

Presbyterian Homes, the senior living organization, recently launched a four-week program called Better Brains with Choices (or, BBC) across its three Life Plan communities in the Chicago suburbs of Arlington Heights, Evanston and Lake Forest to 1) raise awareness about brain health, 2) help residents maintain brain health *and* stave off dementia, and 3) encourage a dementia-friendly environment.

BBC is the innovation of and supported by CHOICES, a program for living well, which is the organization's comprehensive wellness program that offers residents a wide range of activities and possibilities across the seven dimensions of wellness (social, physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, environmental and community).

An interdisciplinary and intercampus group of Presbyterian Homes staff comprises the BBC taskforce. The taskforce formulated an outline for and leads BBC, but each community creates its own program with the help of committees, which include residents. The various interpretations accommodate the different community cultures, and take into account the specific needs of local resident populations, while still adhering to the general guidelines and goals of this brain health initiative.

BBC 2.0

Now in its second year, BBC 2.0 – as it is affectionately dubbed internally – is the ideal way to bid farewell to lazy summer days and kick-start the fall season with its requisite four weeks of intensive brain health awareness activities. Each week features a focal exercise to stave off memory loss and maintain or increase brain agility.

Week 1: Physical Fitness (with an emphasis on improving balance, which deteriorates with age; studies show direct correlation between physical activity and brain health)

Week 2: Nutrition (how to nourish the body and delight the palate healthfully)

Week 3: Socialization (welcoming family members and various guests to campus, participating in wide variety of group activity)

Week 4: Brain "Crop Rotation" ("shaking up" routines to jumpstart the brain. Activities can be as simple as brushing teeth with the opposite hand!)

Sample community activities

Zumbapalooza	Mind Your Mind: Brain Games classes	Mind, Body, Spirit Talk + Demo	Nutrition and the Brain	Community Project
There is some evidence that aerobic exercise that gets your heart pumping is beneficial for the brain as well as the body.	Mind Your Mind workouts are challenging exercises that sharpen mental prowess in memory skills, flexible thinking, perception, reasoning and more.	Research indicates that meditation/yoga can help slow the progression of Alzheimer's disease. Connect the body, mind/spirit through mediation and yoga.	Hear about the effects of B vitamins, Omega-3 fats, antioxidants, and the Mediterranean diet on brain health.	Help pack bag lunches for the Hemenway United Methodist Church soup kitchen.



Westminster Place residents prepare sack lunches for a local soup kitchen

Staff Contributions Prove Invaluable

The staging and planning of the program is an inter-disciplinary effort that almost all community staff, including fitness/wellness, activities, nursing, dining, management teams and more, play critical roles in organizing and executing various activities throughout the communities. Staffers are prepped on program highlights during their morning stand-up meetings, which enable and encourage them to work with residents in a targeted way throughout the day.

Engagement is Key to Successful Program Execution

Perhaps one of the most rewarding aspects of the program is the camaraderie it fosters between ALL members of the community. For instance, a variety of wellness stations are arranged throughout the main campus buildings. This encourages family members, staff and other guests to work together on different mental- or physical-fitness exercises with residents in the community's public spaces, so it isn't unusual to see people working in pairs or groups on various activities:

<p>Signs like this were posted throughout the community...</p> 	<p>"Hunting & Gathering" "Puzzle Mania" "Feed Your Brain" ...with descriptors like these posted at each station</p>
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Emphasis on Community

Additionally, residents and staff from The Moorings of Arlington Heights, Lake Forest Place and Westminster Place participate in the WALK TO END ALZHEIMER'S - North Shore. There are a variety of "fun" events at each community, ranging from a *Chopped* style cooking contest, to seminars and socials that vary by campus.



Presbyterian Homes joined the WALK TO END ALZHEIMER'S - North Shore. Participants included residents from The Moorings of Arlington Heights, Lake Forest Place and Westminster Place.



The Moorings hosted its first-ever version of the Food Network TV show *Chopped!* Three community chefs were tasked with preparing a dish made with these brain healthy ingredients: dark chocolate, Beluga Lentils, Lacinato kale, salmon, tomato, and pumpkin seeds. Residents then voted for their favorites!

Program Metrics

Assessments are conducted at the outset and conclusion of the program so that the taskforce can collect data regarding the effectiveness of the education it provided. For instance, feedback from the inaugural program revealed residents preferred a shorter timeframe, and really wanted to focus, from a physical standpoint, on improving balance. So, those changes, amongst others, were made. Modifications based on 2016 responses will continue to be made as the program evolves.

Contributions to Senior Living

BBC 2.0 was presented as a comprehensive brain health program for older adults at the International Council on Active Aging Conference in November of last year. It was also shared with attendees of the Leading Age Illinois conference in April 2016. "From an industry standpoint, we are all in this together," said Muriel Brunger, administrator of community life, The Moorings of Arlington Heights, who also heads the BBC task force. "It is our hope to continually improve our offerings, and the best way to do that is by sharing our successes and key learnings with our industry colleagues, and hearing about theirs."

For more information about the Better Brains with Choices program, please contact Muriel Brunger, administrator of community life, at The Moorings of Arlington Heights: mbrunger@presbyterianhomes.org.

For more information about Presbyterian Homes, please visit <http://www.presbyterianhomes.org>.