

# Seniors stay active with exercise program

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OWATONNA — If you think that a hip replacement, a knee replacement or a rod through one leg is an obstacle to exercise, guess again.

The senior citizens at The Brooks in Owatonna have already proved you wrong.

Through Live 2 B Healthy, a senior fitness program, residents at The Brooks have not only increased their energy levels, but they have increased their strength as well. In fact, for one resident, one year of exercise for three days each week was enough to lift her out of her wheelchair and into a walker.

“I think the program is great,” said Sharon Rohwer, 68. “It definitely made me stronger.”

Rohwer said on several different occasions, she was able to walk to the exercise class. She was all smiles leaving the program that morning, and though that wasn’t the case for every resident, they all seemed to be in agreement about one thing.

“I do think it’s good for me,” said Marion Ring, 89. Though Ring seemed a little uneasy about coming to the class, she said the exercises have helped her fight arthritis. “I know I’ve got to keep my body moving or else I will get myself into trouble.”

Ring said that she has had three hip replacements, on top of breaking her femur bone and having a rod put through her leg. She has some restrictions during the class, but they are not enough to stop her from participating.

“There’s just a few things I can’t do,” said Ring. But she said if she doesn’t do the exercises at all, she feels the result right away. “I can tell how much stiffer I get,” she said.

The residents were presented with awards on Friday, as they completed their first experience in the program. Residents not only received awards for Most Improved or Hardest Worker, but they also received MVP awards and certificates of achievement.

“I love it,” said Orville Young, 89, after the awards were presented. He said if the program was offered again, he would definitely be back.

To keep the seniors active, Joni Plueger, a certified group instructor, leads the residents through exercises designed around range of movement. In addition to using dumbbells, the residents use balls and resistance bands to flex their muscles. Plueger said she also has them move their hands and their feet at the same time — an activity that engages their mind.

“I try to keep them mentally challenged as well as physically challenged,” said Plueger. She said another big part of keeping the seniors healthy is the social aspect, so she takes the residents on walks in groups of 20 or more.

Cory Czepa, owner and CEO of Live 2 B Healthy, said this is the first time the program has been implemented in Steele County.

“It’s been going really well,” said Czepa.

Czepa said the goal of the exercise program is not just to maintain the strength each resident has or prevent them from losing skills, but instead to build on their already existing strength and balance.

“What we are finding is that people are having less falls,” said Czepa.