

# **Peer Exercise Program Promotes Independence (PEPPI)**

## ***What is PEPPI?***

PEPPI is a physical activity program specifically designed for older adults to increase and maintain their level of fitness and independence. The physical activity program includes strength training using resistance bands and walking.

The program depends upon peer leaders in the local community. A group of older adults become peer leaders that receive professional training in the components of PEPPI – flexibility, balance, strength and endurance exercises. The peer leaders then return to their respective locations (i.e. wellness/senior centers, churches, etc.) and lead PEPPI classes for their peers. The PEPPI program provides older Arkansans with the opportunity to learn how to exercise correctly (i.e. using correct techniques) in a safe environment, and to increase their level of physical activity.

PEPPI is based on research conducted at Tufts University, which has demonstrated the benefit of this type of training for older adults. In 1997, the PEPPI program received the Pennsylvania Health Educators Institute Special Population Health Education/Health Promotion Award. In 2002, PEPPI won the “Health Educators Institute Special Population Health Education/Health Promotion Award,” which is a national award. PEPPI has also been recognized by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as a model program.

Currently, we are implementing PEPPI in 17 senior centers, a church, and a housing complex in central Arkansas in partnership with the Central Arkansas Area Agency on Aging, CareLink. The peer leaders lead the resistance band exercises 2-3 days a week, and walk the other days.

***What is provided free to you?***

The Arkansas Department of Health, in partnership with the Donald W. Reynolds Center on Aging, will provide all the training related to PEPPI – coordinator and peer leader training. This includes a copy of the PEPPI coordinator’s manual, the PEPPI peer leader manual, training sessions to learn the exercises, and background information on the PEPPI program. In addition, the Arkansas Department of Health will provide evaluation materials and technical assistance.

***What will you need to provide?***

You will need to provide:

- Resistance bands for the participants to use during class;
- A space for the class;
- Chairs for participants to use during class;
- At least one peer leader per site (we recommend 2);
- A person who is willing to help coordinate the peer leaders; and,
- Interested older adults.

***For more information, please contact:***

Kristine Day  
Healthy Aging Activities  
Arkansas Department of Health  
4815 W. Markham St., Slot 41  
Little Rock, AR 72205  
Telephone: 501-661-2735  
E-mail:  
[kday@healthyarkansas.com](mailto:kday@healthyarkansas.com)

Nancy Green  
Van Buren Co. Health Department  
PO Box 452  
Clinton, AR 72031  
Cell: 501-412-6467  
Pager: 1-800-264-2535 PIN#0952  
E-mail:  
[ngreen@healthyarkansas.com](mailto:ngreen@healthyarkansas.com)