Strong Women Stay Young™ classes make life easier for women

The Situation
As women age, loss of muscle mass combined with chronic disease symptoms can limit an individual’s ability to perform daily tasks and diminishes their quality of life. Scientific research has demonstrated that exercise with weights (strength training) can increase muscle mass, increase strength and bone density in middle-aged and older women. Strengthening exercises also reduce the risk for numerous chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, osteoporosis, and arthritis. Psychological health is positively affected as well. Strength training has been shown to reduce depression and improve sleep, and it contributes to a sense of well-being among older individuals.

Our Response
The Strong Women Stay Young program, a national fitness program for women, was developed by Miriam E. Nelson, PhD and Rebecca Seguin, MS, CSCS from Tufts University. In 2008 Audrey Liddil, Extension Educator for Bannock County, became certified to teach these classes to the local clientele. In January 2009 the first series of classes were held and two additional series of classes were held in 2010.

Program Outcomes
Of the 42 people that enrolled in the class, ages 33-74, all showed improvement in the amount of weight they were able to lift from the first class. Some individuals increased the amount of weight they could lift dramatically; as much as 80%. But the things the people were most excited about were how strength training improved their lives. In the post evaluation participants reported that it was easier for them to:

• open jars
• climb stairs
• walk farther than before the classes
• get out of a chair
• lift a saddle
• lift bags of salt and dog food

They also reported:
• reduced aches and pains
• more flexibility
• less stress in the neck muscles
• better balance
• better overall health
• looking better with tighter arm and leg muscles

Strength training is the key to fall prevention; Joann Edwards, Strong Women Stay Young™. Photo By Teri Johnson
Class size has increased with each session that has been offered as participants spread the word to other women about their success in the program (see Figure 1). Five participants repeated the class.

Participant Enrollment Numbers

FOR MORE INFORMATION
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