

National Institute for Fitness and Sport

# Balance Redefined

move more ~ live well





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The National Institute for Fitness and Sport (NIFS) is a non-profit organization focused on improving health for people throughout their lifespan.

More specifically, we help senior living organizations use their fitness and wellness programs and spaces as a differentiator in the marketplace. We're driven by a mission to use a customer first philosophy that influences active and healthy choices for those we serve through strong relationships and creative programs. All of our staff, from our leadership team to our entry level health fitness specialist are focused on delighting each of our clients across the country with quality service that inspires healthier living.

More than  
5,000

residents served  
in communities

26

communities and  
growing

14

states

Over  
1,600

visits per month  
programs/  
services



## Balance Redefined

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What follows is an overview of who we are, how we're supporting residents in other communities, and how we can help your community stand out from the competition.

Balance Redefined<sup>™</sup> is NIFS premier fall prevention initiative that encompasses so much more than adding a balance group fitness class to the schedule. We also include specialty classes like Tai Chi, along with balance-focused individual exercise testing and prescriptions, and educational sessions to teach residents how to fall safely. We wrap in technology where we can, and provide regular reporting to the community on program outcomes.





Balance Redefined™ includes a host of programs, services and events that occur throughout the year. Each element is designed to meet the wide range of goals and abilities evident in resident audiences, and every component represents unique opportunities for residents to improve their health well beyond what they could achieve while living in their own home.

### Group Fitness Classes

We dedicate space on your group fitness calendar specifically for balance-focused classes. Where possible, we also offer less traditional classes like yoga and tai chi because these mind-body classes also help participants improve body awareness.

### Special Events

Fall prevention can carry a stigma, so we use showcase events to educate your residents on how they can improve their own balance and decrease their risk for falling. Our annual Balance Fair connects all the balance-related community resources for residents; it's like a health fair focused on balance. Wellness lectures include hands on elements to teach participants important skills like how to fall safely and how to scout out their home for potential trip hazards. And our annual Balance Challenge packs in several activities throughout the month of March to decrease resident's fear of falling.

### One-on-One Services

We love to get residents started in the fitness center with a baseline assessment that measures their balance. With the test results in hand, we work with that resident to create a tailored exercise prescription designed to help positively impact balance and overall mobility.

Our staff also work closely with the onsite therapy team to help bridge residents between therapy and fitness services when appropriate so that gains made in rehab can be continued in the fitness program.



## She's Learning New Tricks

### Ena Moore—Resident at Park Springs since 2004

When Mrs. Moore began participating in the Balance Challenge that NIFS runs annually at Park Springs, she thought she was pretty well-versed in all things exercise.

After all, she's been exercising since well before it was popular. An early diagnosis of arthritis left her in a true "move it or lose it" situation, so in the 1960's she became more active, and she carried that love of exercise with her when she moved into Park Springs in 2004. Mrs. Moore told us she participates in just about everything she can in the community's exercise program including taking a variety of water and land-based group exercise classes, using the fitness center exercise equipment, and joining a team for the annual NIFS Wellness Challenge. Even with a little bit of a slowdown in recent years related to a Parkinson's Disease diagnosis, she's still quite active. In fact, she's been working regularly with NIFS manager, Reggie, and her neurologist to address targeted exercises that will help Mrs. Moore maintain her independence as long as possible.

As a continuation of her exercise program, Reggie invited Mrs. Moore to join the Balance Challenge so she could participate in a more holistic approach to balance training. Fortunately, Mrs. Moore obliged, and it was an accepted invitation that proved to be very timely. At Park Springs, participants have demonstrated a nine percent decrease in their fear of falling over three years of running the Balance Challenge.

As a faithful participant in the Challenge, she was in the crowd when Reggie was teaching participants how to fall and get up safely. Just a few days after the presentation, Mrs. Moore was outdoors in front of the Park Springs Clubhouse when her walker snagged on a rug and she fell. When she recounts the story, she says she didn't have time to think about it, but she remembered Reggie teaching that she should fall to one side and protect her head. Instinctively she did just that.

Her fall occurred right in front of the community's Executive Director, Jim Schneeberger, who offered assistance. But after Mrs. Moore had a moment to get her bearings, she refused assistance from Jim and was able to use the techniques Reggie offered to get up on her own. Mrs. Moore told us, "I see what happens to other people when they fall and I don't want that to happen to me. I don't want to break a hip or injure my brain. So I practice what Reggie has taught us regularly. It was a big help that day [when I fell], but it's helped me continue to be able to garden and keep up with my grandkids too."

Mrs. Moore's fall outside the Clubhouse has become an inspiration across the community and her regular appearances in the gym help her peers know just what successful aging can look like. We're honored to play a small part in her success.



## She's Enjoying New Life

Joan Weigle—Resident at StoneRidge since 2014

When her husband died a few days after they moved to StoneRidge, Mrs. Weigle was faced with a tough decision. She could hold up in her apartment, keep to herself, and process through her grief alone, or she could work through her grief as she met new people and tried new experiences afforded only in a community setting. After spending ten years as a caregiver to her husband, a time she embraced and about which she has no regrets, she felt she was ready to do something for herself.

