

Move with Balance™

WINNER OF A 2012 AMERICAN SOCIETY ON AGING/METLIFE FOUNDATION MINDALERT AWARD

MindAlert: Recognizing Innovations in Mental Fitness Programming for Older Adults

The American Society on Aging, in collaboration with MetLife Foundation, is pleased to announce that the Move with Balance™ program was selected as the winner of the 2012 MindAlert Award in the category for programs designed to enhance mental fitness for the general population of older adults.

The MindAlert Award is designed to recognize outstanding programs throughout the United States that have been developed to improve mental stimulation and creative outlets in later life. The award recognizes high-quality, innovative programs that enhance functioning and quality of life, or prevent functional decline, among older adults. Research has shown that cognitive decline is not an inevitable part of the aging process. New findings in brain health research offer a striking, newer model of aging as a time of brain health and growth in which elders may lead qualitatively better lives—lives filled with more knowledge, wisdom, and an increased capacity to contribute to society.

The Move with Balance™ program of Giving Back in Paia, Hawaii, is a unique, cutting-edge program that uses movement to help prevent falls and enhance cognitive function in older adults. Founded in 1994, the program has been developed over the past seventeen years, integrating research in vision training, kinesiology, and brain plasticity. The program carries out its mission of enhancing quality of life for older adults by pairing active elders with frail elders in loving intergenerational relationships.

Move with Balance™ offers learning opportunities that include integrated movement, vision training, and cognitive and balance exercise skills in its goal of preventing injuries from falls. Through the effective practice of Brain Gym®, vision improvement techniques, and other integrative movement and games, active older volunteers stay healthy and involved, and frail elders learn important skills of focus and concentration, balance, and coordination in a safe, loving atmosphere. The intention is to enhance cognitive function and eliminate or reduce the number of falls through an ongoing exercise regime.

The Move with Balance™ program is available for large-scale replication through its three models: the *Group Model*, for senior centers; the *Caregiver Model*, for caregiver agencies and family caregivers; and the *Personal Model*, for individuals who want to work independently on their cognitive skills and balance. An interactive website supports program participants by monitoring progress, evaluating results, sharing new techniques, offering webinars with guest speakers, providing networking opportunities, and more. A winner of multiple, prestigious awards for contributions in fall prevention among elders, Move with Balance™ benefits older adults everywhere, allowing them to take responsibility for their health and well-being.

The Move with Balance™ program will be honored at the National Forum on Brain Health, held on March 29, 2012, in Washington, D.C., during the Aging in America Conference.

The mission of Giving Back's Move with Balance™ program is to enhance the lives of all older adults by pairing active seniors with frail elders in loving intergenerational relationships. We meet this challenge by offering learning opportunities that include integrated movements, vision training, confidence and balance exercise skills in our goal of preventing injuries from falls and enhancing cognitive skills for all seniors.

“The Review Committee found the Move with Balance™ model to be innovative, unique, and easily replicable, and we are extremely pleased to have an intergenerational program named the recipient of this year’s award,” said MindAlert Review Committee Member Ruth Heller, Program Director at the University of Oregon’s Osher Lifelong Learning Center in Eugene, Oregon. Review Committee members noted that this is a program that truly engages older adults cognitively, physically, and socially.