

# Tai Chi for Grant County

Innovative Services for Rural Elders Grant

Awarded by Oregon Office of Rural Health

Nora A Healey, FNP

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I work as a family nurse practitioner in John Day Oregon at the Strawberry Wilderness Community Clinic and am employed by the Blue Mountain Hospital District.

I have nothing else to disclose and have no conflicts.

# Background

As primary care providers in our communities, we help people manage and treat chronic illness. We often recommend exercise as a prescription to treat depression, high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, coronary artery disease, arthritis and osteoporosis. Exercise really needs to be a life long integrated discipline.

In 2004, The World Health Organization (WHO) developed the Global Strategy on diet, physical exercise, and health. The Global Strategy recognizes and addresses the two main reasons for chronic illness (non-communicable disease) as unhealthy diet and physical inactivity.

Despite the evidence to support prevention of chronic illness through exercise, the resources needed for regular exercise are often unaffordable and unavailable to many individuals in our communities.



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# Grant County

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Grant county is a frontier county (1.6 persons per sq mile) with a population of just over 7,000 people. Nearly 27% of the population is over 65 years of age and 16% of the population live in poverty. Resources that may be available in larger communities are not available in Grant County. Communities may be as small as Monument with 130 people, Dayville with 145 people, or Seneca with 200.

Our Goal is to provide safe, affordable, and consistent exercise to the older and vulnerable populations of Grant County in the form of Tai Chi to help prevent falls, decrease pain, decrease social isolation, decrease stress, and improve quality of life through health and wellness.

# Interest

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- We started by asking people in the clinic and at our local health fair if they would be interested in participating in a Tai Chi program to help prevent falls and improve health.
- We also asked people if they might be interested in teaching Tai Chi.
- As one might expect, we found that the interest in participating in a Tai Chi program was much greater than becoming an instructor.

# Tai Chi Instructors

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Tai Chi instructors are a limited resource in John Day/Grant County so we decided to have instructors trained for our program.

There are several programs already in existence that the CDC recognizes as appropriate to prevent falls and decrease pain in older adults.

Paul Lam's Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention

Tai Chi : Moving for Better Balance

# Suman Barkhas

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- Moving for Better Balance Master Trainer
- 541-735-8234
- <http://www.taichiyogacenter.com/classes>

# Target Audience

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- Choose your target audience.
  - Adults 55 and older with emphasis on those with mobility challenges and seniors over 65
  - Post operative patients that have finished their PT
  - Any individuals at risk for falls.
  - Individuals living in isolation
  - STEADI program

# Goals/Purpose of Program

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- Prevent falls
- Decrease pain
- Manage chronic illness
- Improve quality of life
- Address depression and social isolation

# Who is at risk for falls?

## Measuring Functional Status

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- STEADI program materials are available online to help determine who is at risk for falls.
- These materials integrate perfectly into a Tai Chi program and can be used in a collaborative effort with local clinics and providers.
- STEADI also provides several evaluation tools that can be used to measure baseline functional status and compare for improvement in strength at the end of an 8 week program.
  - TUG (timed up and go)
  - 30 Second Chair Stand
  - 4 Stage Balance Test

# Location

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- Find a place that is easily accessible, safe, has restrooms and water.
  - Senior Centers
  - Outside (weather permitting)
  - School gymnasium
  - Community centers
  - Churches

# Choose a Schedule

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- Once per week
- Two times per week
- Four week to eight week sessions
- Continuous sessions

# Program Promotion

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- Healthcare providers
  - Medical providers
  - Physical therapists
  - Mental health providers
  - Local hospitals and clinics
  - Local recreation centers
  - Senior Centers
  - Word of mouth
  - Any organization with the same goals

# Advertising

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- Radio (coffee time)
- Newspaper (events)
- Social Media
- Flyers

# Sustainability

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- Grants (Oregon Office of Rural Health)
- In kind contributions
- Donations
- Fundraisers
- Foundations/Businesses

# Barriers

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- Difficulty getting sponsors to “buy in”.
- Cost to participants
- Transportation to get to classes
- Fear of falling or not being able to keep up
- People that have tried to start a program and failed.
- Lack of resources (volunteers, instructors, funding)
- Time to promote and run the program
- Lack of knowledge (what is Tai Chi....it is not Tae Kwon Do, a religion or cult)

# Collaboration

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Collaboration has been a huge part in the success of our program.

Oregon Office of Rural Health

People Mover

Blue Mountain Hospital District

Blue Mountain Hospital Foundation

Strawberry Wilderness Community Clinic

GOHBI

OAHBI

Community Counseling Services

Grant County Older Adult and Vulnerable Population Collaboration (OVPC)

Oregon Community Foundation

Elks Club, John Day

# Accomplishments

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- We have reached over two hundred individuals with our program
- We have increased from one class per week to three classes per week, one of which is in Monument and we will continue to expand.
- Securing additional funding to continue for another year.
- Providing a program people really enjoy and benefit from.