

## **A beautiful place for a healthy life!**

The Braxton County Senior Center is a bee hive of lively activity. Serving seniors for over 40 years, the center prides itself on being a centerpiece of community engagement.



One of the reasons the center hums with life is the extensive offerings of fitness and healthy life styles opportunities. Good fitness is important throughout life and the variety of programs available fit into just about every ability and interest. The center's Executive Director, Mary Chapman, is delighted to see seniors come and actively participate. "We are so blessed to have so many options," said Executive Director Chapman. "From the accessible outside walking trail to our Tai Chi for Arthritis classes, we are always on the move!"

Along with seniors, the community, staff and others use the outdoor walking trail. Lined with benches and exercise signage, the trail is rarely empty. Inside, the center has a dedicated fully equipped fitness room with treadmills, standing and seated stair steppers, leg curl, shoulder and chest press along with free weights and much more. A Wii Fit is also available to burn some calories while having fun. Specific exercise classes such as Healthy Steps, Seated Tai Chi, and Workout to Go, keep fitness from becoming a routine. In addition, the center launched "Spring to Healthy Habits Contest" in March. Running over a three month period, this competition tracks points based on a participant's frequency of fitness activity. The first, second and third place winners will be announced June 1 with a grand prize of a new pair of walking shoes. A celebration picnic will follow for all to enjoy.

Another big reason the Braxton County Senior Citizens Center thrives is connected to the very building that houses all this vitality. When she began her position in July 2009, Mary Chapman gave herself a personal challenge to retire the \$1,418,077.09 mortgage on the building as quickly as possible. Built in 2007, it is a beautiful, one-level facility nestled by the Elk River. "As a non-profit organization, I just felt in my heart that I wanted to lift that burden as soon as possible, so I decided to look at way to cut costs and save. "I live by Benjamin Franklin's motto of "A penny saved is a penny earned," so I got to work" said Chapman. She saved by switching to a local and less expensive fuel oil company for the vans. Because of the age of the vans, in her first month, Chapman wrote her first grant to obtain two new vehicles. She continued to write grants for funding for everything from radios, staff positions, operational costs, host programs, supplies, and more while using the extra money she could carve out towards the loan principle. Along with other administrative and partnership savings, the center was able to pay off its loan in five years! Chapman and her assistant director, Melissa Keplinger, continually look out for more ways to save while keeping their eye on the center's resources.

Congrats to Braxton County Senior Center and all that you do!



