

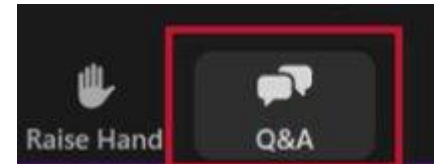
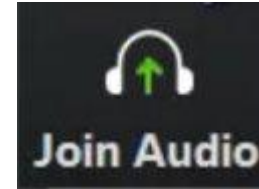


The Impact of Falls Prevention Programs on Social Connectedness

May 12, 2026

Housekeeping

- **Audio Options**
 - Use your computer speakers, OR dial in using the phone number in your registration email.
 - All participants are muted.
- **Questions and Answers (Q&A)**
 - On the Zoom module on the bottom of your screen, click the Q&A icon, type your question in the box and submit.
 - For any questions that we aren't able to respond to, you may follow-up at info@committoconnect.org.
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 - The Chat feature allows webinar attendees, the host, co-hosts and panelists to communicate for the duration of the webinar.



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 - Click on the CC Show Captions button or click on the link in the chat
- **Screen Reader Users: Reduce unwanted chatter**
 - Request speech on demand: Insert, Spacebar, “S”
- **To get our attention if you need tech assistance:**
 - Raise or Lower Hand: Alt + Y



Presenters

Kari Benson, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Aging, Administration for Community Living

Emily Nabors, Associate Director of Innovation, National Council on Aging

Leigh Ann Eagle, Director of Maryland Living Well Center of Excellence, MAC Inc.

Nancy Hedlesky, Coordinator of Special Projects, MAC Inc.

Mark Cullen, Vice President of Strategy and Business Development, Trellis





Commit to Connect

COMBATting SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS IN ALL COMMUNITIES









Commit to Connect

www.committotconnect.org

- **Technical Assistance**
 - Annual National Summit to Increase Social Connections
 - Professional and consumer resources
 - Webinars and Office Hours
- **Communities of Practices on outcome evaluation**
 - Impact of Chronic Disease Self-Management Education programs on social connection
- **“Innovations Hub” to encourage replication**
 - Clearinghouse of 100+ model programs, interventions, and solutions
- **Engage an online Nationwide Network of Champions**
 - 650+ leaders at local, state, and national levels

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Recent Activity

 **RE: Engaging Rural Older Adults**
Posted by: [Robert Lefkowitz](#), 22 hours ago

Posted In: [Open Forum Discussions](#)

Hi Carol, I'm a volunteer for Conversations to Remember. We're using virtual visits to reach seniors all over the country. All the senior needs is a tablet or computer, and they can meet with a set of ...

 **RE: Engaging Rural Older Adults**
Posted by: [Keith Moore](#), 3 days ago

Posted In: [Open Forum Discussions](#)

Blooming Health offers a messaging platform optimized for older adults that can send group texts, emails and voice calls in over 70 languages. It can be used for event reminders, wellness checks, and surveys, ...

 **RE: Engaging Rural Older Adults**
Posted by: [Robert Signore](#), 3 days ago


Posted In: [Open Forum Discussions](#)


Hi Carol, Technology can help with rural older adults since transportation can

Take Action!



Recent Blogs

 **Meet a Commit to Connect Champion: Lori Murphy**
By [Ali Fehlhaber](#)

 **Meet a Commit to Connect Champion: Jan Amys**
By [Ali Fehlhaber](#)

CTC Nationwide Network of Champions





Innovations Hub

committoconnect.org/innovations-hub

Filter Sort ...

