The Active Aging Programs of Catholic Charities of Southern MN (CCSOMN) provide health and wellness opportunities and experiences that are changing lives. The programs are evidence-based, which means that they have been researched, studied and have proven outcomes to help build peoples’ confidence in managing their health conditions, increase physical activity levels and reduce health care costs. Programs serve all people, regardless of faith tradition, and are free of charge. The overall goal of these programs is to improve the quality of life and help people live independently longer. The programs are offered in forty-nine communities throughout southern Minnesota. Quickly expanding to additional communities, 2,593 participants were served from July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019.

Exercise programs are some of the most popular classes available. Trained volunteer leaders are providing SAIL (Staying Active & Independent for Life), Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program, A Matter of Balance and Fit & Strong! Each program provides exercises to improve strength, flexibility and endurance, while providing social connections and some also help problem-solve and provide education. Participants stated they are stronger and able to do more daily activities that used to be hard for them. Participants of these programs are encouraged to work at their own pace by increasing activity and modifying exercises to meet their ability.

For those who want to learn ways to better manage their own health, Active Aging Programs include health and wellness classes that support caregivers and those managing ongoing health conditions. These interactive classes provide tools to better care for yourself and the complex symptoms and issues people face, whether managing their own health or caring for someone else.

The Powerful Tools for Caregiver classes have been transforming for many participants. The classes have helped participants understand that caring for a spouse or loved one, with a chronic condition, often changes what has been normal in a relationship. By realizing new normal patterns, they can increase patience in caring for and improve communication with loved ones.

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