

Get involved with seniors in your area

*Senior to Senior: Good Health, Understanding and Acceptance.*

*Senior to Senior: Good Health, Understanding and Acceptance* is a new program being developed by the Family Health Foundation of Illinois (formerly the IAFP Foundation) to help with health literacy in the retiree to elderly population. The Foundation received a health literacy grant from the AAFP to pilot an activity Robert “Bob” Heerens, M.D., IAFP life member, past president and Foundation board member has been doing for years, into a formal program.

“I am excited about creating a program to get more Illinois physicians involved in sharing their knowledge with our senior population. I hope they will join me in this great endeavor. For the past 20 years, I have been going out to where seniors gather in the Rockford area and talking to them about staying as healthy and active as possible in the senior years,” says the 94-year-old Dr. Heerens. He also gives his audiences a booklet called “the Senior Health journal,” which is full of useful information and space for listing their personal health information, prescriptions, important numbers, and other vital information.

He simply contacted a few groups such as Lion’s Club, Rotary groups and seniors’ communities to see if they would be interested in a physician talking to the group about their health. He tells each group a little about himself and the importance of staying as healthy and active as possible. He uses a few statistics to break the ice such as “At age 70, a person’s heart has beaten 2 billion, 885 million times. It also has pumped 56 million, 362 thousand gallons of blood.” He also finds the Senior Health journal a great way handout to get conversations going.

“Once you’ve broken the ice, then questions start coming. It’s a pleasant way to spend an hour or so and it is so appreciated by the people you talk with,” explains Dr. Heerens. “I greatly enjoy staying active and keeping my hand in medicine, even in retirement. I feel working with the senior population is sharing the best of family medicine—helping older citizens understand their health.”

And now it’s time to take Dr. Heerens’ great work statewide. Don’t let your great knowledge go unused in retirement. You are needed as a great asset in your community. The AAFP grant will cover the cost of the journals for physicians to hand out. All members have to do is request the journals from the Foundation and start making presentations to their local seniors’ groups. The Foundation will track who is making presentations, how many and where. Staff can also provide pre- and post-tests if desired.

**GET STARTED NOW!** Contact Christi Emerson at [cemerson@iafp.com](mailto:cemerson@iafp.com) or call her directly at 630-427-8005. You can call the Family Health Foundation of Illinois toll-free at 800-826-7944 and ask for extension 210.