

Virtual Wellness

Social undistancing



Human Development
Institute



STAYING CONNECTED

Gathering Strength teamed up with the Frazier Rehab Institute and the National Center for Health, Physical Activity and Disability to create and support remote adaptive wellness classes to improve physical and mental health, reduce isolation, and help to keep the participants engaged and motivated.



ACTIVITIES

The grant funded the development and delivery of online and in-person group health and wellness activities for people with paralysis and their family caregivers. This cycle focused on yoga, cardio-boxing, and an exercise-based support group.



INTERNET ACCESS

To help participants overcome challenges with reliable high-speed internet access, the grant provided 10 mobile hotspots with tech assistance.



TRAINING PROGRAM

Provided training on planning and conducting adaptive exercise classes to increase recreational opportunities in the area.

GATHERING STRENGTH, INC.

Gathering Strength is a nonprofit corporation located in Louisville, Kentucky, and committed to empowering people with disabling conditions by assuring equitable access to community resources and spaces, technology, and better health. Founder and President Elizabeth Fust is an attorney in Louisville; she suffered a spinal cord stroke in 2006 and is a T7 paraplegic.

WHY WE LOVE IT

- Remote participation to help reduce feelings of isolation stemming from COVID-19 restrictions and protect health, especially in higher-risk groups like the disability community.
- Encourages caretakers and family members to join in to increase socialization and motivation.
- Provides long-term recreation opportunities for all residents with disabilities by increasing awareness of adaptive wellness and training instructors to integrate it in their own programs.

Assistive technology for wellness



CHALLENGE Maintaining an active lifestyle

Health and wellness are important, regardless of ability. Many struggle to stay motivated on their own.



CHALLENGE Social isolation

Regulations and health concerns around the pandemic led to higher levels of loneliness and isolation than before.



CHALLENGE Internet infrastructure

Kentucky ranks 37th in the nation for high-speed internet coverage. Only about 25% of residents have access to affordable high speed service.



CHALLENGE Lack of variety

Persons with mobility challenges, such as those with paralyzing conditions, don't have many choices for adaptive exercise they can do at home.



The accountability of working out in a group or at a gym helps many people stay focused on their fitness goals. Through the use of new technologies for online meetings, participants get the same benefits without the health risks of going out in public.



Although the CDC and governor were encouraging folks to remain 'Healthy at Home', the social isolation had a measurable impact on mental health. Connected experiences like wellness classes help to build interactions with the world outside safely.



One frustration for persons with disabilities is the lack of variety in available adaptive activities. Creating new options like yoga or cardio boxing makes exercise more appealing. The training element means even more variety and easier access.



The Commonwealth of Kentucky has made high-speed internet a priority but they have had several false starts. Kentucky still ranks below the national average for access and especially affordable access. Through the Wellness Edge grant, Gathering Strength was able to provide mobile hotspots that allowed people without other options to stay connected. Giving folks the tools they need to participate is great, but the access also helps people explore and get comfortable using technology. These users could take advantage of their devices and internet access to connect not just with exercise classes but with family, medical providers, and community resources.



LEARN MORE

gatheringstrength.org
uoflhealth.org
nchpad.org

FREE ONLINE WELLNESS CLASSES

Gathering Strength continues to offer a variety of free virtual health and wellness classes through their network of partners across the country.

Website: gatheringstrength.org/classes

Contact: gatheringstrengthinc@gmail.com