

Meetings & Milestones

Town and Country Gardeners gather

The monthly meeting of Town and Country Gardeners of Alliance was held at Gervasi Winery and Italian Bistro. President Cindy Wahl and Sally Gara greeted members and guests as they arrived.

Speaker John Virido welcomed everyone in the solarium, a greenhouse with wall-to-wall glass windows and filled with plants. Virido's many years of teaching horticulture have given him the knowledge to care for the numerous plants and flowers at Gervasi Winery. Pruning and care of roses was first on the agenda for discussion. Other topics included creating new plants from the many types of plant layering, such as air, tip, serpentine, trench and mound. A pamphlet was given to each member covering subjects discussed and more. After the presentation, a question-and-answer session followed pertaining to gardens and lawns, when to fertilize and prune, and more.

Members gathered in the main dining area of the Italian Bistro for dinner. A variety of dinners, salads, pizza and the specialty of the day were ordered from the menu.

Wahl gave the invocation, and an evening of dining and conversation began. Wahl and Gara presented each member and guest with a small ceramic pumpkin decorated in fall colors and scriptural verse.

Following dinner, a brief meeting was held to discuss the next meeting.

Flower Arrangers learn about balance

The Alliance Flower Arrangers met Nov. 13 at the Alliance Country Club. Carol Grove served as hostess. The topic of study for the day was "Balance." Balance is defined in floral design as visual stability and is usually the first principle noticed.

Grove created a table arrangement with a fall theme using asymmetrical balance from the lesson of the day. A dark brown pottery container was placed to one side of an elongated natural wood base. A piece of driftwood was used in a horizontal line in the container. To accent the line, gold crabapple branches, gold Fuji chrysanthemums and treated leaves were used.

For this lesson in balance, Judy Douglass bound together four canna stalks and placed them in a kenzan at an angle to form the main support. Two stems of cream and white alstroemeria were then wedged between the canna stalks at the top, leaning the opposite direction. Two large yellow roses were then placed where the canna stalks and alstroemeria stems connected, providing the appearance of the counter-balance.

Arranger Linda Greene created an arrangement titled "Balancing Act." Dried hydrangea was balanced atop grass plumes with the help of the dried leaves of the grass.

The Arrangers will meet on Dec. 11 for their annual Christmas celebration.

Becoming better balanced

Alliance Community Hospital physical therapist Lori Toot demonstrates the use of a resistance band for balance exercises.



Review Photo/Gayle Agnew

ACH physical therapist shares information on balance training

By SHANNON HARSH
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As people age, one of the consequences can be a loss of balance, which can lead to falls and injuries.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in three adults age 65 or older takes a fall each year, which can lead to severe injuries, such as bone fractures and head trauma.

