

# IMPACT

University of Idaho  
Extension

Boundary County, 208.267.3235, Fax:  
208.267.3056  
6447 Kootenai Street, Bonners Ferry, ID 83805

## StrongWomen™ improves women's strength and health

### The Situation

Commencing in their early forties women lose 1/4 to 1/3 pound of muscle per year and replace it with that equal amounts or more in fat. In addition to muscle loss women experience a decrease in bone density, especially after menopause. Approximately 10 million Americans have osteoporosis and 80% of them are women. One in two women will experience an osteoporosis related fracture. Loss of muscle combined with chronic disease symptoms can limit their ability to perform daily tasks and seriously compromise their independence.

Strength is a critical factor in living healthier, more active lives. Research shows that a program of strength training not only improves bone density but reduces falls, improves arthritis symptoms, and increases flexibility and strength. The program is appropriate for both sedentary and very active women.

### Our Response

To address this trend University of Idaho Extension in partnership with Boundary Community Hospital began offering Strong Women Stay Young™ and Strong Women Strong Bones™ programs developed by Tufts University.

Classes are offered twice a day and twice weekly to accommodate the varying needs of participants. Classes are taught by Tuft's certified instructors, one a UI Extension Educator and the other a physical therapist funded by BCH. The classes include 8 to 13 strength building and balance exercises. Participants are encouraged to exercise a third day for maximum benefit. A Strong Women™ Journal, complete with exercise logs to record progress, nutritional information and additional resources, are provided to each



Strong Women Graduates

participant. A pre-and post Chair Stand test is used to evaluate lower body changes in strength.

### Program Outcomes

Classes fill rapidly and demographics show participants range in age from 34 to 83. Using a chair-stand pre and post test lower body strength was evaluated. Women showed between 6 and 56 percent increase in lower body strength with most women showing 30-45 percent increase in strength after one 8-week session. Eighty-eight percent of participants have signed up for a second session.

Participants were asked how the program had impacted their lives. Comments include:

- "My doctor could see a big difference." Florence, age 83

- “I find lifting items around the house are easier and I notice muscle tone is visible in my upper arm area.” Linda, age 58
- “This program has helped my neck problems. It makes me feel better.” Betty, age 73
- “Often I have found here in Boundary County we get left out or there is so much apathy that I have to go to Coeur d’Alene or Spokane for a program of this quality. Not so this time.” Julie, age 45

### **The Future**

After the initial class offering, word of mouth spread rapidly and soon the program was at capacity. To help address this peer instructors were identified to lead groups of Strong Women graduates. Training opportunities will be explored and candidates will be identified to send to the next available training.

### **Cooperators and Co-Sponsors**

Approximately \$7,000 of in-kind support from Boundary Community Hospital was provided through the services of a licensed physical therapist. Having a physical therapist at Strong Women™ classes added value, credibility and quality.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

**Carol Hampton**, Extension Educator  
University of Idaho Extension, Boundary  
County  
PO Box 267  
6447 Kootenai Street  
Bonners Ferry, ID 83805  
Phone: 208.267.3235  
Fax: 208.267.3056  
E-mail: [champton@uidaho.edu](mailto:champton@uidaho.edu)

3-09champton-women.pub  
1/09