Organization Name	City, State	Brief Description	Intervention Type	Population Served	Geographic Population Served	Organization Type	Partners Involved	Funding Source	Description
Caring Together, Living Better AgeOptions	Oak Park, IL	Partnering with faith-based groups to offer social engagement activities for Black and Hispanic family caregivers.	Intergenerational Technology	Older Adults Caregivers	Suburban Urban	Area Agency on Aging	Aging and Disability Resource Ce...	Private/philanthropic grant	Program Description AgeOptions, an Area Agency on Aging based in Oak Park, IL.
Friendly Phone Calling Decatur Catholic Charities – Faith in...	Decatur, IL	Older adults who are homebound received phone calls from friendly volunteers.	Intergenerational Volunteerism	Older Adults People with Disabilit	Rural Urban Suburban	Other Community-Based Organi...	Area Agency on Aging Faith-base	Older Americans Act Private/phila	Program Description Faith in Action of Macon County provides friendly phone calling
ONEgeneration Letters to O... ONEgeneration	Van Nuys, CA	This letter writing program allows older adults and students to connect without using technology.	Intergenerational Arts and Creati	Older Adults	Suburban Urban	Aging Services Provider	Intergenerational groups Nutritic	Private/philanthropic grant Other	Program Description In a world where access to digital resources can improve overall social
COAST-IT (Connecting Olde... University of Colorado Anschutz Mu...	Denver, CO	Pairs college students studying health with older adults for intergenerational social phone calls.	Health and Wellness Intergenera	Older Adults	Rural Frontier Suburban Urt	University	Aging and Disability Resource Ce...	Other	Program Description The University of Colorado (CU) Anschutz Division of Geriatrics and
Fairfax County Virtual Cent... Fairfax County Department of Neig...	Fairfax, VA	Virtual senior center developed in response to closures of in-person senior centers and adult day health centers due to the COVID-19 ...	Arts and Creative Expression Heal	Older Adults People with Disabilit	Suburban	Senior Center	Aging and Disability Resource Ce...		Program Description At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, senior centers, adult day

Welcome and Remarks

Kari Benson

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Aging

The Administration for Community Living



The Impact of Falls Prevention Programs on Social Connectedness

USAging Commit to Connect Conference

Emily Nabors, MSG
Associate Director of Innovation
National Council on Aging

May 12, 2026



Agenda

1 National Council on Aging

2 Falls Prevention and Social Connection

3 Atlanta Regional Commission

4 ACL Innovation Lab

5 Resources

National Council on Aging – Who We Are



Our Vision

A just and caring society in which each of us, as we age, lives with dignity, purpose, and security



Our Mission

Create the conditions for all to age well today and into the future



National Council on Aging – What We Do

Resources



Trusted, unbiased information that enable older adults and their caregivers to take small steps that can have a big impact on their health and financial security

Best Practices



Technical assistance and support for professionals in community-based organizations who serve older adults every day

Tools



Personalized, online support for individuals to find benefits, choose a Medicare plan, prevent falls, and plan for a healthy and secure life

Advocacy



A national platform and voice to fight against ageism—and to strengthen the federal programs we all depend on as we age

Learn more at www.ncoa.org and [@NCOAging](https://twitter.com/NCOAging)

National Council on Aging - What We Do

Evidence-Based Falls Prevention Programs

- Technical assistance to ACL Falls Prevention Grantees
- National Falls Prevention Database
- EBFPP Information & Tools
- Clearinghouse of Best Practices
 - Capacity building
 - Implementation
 - Sustainability

Public Education and Awareness

- Annual Falls Prevention Awareness Week Campaign
- National State Falls Prevention Coalition Workgroup
- Consumer Resources & Social Media Tools
- Advocacy Strategies

Clinical Community Connections

- Promotion of STEADI Toolkit
- Partnership Development
 - Disability community
 - Indigenous populations
 - Healthcare providers

Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)

- Regional Planning and Intergovernmental Coordination Agency
- Area Agency on Aging offering aging and independence services
- 2023 Administration for Community Living Falls Prevention Grantee
- Offer A Matter of Balance, Bingocize, and Tai Chi for Arthritis and Falls Prevention
- Volunteer and partner organization-driven

Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)

Organic and Fostered Social Connections

- Tai Chi for Arthritis
- Post-TCA coffee group
- From participant to instructor and champion
- TCA Day

Ingredients and Strategies for Success

- Instructors from the community personalize programming
- Volunteer Appreciation, New Coach Mentorship
- Promote continued connections (listserv)

Tips from the ARC Team

- Ask questions to build something they want to be a part of
 - How do volunteers and participants want to connect?
 - Did participants feel connected to the group?
- Create social opportunities that show they are part of something bigger

ACL Innovation Lab

Grantee Reports from the Field

- “Pleasantly surprised by the way participants have connected with one another, and by the way they communicate, encourage, and support each other.”
- “A Community Advisory Board member that lives in the housing site where a program takes place shared that since the program began, she has seen the community ‘come alive’.”
- “Social connection is a major motivator for participation.”

