COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Grand Pals program

The youngest and more seasoned members of our community have united in a special way at Independence Hill. Grand Pals, a program at Independence Hill which began more than two years ago, pairs second graders from Wildemess Oak Elementary with Independence Hill residents to help build a personal relationship based on learning and wisdom.

Many children don’t have the benefit of seeing their grandparents very often, so the relationships they have developed with the residents at Independence Hill are very precious. Not to mention there is a great deal of knowledge and wisdom that can be learned by spending time with senior citizens. It’s not just the little ones who benefit from any kitchen cabinet or granite counter you can purchase during two complimentary dine-in events.

OASIS offers fun, education, for those over 50

By Jeannette Mclaren

Retirement is all about doing what you want to do, whether it’s sharing your talents with the community, expanding skills you already have, learning something new or meeting people who share your interests. For 21 years, San Antonio’s OASIS program has helped people over 50 do just that. Curious about Zumba? Want to learn to salsa or line dance? Wonder what classes titled “For Date or Not to Date” and “I Love My Kids, But I Don’t Want to Live With Them” are all about? Interested in classes in tai chi, yoga, jazz, gardening or Latin? You’ll find all of that in the variety of classes and programs at OASIS centers and outreach sites throughout the city.

“We give seniors the opportunity to learn things they never had the time to learn before,” says Brenda Schmachtenberger, who has been executive director of OASIS for 20 years. Exercise classes are taught by people trained to work with older adults, college professors and other experienced instructors teach classes in the arts and humanities, music and writing, while trained professionals teach computer classes. At least 25 percent of the classes are free, and other classes are offered at low cost. Membership in OASIS is required to take a class, but there’s no cost to become a member.

Day trips are so popular they often fill up months in advance and have waiting lists. All of the summer trips are currently full, but OASIS’ fall catalog will offer more. Volunteerism also is a huge part of our mission,” says Schmachtenberger.

There are currently 400 volunteers contributing their time through OASIS. Half of those have been involved in an intergenerational tutoring program, helping students in grades 1-3 improve their reading skills. The next tutor training is planned for September.

Other volunteer opportunities include representing OASIS at community health fairs, serving on the curriculum committee and helping at OASIS center answering phones and helping new members.

For more information about OASIS, call (210) 236-5954 or go to www.oasisnet.org/cities/san antonio.aspx.

IS IT TIME FOR A CHECK-UP?

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