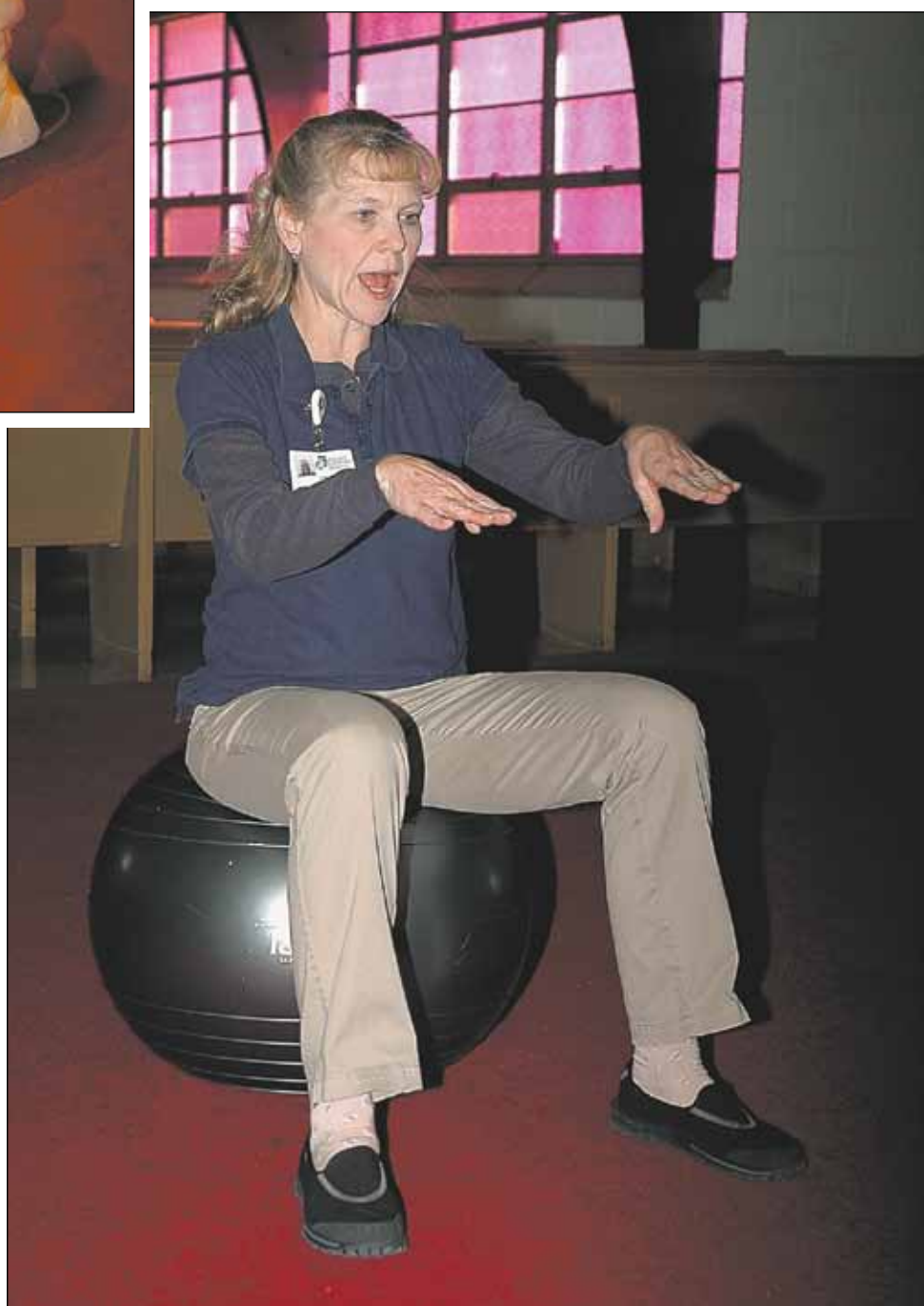
While some falls cannot be prevented, there are some things that can be done to improve balance and stability and lessen your chances of taking a dangerous plunge.

Lori Toot, MPT, supervisor of outpatient therapy at Alliance Community Hospital, spread that message to the VIP (Visually Impaired Persons) group on Nov. 13 at Vine Street United Methodist Church, where she spoke on the topic of balance and fall prevention.

Toot said research shows improvements can be made at any age if you are willing to put in the effort. "It does take some effort and physical exercise and being a physical person and trying to be active," she said.

At outpatient therapy, Toot works with patients who have balance issues. Each person uses a program individualized for them and the issues that they have.

She said when looking at balance, there are four main systems involved: vision, the brain, joint and muscle



Review Photo/Gayle Agnew

Alliance Community Hospital physical therapist Lori Toot talks to the VIP group about balance training Nov. 13 at Vine Street United Methodist Church.

nerve receptors, and the vestibular system, which lies deep within the inner ear and is extremely important for balance. "What it does is record head movements when you move and look around," she said of the vestibular system. "It sends signals back to your brain about where your head is in space."

As a physical therapist, Toot does an extensive evaluation of her patients, testing them on different aspects of standing, movement, reaching and other actions that require balance in order to find their limitations. She also does a strength test to see if they have muscle weakness that could be the culprit. "General strength is very important," she said. "Even just getting into a general strengthening program has been shown to improve balance. If you have weakness in your legs, certainly that is going to affect your balance as well."