Resources from ncoa.org



Enhance Fitness class, Baltimore County Department of Aging, Baltimore, MD

Check out these articles to learn more

- [How Do Social Activities Prevent Falls in Older Adults?](#)
- [Beyond the Program, Building Community Beyond Alumni Engagement](#)
- [Why Friendships Matter as We Age](#)
- [How to Talk to Your Friends and Family About Falls](#)
- [Loneliness and Isolation in Older Adults: How to Help](#)

Thank You!

Emily Nabors, MSG

Associate Director of Innovation

National Council on Aging

emily.nabors@ncoa.org



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MAC Inc. Falls Prevention Project and Social Connection

Funding Statement:

IRB # 060925-1214

This project is supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human

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Today's Conversation

- Why is this project needed?
- Program overview
- Impact on Social Connectedness

Why is this project needed?

- Many of our referrals to Stepping On at MAC do not have transportation, have a debilitating fear of falling, and are isolated from their community as a result.
- Many are also using walkers/rollators full time, or sometimes even use wheelchairs, Stepping On is not designed to serve that population.

Program Snapshot

- Free, in-home falls prevention program targeting Wicomico, Worcester, and Somerset counties
- Combines home safety, exercise, medication reviews and education
- Delivered by an interdisciplinary team

Intervention Structure

- 1 pharmacist visit
- 4 physical therapist visits
- 8 exercise specialist visits
- Program length: ~4 months

Study Design Overview

- Participants screened for eligibility
- Medications reviewed by pharmacist
- Baseline balance and home safety assessments done by physical therapist, progress measured at 60 and 120 days.
- Participants receive any mobility devices or assistive devices recommended by the physical therapist
- Exercise sessions carried out with exercise specialist, as well as the participant exercising on their own.

Overall progress

"We have completed 10 60day re-evaluations thus far, and in this short time participants have improved in almost every metric, including: Timed Up & Go, 30 Second Chair Stand Test, Modified Tandem Stand, Tandem Stand, Floor Transfer, The Falls Efficacy Scale (FES-I), the Patient Specific Functional Scale, the Global Rating of Change Scale.

The process of the study not only increases strength and balance in time, but it gives participants confidence that they CAN improve those things if they are willing to work at it. Participants are excited to opt in to a study for the greater good as well as working on themselves.

Impact on Social Connectedness:

Participant 1 (76-year-old female):

We found during this participant's 60-day re-evaluation that she improved her confidence in several of her goals set in the beginning of the program. She is able to step up on a curb with her walker, where she could not do that before. She is also able to climb stairs, and she couldn't do that in the beginning of the program. Her confidence in her walking without a walker has improved significantly. Her left leg strength and mobility was severely affected by chemotherapy, but this program has helped improve that significantly. She is now able to get up off of the floor, where she could not do that before the program. She feels that this program has kept her motivated more than when she completed physical therapy in the past. Her long-term goal is to go on a trip with her daughter and grandson when she completes the program.

Impact on Social Connectedness

Participant 2 (83-year-old female):

Made an initial goal of dancing with her husband again. She was disappointed that at the last wedding they attended, she did not feel comfortable trying to dance. At her 60-day re-evaluation, the physical therapist had them practice, and they were able to dance for a few minutes!

Her confidence improved on the Falls Efficacy Scale (FES-I) with walking in a place with crowds as well.

