



## Program planning for camps with older adults

The information provided below are key points, based on discussions with participants from ACA's "Great Getaway Camp" in November 2019, discussion with Tania Maloney from "Nurture for Nature" inter-generational programs and feedback from Camp Manyung outdoor activity program for older adults.

### Camp staff mindset

- Inclusive, welcoming and encouraging attitudes of the whole camp staff team makes all the difference to the success of older adult camps
- Camp leaders with Flexible approach, ensures that efforts can be made by camp staff to find potential solutions to any barriers to participation that may arise
- Patronizing attitudes of Camp staff towards older adult participants (albeit unintentional) is not appreciated by older adult participants and can detract from the whole camp experience. Treating older people (like all people) with dignity and respect in all interactions is key.
- Camaraderie and building sense of community is important at camp. Many older adults are socially isolated and camps provide an opportunity to create a sense of belonging
- Consider asking an older person with a "can do attitude" who is confident and active outdoors on a regular basis to join the camp as a role model. Many older people will not believe they are capable of participating in many outdoor adventure activities "I'm too old for this" or "I never thought I'd ever do this" are common thoughts. An older adult role model within the group can help break down this limited thinking.

### Program Planning

- completion of program risk assessment (refer AAAS & GPG)
- flexible program design that provides choice / options for everyone to participate, regardless of their physical mobility, is important to ensure inclusion, e.g. providing different activity options for different physical capabilities
- consider physical effort and cognitive ability required to complete activity programs and design program accordingly
- consider use of adaptive equipment to support participation on activities e.g. electronic attachments to bikes or use of Universal Harness on Giant swing
- consider time spent standing around at activity sites, is there seating available?
- co-designing of the program with participants with specific needs before the camp, will identify any potential barriers and find solutions to overcome them
- consider protection from weather and environmental factors e.g. wind, heat, sun exposure. Generally, many older people prefer to part take in activities in the morning when they may have more energy and the sun is less severe than the afternoon. For activities in full sun, consider using shade shelters and recommend hats and collared shirts.

- Activity Leader: Participant ratios may need to be greater to ensure additional support is provided
- Activities may require small group sizes and/or additional time to complete as older adult participants may move slower than other groups at camp e.g. school groups
- consider longer break times between activities to allow for adequate breaks to regain energy and extra time required to move between activities
- Physically demanding activities could be spread out evenly with passive activities
- Sociable activities e.g. poly pong or table tennis is very important for the down time, social time and reminder of games played in their youth
- Wet weather contingency program.
- Provide specific "what to bring" and "what to wear" lists, ensuring appropriate outdoor footwear is specified and outdoor head wear e.g. beanie or sun hat

### **Program Facilitation**

- "encouragement and positive attitude from the camp site staff team can make all the difference to whether a person will participate or not" (Liz ACA Great Getaway Camp participant 2019)
- Clear and precise activity safety briefings, to build trust among participants that it is a safe experience
- The pace of the activity maybe slower than the outdoor leader is used to, so need to allow time for participants to engage in the activity. "Jason didn't rush anyone and gave as much time as was needed .. this also made a big difference" (Frank from ACA's Great Getaway camp participant 2019)
- Many outdoors leaders enjoy the slower pace that comes from working with older adults, as a change from working with school groups
- Being in nature is a powerful sensory experience and can stimulate distinct memories from their younger years of life. It is great to allow time in the program design for older participants to tell their stories and relive these experiences (Tania Maloney, Nurture for Nature, 2020)

### **Marketing and communications**

- Clear communication before camp in formats that are readily used by older adults is important e.g. email or option to send information in the post
- Clear communication during camp is important to ensure everyone is aware of what is happening each day and any changes that may occur
- Consider using a range of different marketing channels to reach older adult audiences e.g. Facebook, U3A, Rotary, CWA, Church newsletters, local newspapers, local cinema advertising, local community sporting and recreational clubs e.g. bowls, tennis, golf, swim clubs

## **Camp Facility requirements**

### Accommodation

- sleeping on top bunks is not appropriate, due to physical effort required, potential for falls and not easy if getting up multiple times during the night for toilet. Most older folks will sleep on bottom bunk or if possible, provision of single bed for those who require it.
- Provision of a portable hoist for transfers from wheelchair to bed is vital. Physically lifting of people from their chair is not dignified and is also poor manual handling practice for the carer.
- ensuite bathrooms are important, especially as many older people visit toilet multiple times during the night
- option to access single bed if required
- space to store bags off the floor so they don't become trip hazards. Important to take steps to prevent falls for older people

### Trails and pathways

- accessible paths, tracks, trails and ramps makes a big difference to people with mobility issues
- For participants with mobility issues, it is useful to know in advance how steep the gradient of the camp in the main areas
- good external lighting between buildings minimizes potential for trips and falls when walking after dark for people with impaired vision

### Amenities

- consider the proximity of amenities from the outdoor activity program sites