Within a few weeks after moving into StoneRidge, someone invited her to try the Balance class, and she's been a faithful participant ever since. In the last few years, she's tried all sorts of exercise opportunities at the community including swimming, balance and core classes, tai chi, meditation, walking groups, and gardening. She's also enjoyed a regular card group and even picked up studying Spanish.

While working with Tracey, the NIFS manager in the StoneRidge fitness center, Mrs. Weigle proceeded through balance testing on the Biodex Balance System™ and was pleased with her scores, but she didn't stop working on her balance. In a recent retest, she showed improvement in her scores, and she told us with measured pride, "I'm 87 years old, and I've aged a few years while living here, but I'm getting better and the machine says so."

Her balance isn't the only thing improving. In a recent doctor's visit, she received an A+ rating from her physician for her well-controlled blood pressure, and an ankle pain that had long plagued her (for which her doctor could find no cause), is no longer a problem. She credits staying busy and regularly taking the stairs for these health improvements. Mrs. Weigle is definitely a fixture in the balance class, but she's also a champion for regular exercise in the pool. In fact, she told us her family knows that they should not call her at 9:00 a.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, because she will be in the pool at those times.



She's not one to brag, but we think Mrs. Weigle is something of a superstar. Prior to moving into StoneRidge, she indicated she had lived an active lifestyle, but a lot of that went away when she assume full time caregiving responsibilities for her husband. Within a few years of moving in, she competed in the Connecticut Senior Olympics and did so well that she went on to compete at the national level.

For Mrs. Weigle, it's not work. The exercise programming is an essential element of her social life as well as her independence. She told us, "Fitness at StoneRidge is fun and continues to challenge me to keep moving as I age. I feel truly blessed to be at this community of care, knowledgeable people, most especially our Tracey!"

## He's Regaining Freedom

Henry Sadler—Resident at Blakehurst since 2009

**M**r. Sadler never used to exercise. But when he moved to Blakehurst in 2009, his decision to start taking group fitness classes and using the pool proved valuable to overcome health challenges that were just around the corner.

Three years after moving in and well after exercise had become a habit, Mr. Sadler had a knee replacement which eventually became infected. After significant medical consultation, Mr. Sadler had the replacement removed and replaced with surgical concrete. Unfortunately, that “fix” left him unable to walk with minimal movement at the knee. In addition to the mobility challenges, he had lost a lot of healthy muscle.

When Mr. Sadler was released from physical therapy, he was only able to get around by scooter or wheelchair, and he had to stop attending a much loved family vacation at the beach in New Jersey. He missed regular exercise, so he started working with NIFS manager, Kimberlee, to figure out ways he could still be active. She introduced him to the Nustep and with some creative techniques, she was able to provide options for him to press his heel into the pedal so that he could get a feel for the movement that he wasn't able to replicate because he couldn't walk. Once his incisions healed, she also helped him start moving more in the pool.



It was in the water that she helped Mr. Sadler take some serious strides to improving his mobility and his balance. He started with a support to help him maintain his balance and began regular tandem and heels down walking. Within a few months Mr. Sadler was able to walk short distances with a walker, and transitioned to the water aerobics class. Unfortunately, he suffered another infection, and was unable to bear weight or use the pool for three months. Once he was given clearance again from his doctor, he resumed the same aquatic prescription that was designed for him and began working again on building strength and balance.

One month after that second setback Mr. Sadler was back up and walking again. Now, he does water exercise every day for an hour along with a variety of other land-based exercise to help his strength, balance, and flexibility. At 87 years young, he's back to driving, he walks confidently with a walker, and in 2015 he was able to start enjoying his coveted family vacation again.

When we asked him how the NIFS staff and the exercise program at Blakehurst had impacted his life, he quickly shared, “I'm as active as I used to be, and I get to enjoy time with my family. They have a lot of activities here, and you can't participate in everything, but I credit the exercise program for the reason I'm still so active at age 87. I get around my apartment without assistance and outside of there, I do whatever I want to do.”





## Balance Redefined—FAQ

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### 1. Can my current staff be trained to deliver this program?

Right now, Balance Redefined™ is only available when NIFS staff are managing your fitness center. However, if you'd like to find out more about how your employees could build a more robust fall prevention strategy, you may want to connect with us about consulting over a short term to provide your staff with tools they need to start developing their own programming.

### 2. Is this program only for independent living residents?

It started as an independent living program. But in the last few years, we've had a lot of success using elements of Balance Redefined™ with residents in assisted living. In fact, we've seen tremendous increases in participation in the fitness program overall along with increases in all community activities after we introduce Balance Redefined™ for residents in Assisted Living.

### 3. Do I have to spend a lot of money to implement something like this?

Not necessarily. Your biggest cost is personnel-related; you need to make sure you have the right staff with the right education and experience to understand and execute on core elements fundamental to sound fall prevention programming. The other cost we often see is for technology. Options can range from a few hundred dollars on a Wii Fit and balance board to several thousand dollars for a Biodex Balance System™.



# Our Partnerships

We have full time staff at work in community fitness centers in 14 states. The map below shows our current footprint in red, but don't let where we aren't located scare you. We are adept at setting up business in a new state. In fact, since 2009, we've added almost half of the states below. Talk to some of our clients (look below the map), and they'll tell you we're responsive, easy to work with and exceptionally hard working.

