

**Sixtysomething Club Sets Pace for Seniors**

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One of the goals of the Office of Graduate and Continuing Studies at Longwood College is to provide for the needs of all age groups in the community. To that end, a variety of noncredit classes has been offered in the past few years. However, most of those classes were geared toward adolescents and pre-adolescents. A large segment of the community--senior citizens who did not belong to any of the more formal groups--was being overlooked.

On Wednesday, September 19, 1990, the first meeting of the Sixtysomething Club was organized to provide an activity for that segment of the local population. Approximately sixty people attended that meeting and expressed an interest in participating in the activities. Since then, another 50 names have been added to the roster.

The Sixtysomething Club is a loosely organized club that requires no dues or formal initiation. The only membership requirement is to attend a meeting and the senior's name is then added to the club roster. Although attendance is taken at each meeting, it is not necessary to

attend a certain number of meetings per year. Due to health problems and other commitments, it is not always possible for seniors to attend the meetings, which are scheduled for the last Wednesday of each month from 10 a.m. to noon. In addition, not all members are interested in every topic. However, attendance has averaged about thirty people for each meeting.

Members are periodically asked to provide topics of interest, and the Graduate and Continuing Studies office staff also brainstorms to plan the meetings. Because the club is under the auspices of a state college, a balance is provided between topics that might be considered strictly academic and day trips to selected sites.

Generally, the "academic" topics are scheduled for the winter meetings. Local personalities have lectured on the history of High Bridge, which figured prominently in the Civil War; archeological sites that have been excavated by Longwood students; canine companions for independence; a missionary trip to Russia; quilt making; yoga exercises; and other topics of special interest to senior citizens.

Trips are usually scheduled for the spring, summer, and fall and have included visits to Monticello (Jefferson's

home), local Civil War sites, plantations dating from the 1600s, Montpelier (Madison's home), the state capital, museums, the Peaks of Otter, and riverboat cruises on the James River and Smith Mountain Lake. The cost for each trip is minimal, covering the expenses for the bus and driver, any entry fees, and usually including lunch.

To augment the activities of the Sixtysomething Club, the Office of Graduate and Continuing Studies also offers a number of noncredit courses of interest to the older population. Courses are free for senior citizens if there are enough paying participants to cover the salary of the instructor.

One of these courses is an arthritis aquatics program that is offered three times per year. The purpose of the program is to provide an enjoyable recreational group activity where people with arthritis can meet each other. It is a nonclinical program and is not intended to replace a prescribed regimen of exercise. The class, which meets for 10 hours, is led by an AAP-YMCA-trained instructor and consists of a series of recreational warm water activities requiring no swimming ability. A physician's acknowledgement of participation and a participant release form are

necessary to attend the class.

Other noncredit courses of interest to seniors are swimming for fitness, which consists of body exercises conducted in a swimming pool to enhance strength, flexibility and endurance; and a computer class that teaches proper techniques for operation of an IBM and an IBM-compatible personal computer.

Although not specifically geared to the local population, Elderhostel programs are also offered at Longwood in the summer. Elderhostel is a national, nonprofit organization that offers inexpensive, short-term academic programs around the world. Cost for the programs varies from state to state, but includes lodging and meals for the week-long course.

Currently, Longwood offers three such course. Hostellers study life and architecture of Virginia plantations, including field trips to plantations open to the public and those that are not open for tours. In different weeks, hostellers study the three capitals of Virginia (Jamestown, Williamsburg, and Richmond) and the military campaigns of 1864-65, following Lee's retreat from Petersburg to Appomattox.

Since Longwood College comprises a large part of the Farmville community, it is the continuing goal of this office to strengthen the tie between the college and the town. Meeting the needs of the older population is one way to do that.

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