We came away from the class feeling more optimistic about my future in regards to these conditions than we had dared to before. I have started doing many of the things I learned from the class and have improved remarkably in regards to the things I thought I couldn't do physically as well as mentally and emotionally.

- Stacy, Living Well participant,
Multnomah County

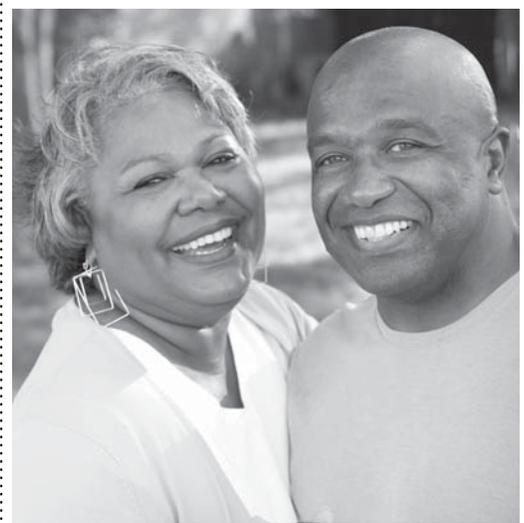
It works!

Research conclusively shows that these programs positively affect older adults' health, contributing to reduced health care costs, and allowing older adults to remain in their own homes. Some of the evidence-based programs now being used in Oregon include:

- **Living Well with Chronic Conditions**, a peer-led program for ongoing health conditions that results in improved self-reported health, decreased disability and decreased hospitalization;
- **EnhanceFitness**, a physical activity program that results in improved health and decreased hospitalization and healthcare costs;
- **Tai Chi**, an eight-form version of tai chi designed for older adults that results in a decreased risk of falls;
- **Other evidence-based programs include:** the Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program, StrongWomen, Better Bones and Balance, Active for Life, and SAIL (Stay Active and Independent for Life). The programs have significantly reduced falls, risk of chronic disease, and depression and disability. They have also increased older adults' ability to remain active and independent.

I can tell from folks walking down the street who is taking the tai chi classes. The people who take tai chi are more solid on their feet. Their gait and stature is confident – they are more sure of themselves and where they are putting their feet. They are striding with confidence. It is wonderful to see.

- Delene Durfey, Gilliam County Senior Services Coordinator



It's feasible!

Programs have been successful and popular in various areas and populations of Oregon. To date, these evidence-based programs have reached more than 2,400 older adults as part of the pilot projects. Several thousand additional Oregonians have participated in these programs as they have spread to other communities across the state.

Because they make a difference in peoples' lives, these programs create their own advocacy base from which new leaders emerge to carry on and expand the programs. These low-cost programs have been well received and supported by partners including aging services providers, public health, tribes, extension services, parish nurses, health care systems, mental health agencies, multicultural service providers, county parks and recreation programs, and others.

There is something contagious about the way individuals and organizations want to be associated with these successful programs. While programs must be offered as designed in order to ensure that they're effective, each community has developed its own way to coordinate, promote and support the programs to meet local needs.

A front page article in the Medford Tribune resulted in more than 100 registrations for Living Well programs – filling programs for the next four months! The article, by staff writer Sarah Lemon, highlighted how the program helps participants manage their health conditions and not feel so alone.

