



# THE MADISON SENIOR CENTER

BY LAURA HUNT

The Madison Senior Center is redefining what a senior center is. Located in the heart of Madison at 330 W. Mifflin Street, it is a vibrant center of activity for older adults who want to learn new skills, challenge their brains, or even exercise. It's the 21st century and today's seniors are learning and doing more than ever before.

The word senior can mean many things, but it does not mean old. Being a senior in high school or college represents four years of hard work. In

families it's a title of respect. Corporate America uses the word senior to signify authority (for example, Senior Vice President). At the Madison Senior Center, it means you are at least 55 years old and have earned the privilege of being considered a senior adult.

September is National Senior Center Month, and this year's theme is Find Balance at Your Center. Finding balance in life is one of our program goals every month. Activities offered provide opportunities to be engaged

physically, mentally, and emotionally. Many of our instructors are seniors who enjoy volunteering to share their valuable skills and knowledge.

One of the highlights this year is a documentary called *The Age of Love*, directed and produced by Steven Lowery. In this 99-minute film, 70 to 90 year olds discuss their need for companionship and intimacy later in life. This poignant and entertaining screening will be held at the Central Library on Tuesday, September 13, at 1:30 p.m. The event

“redefining what a senior center is...a vibrant center of activity for older adults who want to learn new skills, challenge their brains, or even exercise.”

is free, but preregistration is strongly recommended.

On October 5, there will be a Monona Terrace lecture on aging and intimacy by John DeLamater, Conway-Bascom Professor of Sociology at University of Wisconsin–Madison. Then the following week, the Madison Senior Center will host a speed dating event for seniors. The desire for intimacy doesn't decrease with age.

Other special events at the Madison Senior Center include A Photo Affair (September/October) and An Artful Affair (April/May), both of which are coordinated with the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art's Gallery Night. The Health & Resource Fair on November 3 targets both seniors and their caregivers, who themselves are often seniors. In

November, we feature The Festival of Wreaths, and in December, we host our Classic English Tea. These two events raise funds that provide support to offer most programs at little to no cost.

The second floor of the Madison Senior Center is home to an art gallery, which features artwork by local adults ages 55+. The amount of talent in our community is amazing, and anyone can view the art Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Programs at the Senior Center are varied and reflect the needs and interests of participants. Art classes have included watercolor painting, printmaking, and drawing. We regularly offer financial literacy classes, computer classes, health screenings, and musical performances. We've

also had presentations on financial security, internet security, and low-vision resources.

Our Brown Bag Lunch Series features a local author every month, except July, August, and December. In October, local author Bill Bilbo, who specializes in flash fiction, will read and discuss his work, and spend time teaching attendees how to write their own flash fiction.

Not to be forgotten is the growing research that reinforces the importance of exercise and good nutrition as people age. Three exercise classes are available to participants: Gentle Exercise, Gentle Yoga, and Simple Strength. Other movement classes include Ballroom Basics for Balance, which was designed by Susan Frikken, OT of Yahara Therapy, with a new class starting on September 23, and Laughing Bodies/Dancing Minds, a movement class taught in January by Li Chiao Ping, Dance professor, University of Wisconsin–Madison.

A variety of other programs are also offered, such as the AARP Smart Driving Course, Celtic Harpist Shari Sarazin, Intergenerational Preschool Hour, Gilda's Glee Club, and a BEAM tour of the de Young Art Museum in San Francisco. Sign up to receive our electronic monthly newsletter, *The Messenger*, free of charge. Register for your new My City of Madison Account at [my.cityofmadison.com](http://my.cityofmadison.com). Click on “New User?” in the green





box, then “Register” on the word box. Provide your information and click the box to register. Scroll down to “Senior Center” and click.

One of the most surprising things for a lot of people who are new to the Madison Senior Center is the number of volunteers. All of our front desk staff and most of our instructors and dining site staff are volunteers. This allows us to offer programs for little to no cost, and the volunteers continually comment on how rewarding the experience is.

So forget everything that you thought you knew about senior centers being for old, bingo-playing people in poor health. Stop by the Madison Senior Center or visit [madisonseniorcenter.org](http://madisonseniorcenter.org) to learn more about participating in programs and activities with other adults who may or may not be retired from their job, but certainly not retired from life.

*Laura Hunt is the program coordinator at the Madison Senior Center. She is responsible for the programs, special events, community outreach, and public relations. Prior to joining the Madison Senior Center staff, Laura was the program manager at the North/Eastside Senior Coalition and spent 30 years with the YMCA of Dane County focusing on children and families.*



Photograph submitted by Laura Hunt

COLONIAL CLUB SENIOR  
ACTIVITY CENTER -  
SUN PRAIRIE  
(608) 837-4611  
[colonialclub.org](http://colonialclub.org)

DEFOREST AREA  
COMMUNITY SENIOR CENTER  
(608) 846-9469  
[thecommunitycornerstone.org](http://thecommunitycornerstone.org)

EMMCA  
(608) 223-3100  
[emmca.org](http://emmca.org)

FITCHBURG SENIOR CENTER  
(608) 270-4290  
[fitchburgwi.gov/621/senior-center](http://fitchburgwi.gov/621/senior-center)

GOODMAN COMMUNITY  
CENTER  
(608) 241-1574  
[goodmancenter.org/programs/older-adults](http://goodmancenter.org/programs/older-adults)

MADISON SENIOR CENTER  
(608) 266-6581  
[cityofmadison.com/seniorcenter](http://cityofmadison.com/seniorcenter)

MCFARLAND SENIOR CENTER  
(608) 838-7117  
[mcfarland.wi.us](http://mcfarland.wi.us)

MIDDLETON SENIOR CENTER  
(608) 831-2373  
[ci.middleton.wi.us](http://ci.middleton.wi.us)

MONONA SENIOR CENTER  
(608) 222-3415  
[mymonona.com](http://mymonona.com)

MT. HOREB SENIOR CENTER  
(608) 437-6902  
[mounthorebwi.info](http://mounthorebwi.info)

NORTHWEST DANE  
SENIOR SERVICES -  
CROSS PLAINS  
(608) 798-6937  
[nwdss.org](http://nwdss.org)