

50 North has been honored as the Senior Center of the Year in Ohio by the Ohio Association of Senior Centers (OASC) on Thursday, March 7th.

OASC believes in the power of senior centers to make a difference in the lives of older adults in their communities. To that end, the Senior Center of the Year Award was established to raise awareness about the impact Senior Centers have on their community and recognize best practices.

Executive Director, Carolyn Copus, said the requirement to receive the award was to provide the mission and vision of 50 North and to present an innovative best practice used at 50 North.

According to Copus, 50 North has served Hancock County since 1970, supporting seniors with the resources and opportunities they need to live with health and purpose. The organization has grown and changed so much in the past 54 years. Our mission has stayed the same, *enriching lives and supporting independence for older adults in Hancock County*.

50 North's vision is to have highly effective utilization across all services and program spaces, excellent financial strength through future levy renewal, elimination of debt, and a fund for capital expenditures. To be indispensable to the community with expanded public awareness of our services and programs and to be the "go to" place for older adults in Hancock County. Also, to continuously pursue excellence via great staff, board members and stewardship as well as regularly implement solutions for unmet needs in the community.

50 North helps older adults and their families in Hancock County navigate some of life's biggest transitions: from work to retirement, from good health to chronic conditions, and from full independent living to receiving some support to remain in their homes.

50 North offers solutions to those 50 and older in Hancock County in five key areas: activities, chores, nutrition, outreach, and wellness.

The best practice area 50 North highlighted was the wellness program. 50 North's wellness programs are designed to encourage well-being and optimal health through movement, strength training and self-awareness. The wellness center provides members with a supportive network of people focused on their health and wellness needs.

Through cardio and strength training equipment, 37 group exercise classes, walking track, WellBeats (a virtual presentation of group exercise classes projected on the wall), VibePlate (improves balance, coordination, posture, and increased bone density), Hydro Massage Bed and Lounger (water and pressurized jets to help massage muscles and soft tissues in the body), personal training, and professional consultation on fitness, nutrition, and disease management, 50 North encourages members to live happier, healthier lives.

Orthopaedic Institute of Ohio provides physical therapy sessions at 50 North two times a week at a cost. Free fall risk screening by licensed physical therapists is offered as well.

According to the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, active people generally live longer and are a less risk for serious health problems like heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and some cancers.

In 2023, 2,723 members utilized the wellness center 106,929 times throughout the year. Membership grew by 22 % and the utilization of the wellness center increased by 28% from the previous year.

50 North's wellness programs educate, motivate, and inspire adults 50 and older to remain active. Increased overall well-being, quality of life, and socialization are key benefits to participating in 50 North wellness programs.

According to Copus, "this award gives recognition to 50 North's board members, staff, volunteers, members, and Hancock County for the great job everyone does for the areas older adults. People are treated like family and all are taken care of."

Copus said, "It is an honor to receive the award on behalf of the board, staff and volunteers. This recognition is for the phenomenal job they do every day!"

The purpose of the OASC is to support and enhance the ability of Ohio's senior center network to effectively serve older adults by providing education, mentoring and training to senior center and aging network staff. OASC provides educational programs, workshops and seminars throughout the year, including the annual conference, regional workshops and educational events cosponsored with other organizations. Staff members can be certified on one of three levels based upon experience and educational achievements.

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