Another participant had not been out onto their beautiful back deck overlooking their pond in a long time. At her 60-day re-evaluation, the physical therapist helped her out to the deck, and she is now confident that she can do that with her daughter and granddaughter when they come to visit.

This participant is also interested in participating in a phone buddy system to increase exercise compliance.

Impact on Social Connectedness

Participant 3 (81-year-old female):

Had not been out onto their beautiful back deck overlooking their pond in a long time. At her 60-day re-evaluation, the physical therapist helped her out to the deck, and she is now confident that she can do that with her daughter and granddaughter when they come to visit.

This participant is also interested in participating in a phone buddy system to increase exercise compliance.

This participant responded as “Very concerned” about walking in a place with crowds at her baseline evaluation and answered “Not at all concerned” after her 60-day re-evaluation. She also went from “Fairly concerned” about visiting a friend or relative, to “Not at all concerned”.

Impact on Social Connectedness

Participant 4 (82-year-old female):

This participant mainly relies on using a walker and wheelchair to get around. Her main goal is to be able to walk only using a single point cane. Her initial self score on the Patient-Specific Functional scale on using a single point cane was a 1 on a 0 (unable to perform activity) to 10 (Able to perform activity as before injury or problem) scale. At her 60-day re-evaluation she had increased her score to a 5.

This participant was also referred to the PEARLS program through this program and is now seeing a counselor to help reduce depression symptoms.

The Impact of Falls Prevention Programs on Social Connectedness

How evidence-based fall prevention can rebuild confidence, movement, and connection

Mark Cullen
Trellis / Juniper
May 12, 2026



The core idea

Falls prevention can interrupt a physical and social decline cycle.

Fear of falling can cause people to reduce activity. That protects them in the short term, but it can also narrow their world: fewer outings, less movement, weaker muscles, lower mood, and more isolation.

Evidence-based classes create a safer, repeatable way to move with others by restoring confidence and making social contact part of the intervention rather than an afterthought.

01 Reduce fear

Participants build confidence and learn how to talk about fall risk.

02 Rebuild movement

Group-based activity supports strength, balance, and routine.

03 Reconnect socially

Showing up with peers creates structure, accountability, and belonging.

Loneliness is a biological stress signal

Research helps explain why structured connection belongs in a health intervention.

Chronic loneliness is not simply sadness. It is the body staying on alert.

Former Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy's book 'Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World' summarizes loneliness research and makes the science concrete: some people may inherit greater sensitivity to disconnection, but experience and circumstance matter far more. When loneliness persists, short-term stress responses can become long-term wear and tear.

Why this matters for Juniper

Juniper addresses the modifiable side: repeated, welcoming social contact built around movement, peer support, confidence, and practical health goals.

1 Sensitivity to disconnection

Loneliness can arise from missing any of three essential forms of connection: a close intimate bond, meaningful friendships, or a shared community of purpose and belonging.

2 Chronic stress biology

Persistent loneliness is linked with inflammation, cardiovascular strain, and weaker antiviral defenses.

