

# Sunday News

## May 11, 2008

### Section A- News

SUNDAY NEWS, LANCASTER, PA.

# They don't act their ages

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Retirees wield considerable clout in Lancaster County.

Literally.

Many people over 65 are physically stronger and mentally sharper than their forebears.

They don't act like their parents and grandparents. They're healthier. They remain independent longer and strain society's support system less.

The county's 19 continuing care retirement communities are behind them all the way.

Smoking at these facilities is out. Fitness centers and nutritionists are in. The solitary rocking chair scene is taking a back seat to African drumming workshops, water volleyball, weightlifting, power this and power that.

"We don't really do, like, bingo," said Willow Valley spokeswoman Melinda L. Scott.

"We had folks go to the Senior Olympics" last year in Louisville, Ky., Scott added. "We sent folks down with trainers and warmup suits" and expected them to be in top shape. "We had three gold medals come back. That's the kind of oomph we're trying to

put in these programs."

Cognitive fitness is the other big CCRC push.

"We have [retired] admirals who live here," Scott said. Retired NASA test engineers, Retired Federal Reserve workers.

Their brains should remain fully engaged. And so CCRCs make it easy and fun to do so.

The Willow Valley computer club boasts more than 500 members, according to Scott.

The model railroad-ing room buzzes with an elaborate, homegrown layout featuring tiny synchronized traffic lights and an airport that emits three different airplane sound effects.

Residents' pro-quality photographs hang on the art gallery walls.

Meanwhile, grandfathers in the Brethren Village woodshop are building — what else? — grandfather clocks.

Folks are studying the Bible and growing plants in the Green Thumb Society.

Simply doing stuff with peers promotes wellness, said Nelson Kling, president of Mennonite Home Communities.

Added Kling: "I'm always amazed at the social recon-nections that occur" when people meet back up again after all those years. ■