

## Simi Hills exercise program is a hit with seniors

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Posted January 15, 2013 at 6:08 p.m.

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Joe Luma (left) and Flo Trapani (right) participate in a Sit and Box exercise class at Vintage Simi Hills. The class is meant to improve cardiovascular and upper body strength.

A senior exercise program called Sit and Box at Vintage Simi Hills has earned the Assisted Living Innovation in Quality Award from the California Assisted Living Association.

"The selection committee found the program to be quite innovative and the outcomes impressive, one that could be adapted or replicated to the benefit of many," said Sally Michael, president of the California Assisted Living Association. "It offers seniors, including those unable to stand, an enjoyable means to staying fit while increasing strength and stamina."



Joe Luma (left) and Judith Richardson (right) participate in a Sit and Box exercise class at Vintage Simi Hills. The retirement community received a statewide award for innovation in senior care with the class.

Each workout session employs punching and kicking motions used in kickboxing while in a seated position, said Jim Carper, 55, of Simi Valley, a class instructor who collaborated on the development of the program.

"While seated in chairs, we stretch, exercise, then cool down," Carper said. "Boxing gloves provide lightweight training benefits. At the end, participants are invited to punch a bag while seated."

The class began with five people and now attracts up to 20 at 10:30 a.m. each Friday.

"While individuals are, in fact, living longer, programs such as these afford seniors the opportunity to remain active within their physical capabilities, stay socially engaged and ultimately achieve a higher quality of life," Michael said.

The program was inspired by Flo Trapani, 55, of Simi Valley, when she was in her second month as activity director for Vintage Simi Hills.

"I was looking for something a little different than the exercise program we had in place," she said. "I wanted it to be fun for our residents, challenging and a little different than what one would think seniors could participate in."

Trapani had just finished a boxing workout in her home when she realized the residents would be able to do the same workout if they sat.

When she first described the program to residents at Vintage, "they weren't really crazy about the idea. However I brought numerous pairs of boxing gloves with me the first week ... showed them how much fun the class was, as well as how great it was for their physical conditioning, and it grew from there," she said.

While establishing the program, Trapani collaborated with Carper, who worked at the Simi Valley YMCA.

"Jim was my first boxing instructor and a co-worker from the YMCA when I worked there," Trapani said. "I asked him if he could come in and choreograph and instruct a great boxing routine for us and if he would be willing to allow our residents to demonstrate to the members at the YMCA. The residents were thrilled to demonstrate their class, and felt so happy to be able to show others that they were still going strong and that they could be a role model for others."

Program participants also made a DVD of the boxing class.



Joe Luma (left) and Min Bromberg (right) participate in a Sit and Box exercise class at Vintage Simi Hills. Bromberg has been taking the class for several months and said she really enjoys it.

"We met our goals of fun exercise, something different, increased self-esteem as well as physical condition and partnering with the community," Trapani said. "The residents at Vintage Simi Hills are remarkable, and are truly an inspiration to others."

Carper said, "Who would think senior citizens would be interested in cardio kickboxing? It seems counterintuitive. However, what makes it attractive is that it is something no one would expect seniors to do, particularly seniors with mobility issues. Their willingness to participate is gratifying and their enthusiasm inspiring."