Also important to balance is flexibility. Toot said hamstrings especially tend to get tight if you don't move around a lot and are more sedentary. This tightness affects the way you stand and walk and can lead to a loss of balance.

In addition to muscle weakness and flexibility issues, balance can be lost due to decreased endurance, immobile joints, circulatory deficits, vision problems, brain injuries and reduced sensation.

Toot spoke about how physical therapy can help and gave examples of specific exercises that can be done. Some were simple, such as heel and toe raises or squats to strengthen the quad muscles, while others were done using equipment. She showed exercises to do while seated on an exercise ball, standing on a foam stability pad or using resistance bands.

She added that doing Tai Chi, pilates and yoga can also be of help.

"One of the advantages of going into therapy is that it's my goal to challenge you, but I'm there to protect you from falling as well," she said. "The goal is to challenge you and challenge your balance. It's like muscles — your balance is going to develop and improve if you challenge it and work it."

Toot said balance issues are evident if people have falls, must hold onto something while going up stairs or just feel off balance when walking. While genes and medical problems are a factor in balance, she said doing physical therapy can still help show improvements.

Toot added those who think they have a balance problem should talk to their doctor about whether they would benefit from physical therapy and balance training and get a prescription to go for an evaluation.

@SHarsh_AR on Twitter

Do you have a balance problem?

You may have a balance problem if you have experienced the following:

- Difficulty in walking, particularly on uneven surfaces or with climbing stairs.
- Difficulty getting into and out of the bathtub or standing in the shower.
- Difficulty in reaching and placing objects overhead or stooping to pick up objects from the floor.
- Difficulty carrying groceries or other items.
- Difficulty standing from a chair.
- Have had a fall or almost fell.

Balance-boosting footwear tips for older Americans

Balance in all aspects of life is a good thing. We work hard, but make time for fun, love our children while setting boundaries, and eat healthy all week to enjoy a sundae on Friday night. But mental equilibrium isn't the only kind of balance that's important in life. Good physical balance can help older people avoid the debilitating and potentially life-threatening complications of a fall.

Falls are the leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injuries among older people, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2010, 2.3 million fall injuries sent older folks to emergency rooms, 662,000 required hospitalizations, and falls cost \$30 billion in direct medical costs, the

CDC said.

"Preventing falls among older Americans is a top health priority, and improved balance can help reduce the risk of a fall," said Dr. Matthew Garoufalis, a podiatrist and president of the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA). "Proper footwear can help improve balance, especially in older people who may struggle with mobility and balance issues."

When selecting a shoe to improve balance, keep these guidelines in mind:

■ Put shoes to the test — the APMA's 1-2-3 test. Step 1: Press on both sides of the heel area to ensure the heel is stiff and won't collapse. Step 2: Bend the shoe to check for toe flexibility. The

shoe shouldn't bend too much in the toe box area, but it shouldn't be too stiff and inflexible either. Step 3: Try twisting the shoe; it shouldn't twist in the middle.

■ Have your feet professionally measured every time you shoe shop. Natural aging and health changes can cause the size of your feet to change. Measure both feet late in the day and shop for the larger foot.

■ Bring the type of socks you plan to wear with the shoes and walk around the store in the shoes before you purchase them.

■ If you don't feel comfortable or steady in the store, don't buy them. Shoes should feel comfortable and supportive right away; if they don't feel good right

away, breaking them in won't improve things.

■ If you have specific health challenges or foot issues, talk to a podiatrist about the best footwear for your needs. If your podiatrist has prescribed orthotics — biomechanical inserts that go into your shoes — take them with you when you shop and try them out in the shoes you're considering.

■ Remember quality shoes can be an investment. Before you buy, check to see if the brand and style you're considering have earned the APMA's Seal of Acceptance and Seal of Approval. The organization grants these seals to products found to promote good foot health.

Courtesy of Brandpoint