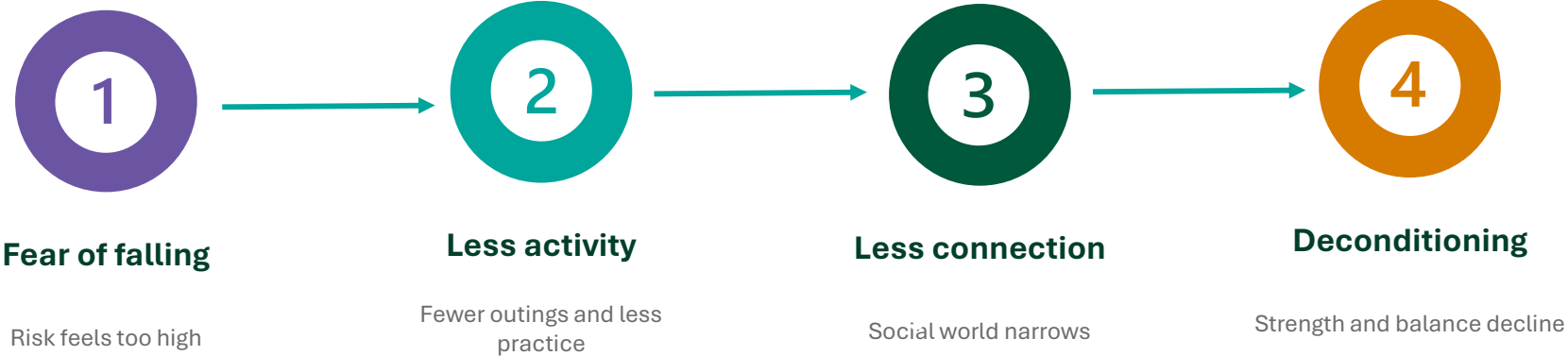
3 Outsized health risks

Lacking social connection can shorten lifespan as much as smoking fifteen cigarettes a day and may pose a greater health risk than obesity, heavy drinking, or physical inactivity.

Falls and isolation can reinforce each other

Fear of falling can shrink a person's world — and a smaller world can increase fall risk.

THE CYCLE



Falls prevention programs can interrupt the cycle by giving people a safer way to move, rebuild confidence, and re-enter social spaces.

Juniper is Minnesota's Community Care Hub

A statewide network connecting evidence-based community programs with healthcare and social care partners.



34,000+

older adults served statewide since 2018

~50% / ~50%

metro and rural reach

69%

Attended fall prevention programs

100+

clinical and community partnerships

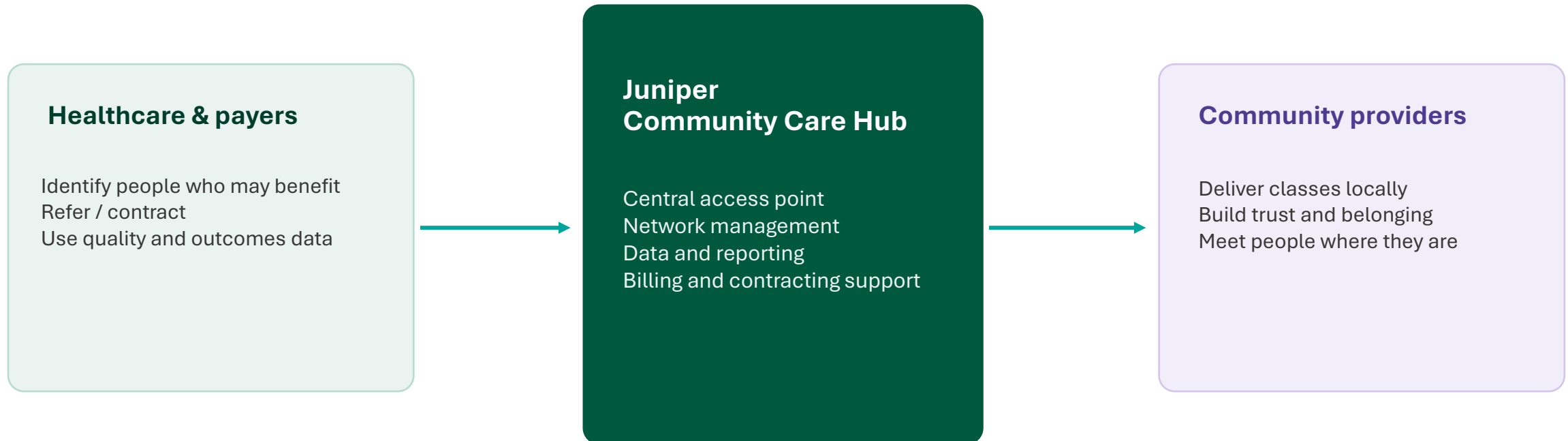
~74

average participant age

Juniper provides a central access point for participants, healthcare partners, and community-based organizations — reducing operational friction while preserving local delivery.