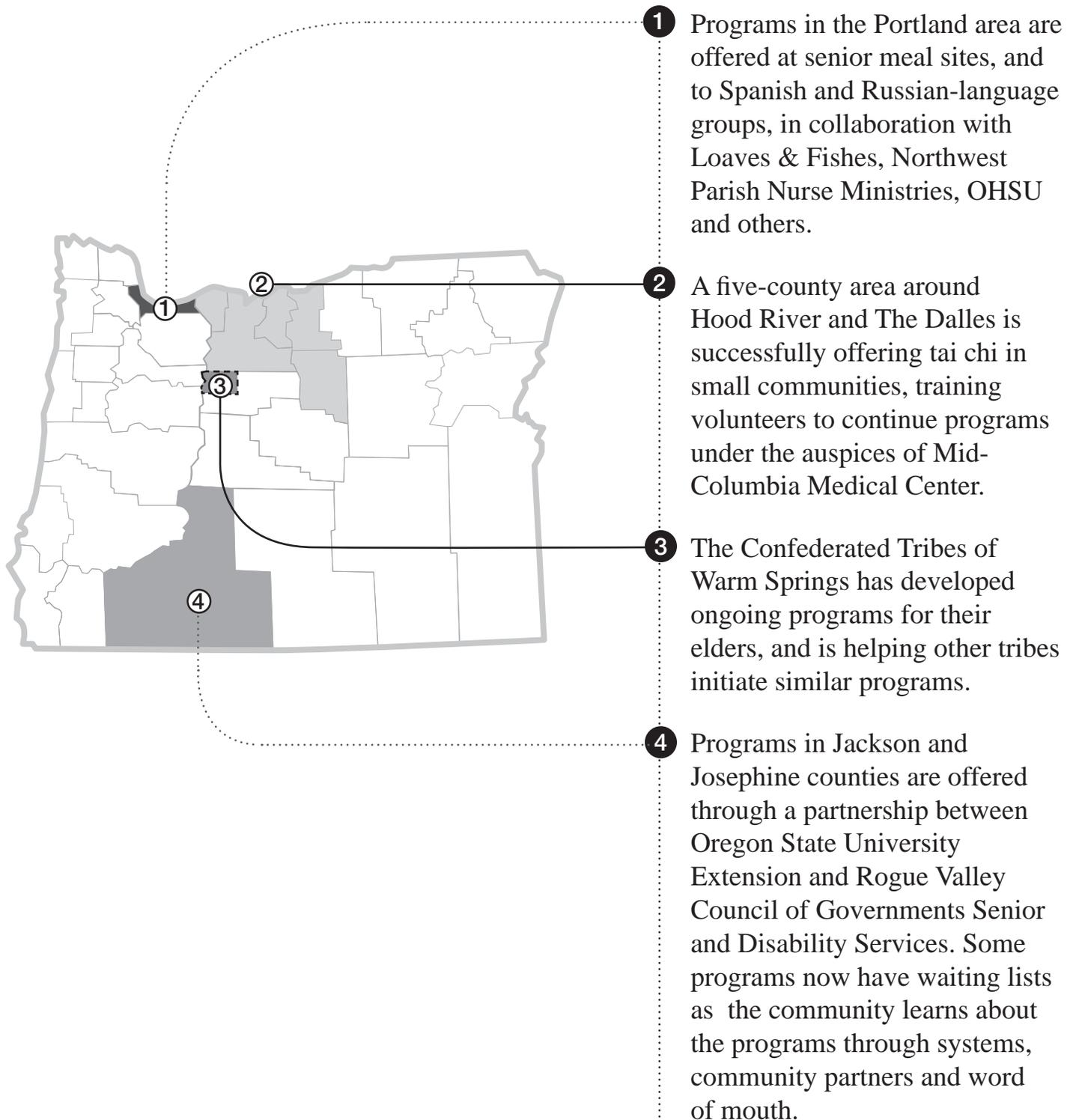


“Susan Rust walks in her neighborhood in Ashland. After attending a series of “Living Well With Chronic Health Problems” workshops, Rust learned to set goals toward improving her health, which helped her to relieve chronic joint pain and lose weight.”

- (photo by Jim Craven)

It can work in your community!

Evidence-based programs have been well-received in rural and urban settings, with low-income seniors, and by many different ethnic groups.



Organizations are using a variety of approaches to sustain these valuable programs:

- Finding low-cost ways to offer programs through use of volunteer leaders/ instructors, and free space provided by community partners;
- Combining funding from participant fees, local grant or United Way funds, and Area Agency on Aging's Older Americans Act wellness funding;
- Exploring options for reimbursement of these programs through health care insurers. For example, Living Well is now an employee benefit in some Oregon counties; EnhanceFitness is a Medicare-covered benefit through Group Health in Seattle; and a growing number of states are looking at reimbursement for these evidence-based approaches.



A group of Warm Springs elders who have been participating in the EnhanceFitness exercise program since 2007 report noticeable changes: the man who now walks without the use of his cane; several who can now reach things on kitchen shelves and bend to tie shoelaces; others who report sleeping better at night. Eliza Jim reports, “EnhanceFitness is very fulfilling. We exercise at our own pace, and it’s done a lot for all of us. I think this is a beautiful program.”



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