

# EnhanceFitness offers free exercise opportunity for those 60 and older

Program available at several sites around Clark County



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Participants in an EnhanceFitness class keep in step with instructor Laurie Porter while working out at Battle Group Center. The class provides free group exercise for people 60 and older. Photos by Amanda Cowan/The Columbian

By **Wyatt Stayner** (</author/wstayner/>), Columbian staff writer

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## If You Go

EnhanceFitness classes happen at different times and locations throughout Clark County.

- 8:30-9:30 a.m. and 9:45-10:45 a.m. Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at Battle Ground Community Center, 912 E. Main St.
- 1-2 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday at Bridgeview Resource Center, 505 Omaha Way, Vancouver.
- 1:45-2:45 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday at The Vancouver Clinic, 7809 N.E. Vancouver Plaza Drive.
- 9:45-10:45 a.m. Tuesday and Wednesday at Washougal Community Center, 1681 C St.
- 9:45-10:45 a.m. Monday and Friday at Camas Community Center, 1718 S.E. Seventh Ave.

There's an opening for a new EnhanceFitness class instructor. To apply: [www.helpingelders.org/about-us/careers/](http://www.helpingelders.org/about-us/careers/) (<http://www.helpingelders.org/about-us/careers/>)

BATTLE GROUND — About 25 people are standing next to chairs in the Battle Ground Community Center.

They walk through exercises like side stretches and lateral arm raises, while a handful of their peers at nearby tables read, drink coffee and chat. This is the scene on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday mornings at the community center, when EnhanceFitness classes take place.

EnhanceFitness is an evidence-based group exercise program aimed at older adults, and free to those 60 and older. The fitness class utilizes easy-to-learn movements that aren't too intense with a group atmosphere, which promotes bonding and keeps people committed to coming back.

Hourlong sessions begin with a five-minute warmup, followed by 20 minutes of aerobic exercise, a five-minute cool-down, 20 minutes of strength training with soft cuff weights and, finally, 10 minutes of stretching. Dynamic and static balance exercises are peppered throughout.

The class is offered by the Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities of Southwest Washington to help the area's growing aging population.

Laurie Porter started teaching the Battle Ground class almost nine years ago and said some of the original

members still attend.

"It includes all components of fitness. Cardiovascular fitness, strength, balance and flexibility, and it's a well-designed program," Porter said after a class. "A lot of people just want to stay in shape. There are a lot of people who want to come in and lose weight. Or they want to regain their strength and balance."

Battle Ground resident Susan Zoller started attending Battle Ground's EnhanceFitness around October — there are also classes in Vancouver, Camas and Washougal. Zoller tries to make as many classes as she can in between doing consulting work and her grandkids.

Zoller rides to the class with her neighbors. She broke a leg a few years ago, so she likes how the class can help with her rehabilitation. Zoller also is a master gardener, and gets exercise from walking her 120-pound Newfoundland, but EnhanceFitness is her primary organized exercise opportunity.

"It's just a good way to get out and moving," Zoller said.

Zoller said she is so busy that she hasn't necessarily made many friends through the class, but Porter said social connection is definitely a draw for many members. The National Institutes of Health has conducted studies about the importance of group exercise for older populations. Regular group exercise can contribute to balanced health through providing fun, physical exercise, social connection and community expansion.


"It can just be social. That's a big part of it. It's a very social environment. Everybody is friends," Porter said. "They get to know each other. We go out for coffee afterward. Once in a while we even have potlucks."

Porter lets each class move at its own speed, and tries to gear the fitness level of each class to match 75 percent of the members. Some members need to skip an exercise if it hurts, or modify an exercise by sitting down — all the exercises can be done from a chair.

Porter said her greatest joy comes when members tell her they can climb stairs without huffing and puffing now, or they can get out of their chair without assistance or that they've regained strength and balance after a fall.

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"I love the people," Porter said. "They're awesome. I've developed great friendships over the years."



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