

## Kendal on Hudson's Fall Prevention Clinic

By Jo-Ann Rapaport , with Photos by Cathy Disomma

Did you know that falls are the leading cause of fatal and non-fatal injuries for older Americans? Falls are costly—in dollars and in quality of life. According to Cathy DiSomma, Kendal's Fitness Coordinator, "Falling is an avoidable part of getting older. The National Council on Aging documented that the number of falls among seniors can be reduced substantially through balance training and other practical strategies."

Kendal on Hudson held its first Fall Prevention Clinic on Tuesday April 17, 2018. Twenty-Five residents were pre-tested and enrolled. They were guided by 11 Team Balance Volunteers trained to spot the residents as they worked at each of the six Balance Stations set up in the open space near the fitness center.



Volunteers: Regina, David, Todd, Cathy, Victoria, Alise, Lisa, Allie, Samantha, Stephanie, Ellen



The 90-minute program began with a brief talk by David, one of Kendal's Fitness Assistants. He presented the common factors that can lead to a fall, including changes in a person's balance and walking over time or undiagnosed diminished vision or reduced peripheral vision. In addition, medications such as Klonopin, Xanax or Ativan may have troubling side effects that can impact balance and coordination.

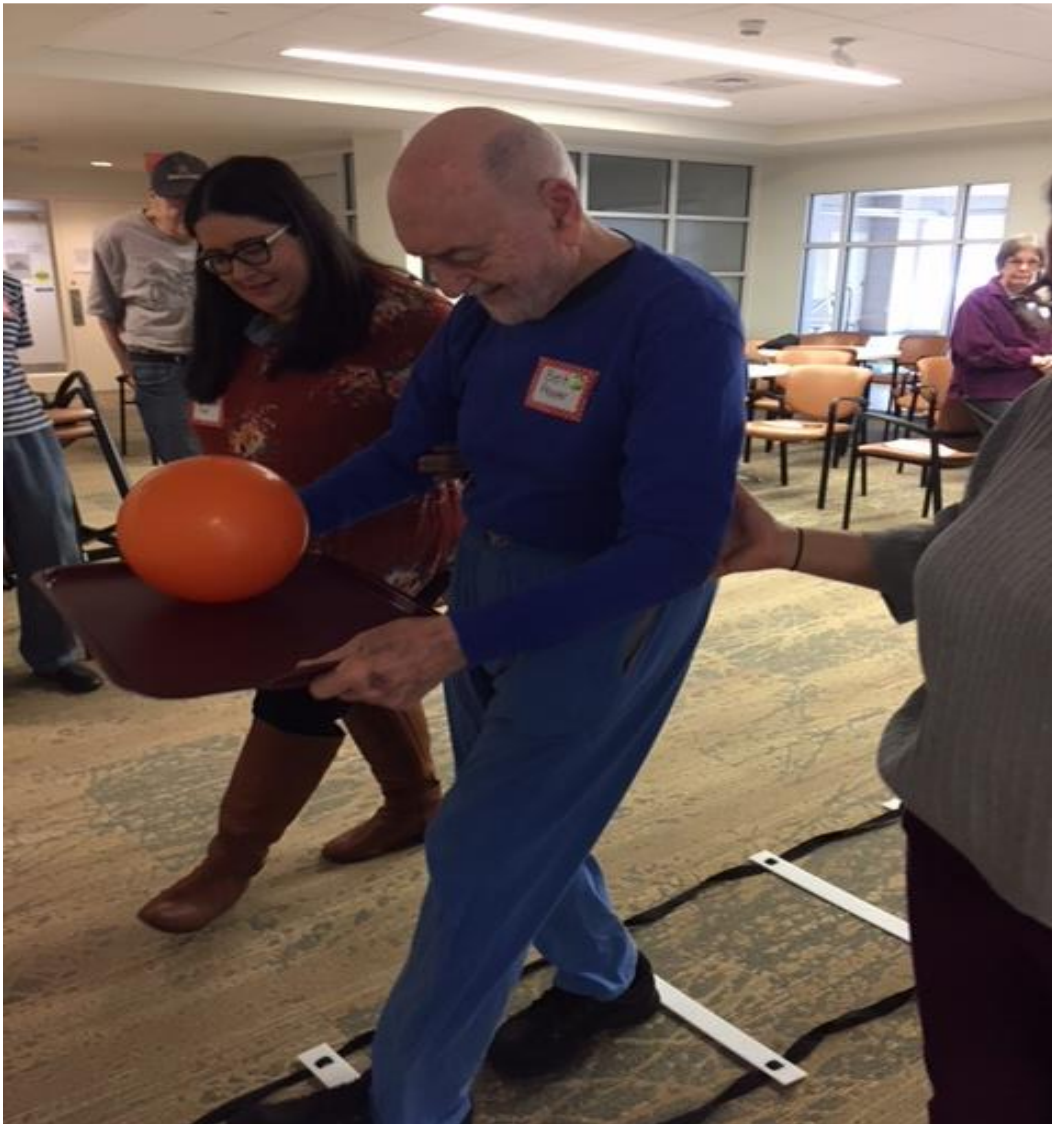
David then outlined strategies to reduce the risk of falling such as regular exercise (with balance training) proper footwear and regular eye exams. In addition, David stated that people need to know the possible side effects of their medications. He also noted that wearing loose fitting clothing can result in a trip and fall.

Participating Residents then moved to the open area that was divided into Six Balance Training Stations. Teams of six residents were directed to each of the stations. Two Balance Team Volunteers worked at each station.

1. Dots - The resident stands on the purple dot that's in the center of 4-dots blue, yellow, red, green that are placed in a north-south-east-west position. Residents were asked to step on the colored dots in a specific order. Once accomplished, the volunteers increased the level of difficulty for this exercise by moving each dot further apart.



2. Ladder – Balance and coordination are challenged by stepping only in the spaces between the rungs of a ladder that's flat on the floor. The second level requires the resident to walk the ladder while carrying a ball. While the third and most difficult level asks the resident to walk the ladder while balancing the ball on a tray.



3. Obstacle – Participants were asked to walk a path while stepping over a series of low height gates without knocking any of the over. The next level required the participant to step over the gates while holding a ball. A more difficult level required the participant to step over the gates while balancing a ball on a tray.



4. Platforms and Steps – Provide the opportunity to walk up or down a step as well as balance on a platform. Over time the height of the platform can be increased as well as the number of steps



5. Walking the Line. – The participant is asked to walk a tightrope that's a straight line of tape on the floor, putting one foot in front of the other. This balance challenge can be difficult.

6. Unstable Surface – This was the most challenging balance training station as participants were asked to step onto a bosu – a flexible rubber topped half circle balance trainer.



Participants also received a series of balance drills to practice at home while holding onto a counter or sturdy chair.

There's little doubt that Fall-Prevention Clinics will become a regular program at Kendal's Fitness Center. Every resident that responded to the follow-up survey said they would participate in future Fall-Prevention Clinics. In fact, a number of residents that are cleared to use the Fitness Center independently have requested balance and coordination training. A fine First for the Fitness Center!

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