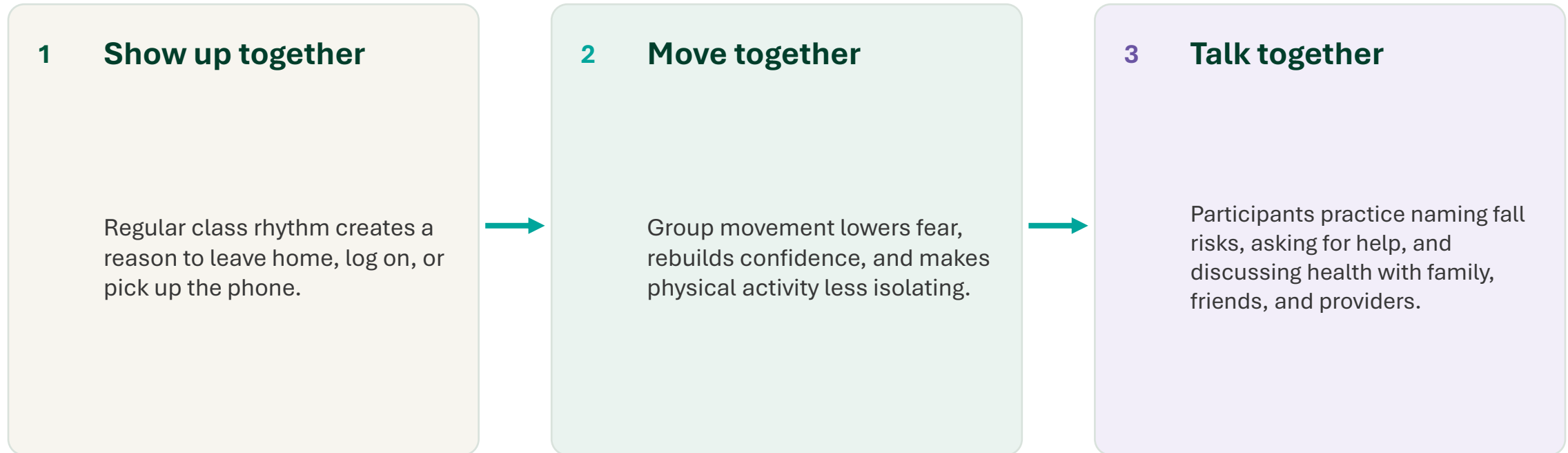
The model: evidence-based programs delivered through trusted local partners

The same infrastructure that prevents falls also creates repeated social contact.



Juniper turns fall prevention into structured connection

The intervention is physical, but the mechanism is broader: routine, confidence, conversation, and peer contact.

