



Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Winona launches program to encourage and support individuals to master the art of aging.

The Aging Mastery Program® is an approach to living that celebrates the gift of longevity. The 10-week program combines goal-setting, daily practices, and peer support to help participants make meaningful changes in their lives. Central to the AMP philosophy is the belief that modest lifestyle changes can produce big results and that people can be empowered and supported to cultivate health and longevity. This program is made possible due to a generous grant awarded to Catholic Charities by the National Council on Aging.

Our goal is to change societal expectations about the roles and responsibilities of baby boomers and older adults and to create fun and easy-to- follow pathways for getting more out of life.

Equally important, the program encourages mastery — developing sustainable behaviors across many dimensions that will lead to improved health, stronger financial security, enhanced well-being, and increased connectedness to communities. Each level of mastery is based on consistency and duration, allowing participants to set individual goals. In addition, a reward system both motivates and encourages ongoing participation.

We are living longer. Are we living better?

Life expectancy has increased dramatically over the past 50 years, yet societal expectations of older adults have changed little. Moreover, people are generally unprepared for this increased longevity. AMP offers an innovative approach to guide individuals through this phase of life. The program incorporates evidence-informed materials, expert speakers, group discussion, peer support, and small rewards to give participants the skills and tools they need to achieve measurable improvements in managing their health, remaining economically secure, and contributing actively in society. All program materials and resources align with the goal of helping people enjoy self-sufficient lives.

Our primary goal in offering the AMP is to build on the successful results thus far showing that older adults in the program significantly increased their: social connectedness, physical activity levels, healthy eating habits, use of advanced planning, participation in evidence-based programs , and the adoption of several other healthy behaviors.

“This program was very uplifting. I learned that the aging process can be done gracefully. I am working on a plan for the future to share with my family.”

- AMP Participant

Diane Rud, Catholic Charities' Senior Health Promotions Coordinator, facilitates the AMP in La Crescent, MN. "After I retired, I missed having purpose, as well as the social and intellectual stimulation that work provided for me. I want to keep my brain stimulated and I love learning with peers. Facilitating this program meets those needs and challenges me to do the things I need to do to stay healthy," said Rud. La Crescent AMP participants strongly encourage others to enroll in the program, stating the program strengths to include, "Great program materials and speakers, nice diversity of people enrolled in the program, other participants are very engaged, interested and willing to share, we are increasing our social interaction and forming friendships."

Catholic Charities has offered the program to 50 older adults in three communities, with an additional five communities scheduled benefit from the program in the fall of 2016. For more information or to find a class near you, visit the Catholic Charities website at <https://www.ccwinona.org/programs/aging-mastery-program/>. To request the AMP to be offered in your community, contact Jennifer Halberg, Director of Senior Services at jhalberg@ccwinona.org or (507)454-2270.