

## Star Program Centers

**Parker Health Group, Inc. (Parker)** awarded Project Healthy Bones a grant in 2012 to evaluate its effectiveness in an assisted living facility. Parker now includes Project Healthy Bones in the wellness programs in all five of its facilities. In the past few years Parker developed a unique Parker at Home program in which its exercise instructors and physical therapists are trained to be peer leaders and lead classes in nearby retirement communities.

**Interfaith Caregivers of Greater Mercer County**, a volunteer-based organization providing non-medical services for the elderly, began offering Project Healthy Bones classes in 2012. It now has 7 lead coordinators, 24 peer leaders, and 193 participants in 7 classes at 5 locations. Two classes are bilingual (Spanish), and are held in the cathedral in Trenton and low-income senior housing.

**Hunterdon County Division of Senior, Disabilities, and Veteran Services**, one of the first pilot centers, offers a comprehensive program that includes an annual beginners' class, several ongoing classes, and a *Two-Timers* program for those who want to exercise a second time each week.

**Other classes** are noted for community outreach. They invite guest speakers to complement their educational work, participate in local health fairs, work with Girl Scouts and non-profit groups, and create educational posters displayed in libraries, senior centers, and municipal buildings during May, National Osteoporosis Month.

## Healthy Bones Are for Everyone!

*"It's never too late, or too early, to take care of your bones!"*



## Project Healthy Bones

*An Osteoporosis Prevention, Exercise, and Education Program for Older Adults*



For more information on Project Healthy Bones or to find a class near you, visit [www.aging.nj.org](http://www.aging.nj.org) or call 609-438-4798.



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## The Program

Project Healthy Bones was created in 1997 by the New Jersey Interagency Council on Osteoporosis and the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, now known as the Department of Human Services, Division of Aging Services.

It is a 24-week exercise and education program for people who have osteoporosis or osteopenia.

Its goal is to 1.) reduce the risk of falls and fractures, 2.) improve balance and bone strength, and 3.) encourage a bone-healthy lifestyle.

Lead coordinators affiliated with community-based organizations assure program fidelity, provide on-going guidance, and train peer leaders. These peer leaders then go out into the community and lead the Project Healthy Bones classes.

Classes are held in a variety of locations throughout the state, such as senior centers, libraries, municipal buildings, churches, and senior living facilities.

Project Healthy Bones is offered free of charge, but participants are required to purchase a program manual and hand and leg weights.

Class sizes may vary depending on location. The average class has 20 participants.

## We have grown to . . .

**143** classes, **241** peer leaders, **2,516** participants

**96% of peer leaders are volunteers!**

**18,000** volunteer hours annually

*"My mother was diagnosed with osteoporosis, and I saw the impact it had on her life. Our program helps me take good care of my bones."*

## The Participants



### Who they are . . .

- 95% are women.
- They are between 48 and 93 years old. The average age is 72.
- They see themselves as wives, mothers, daughters, sisters, parents, grandparents, and retirees looking to be healthy.
- Most are strong and active. Many have had joint replacements and some use canes or walkers.
- Most express a fear of falling. In some classes, 1 out of 3 has fallen and had serious injuries and fractures.
- Most continue in the program for years, and as long as possible.

### What they see . . .

Improved balance and strength, reduced fear of falling, greater awareness of posture, and more energy to lead an active life.

### What they say . . .

*"My bones are improving, and I am improving as a person because of our class."*

*"It's the best thing I've done for myself."*

*"I like the discipline of exercising correctly and feel stronger and more confident with each class."*

*"I love our portable exercises; I do them everywhere."*



## The Peer Leaders



### Who they are . . .

- 98% are women, from diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds.
- They are between 40 and 93 years old. The average age is 84.
- Some have served since the program began 22 years ago! Most continue as leaders, and almost every class has at least one original leader.
- Most are former teachers and nurses.
- Many express concern about falling, and have had serious injuries related to falls.

### What they do . . .

- Set up exercises
- Coach for correct performance
- Encourage and support participants
- Facilitate interactive discussions on bone health
- Maintain class records and participant forms to measure progress and check outcomes



*"It has been so rewarding to lead my class these past 15 years. It gives me a purpose in life, and helps all of us overcome the social isolation older people often feel."*

*"It feels good to help others do the exercises correctly. I am proud to be part of Project Healthy Bones."*