

Growing Stronger Programming and Collaboration

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Everyone has favorite parts of the work that they do. I get to share the stories of the good work that my colleagues do throughout our county and community in a number of different venues. I help people recognize their goals, develop strategies to reach those goals and provide opportunities to practice skills needed. Much of what I do happens in collaboration with various organizations within our region.

As you may have guessed, one program, near and dear to my heart, is the Growing Stronger Program. Beloved by participants, Growing Stronger makes significant impact on the lifestyle of regular attendees. Almost every week, one or more of person reports how Growing Stronger helped them or made their life better.

Recently I was contacted by the Adirondack Health Institute regarding recognizing the Growing Stronger Program in Franklin County in a featured article on their brand new website, <http://www.healthyadk.org/>. The article focuses the benefits of Growing Stronger, of strength and balance building programs, and the ways that Cornell Cooperative Extension Franklin (CCE Franklin) collaborates with many agencies in the North Country to bring the advantages of this program to our region.

From the very beginning, Growing Stronger has gained from the efforts of many collaborators. Eastern Adirondack Health Care Network paid for facilitator training and provided weights for classroom use. I co-facilitate the program with Josy Delaney from Alice Hyde Medical Center and volunteers from Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). The Frist Congregational Church hosts twice a week sessions and has for over one and a half years. Local health care providers act as a regular source of referrals to the program. In Akwesasne, the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe Office for the Aging provides the program to their clients on a regular twice each year basis.

Growing Stronger helps those of us age 50 + years to improve our overall well-being. Strong muscles, strong bones and good balance enable us to enjoy the things in life that we find important.

Research indicates that strength-training programs like Growing Stronger are a safe and effective way to maintain our ability to do the things we want and remain independent. Remember, the benefits of muscle-strengthening activity extend beyond our muscles.

These activities assist in maintaining our balance, reduce the symptoms of arthritis, lower our risk of many chronic diseases associated with aging and strengthen our bones. As we age, good balance protects us from falls and bone strength decreases our risk of serious injury. This is true regardless of gender. Other benefits include improved sleep quality and a healthy state of mind as indicated by less reported depression, improved self-confidence and self-esteem. The Growing Stronger Program benefits women and men whether they are currently active or not, since each person starts at their own level.

We meet from 10-11:30 in the morning on Wednesdays and Fridays at the First Congregational Church. The church is located on the corner of Clay and Main Streets. In the ongoing format, you are invited to join the program at your convenience. For participant safety, you will be asked for some information about your current health status and may be asked to discuss the program with your health care provider to assure that the program meets your needs. Please call Vanetta or Dan at (518) 483-7403 or email vmc23@cornell.edu to learn more or to join the program. Also, you can learn more by visiting CCE Franklin's website at Franklin.CCE.Cornell.edu, Growing Stronger is one of our highlighted programs on our home page.