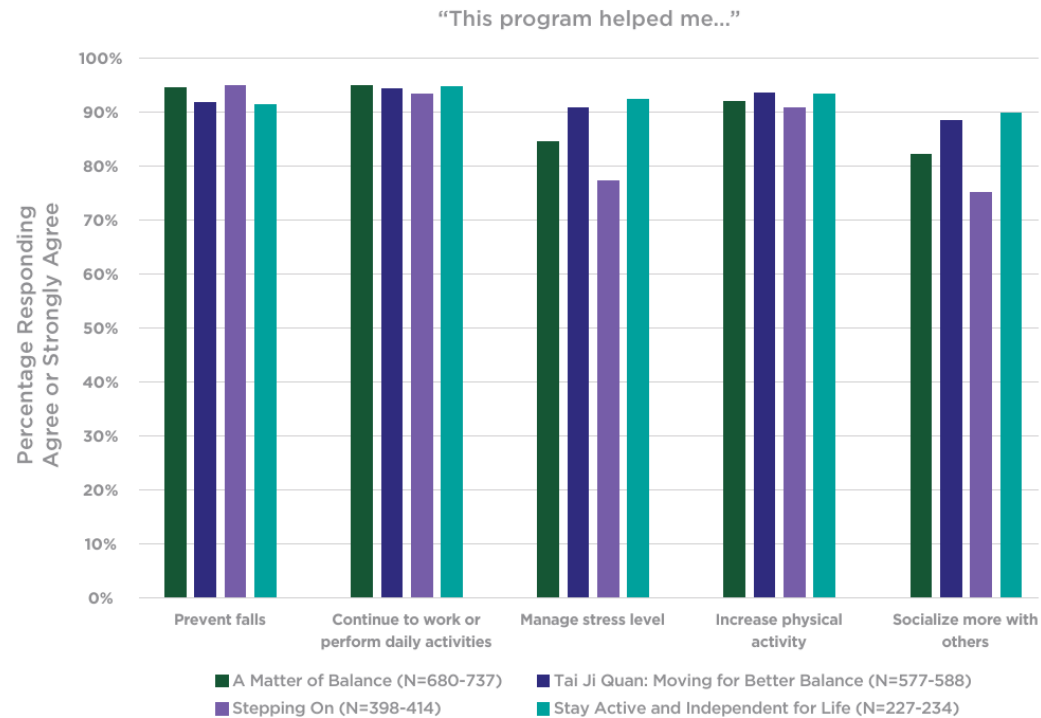


A program design that makes connection repeatable, predictable, and safe

Participants report gains in social connection behaviors

Across programs, participants reported that classes helped them socialize more with others.

Figure 2. Juniper-supported falls prevention programs' impact on healthy behaviors.



75%–90%

agreed the program helped them socialize more

Participant data tells us...

Juniper classes create structured opportunities for connection and are associated with participant-reported gains in socialization, activity, confidence, and well-being.

Connection supports independence when it builds confidence

The social connectedness story is strongest when tied to activity, confidence, and daily function.

9 out of 10

would recommend the class to friends or family

>90%

reported feeling less afraid of falling and more confident increasing activity

>90%

reported the program helped them prevent falls and continue daily activities

Socialization is key to fall prevention

Juniper's social connectedness impact is not separate from fall prevention. It works through the same practical assets people need to remain independent: confidence, safe movement, peer accountability, and a reason to stay engaged.

Fall prevention outcomes: meaningful reductions across programs

Participant-reported pre/post data showed lower fall rates after class participation.



Average absolute reduction

13.4 pts

Absolute reductions ranged from 6.4 to 19.9 percentage points across the four fall-prevention programs.

Follow-up data suggest gains can last beyond class

A follow-up survey found reduced fall rates months after program completion.



69% lower fall rate

average 207 days after class end

More than fall counts

Participants also sustained improvements in fear of falling and social activity levels, supporting a broader story of confidence and independence.

The social and physical gains appear to reinforce each other

Why this can scale: connection through infrastructure

The Community Care Hub structure makes social connection operational, not incidental.



1 Referral pathways

Make it easier for healthcare, public health, and community partners to connect people to programs.

2 Network capacity

Train, support, and coordinate local providers across geography and bring reimbursement to support their work..

3 Data and accountability

Track participation, health outcomes, and value so the work can be sustained and funded.

Lessons for scaling social connection through fall prevention

Practical design choices matter as much as program selection.

1 Start with trust

Programs work best when delivered by organizations people already know or can quickly come to trust.

2 Make program delivery and attendance easy

Offer multiple modalities, develop connection between class leader and participants, gamify learning.

3 Measure more than falls

Track confidence, activity, well-being, socialization, and daily function alongside fall outcomes.

4 Build referral habits

Healthcare referrals require workflow integration, repeated communication, and clear value to the referring team.

5 Design for re-engagement

Classes should become a doorway to ongoing movement, future programs, peer connection, and self-management.

6 Sustain the backbone

Network coordination, data analysis, billing, quality, and compliance are not overhead; they are essential infrastructure.

Measuring value means measuring connection and financial outcomes

Three takeaways

Falls prevention is a practical platform for rebuilding social connectedness.

1 The health problem is connected

Fear of falling, inactivity, loneliness, deconditioning, and avoidable utilization are often part of the same cycle.

2 The intervention is more than exercise

The class creates routine, peer contact, confidence, and conversation — the social infrastructure people need to stay engaged.

3 The scale strategy is infrastructure

Community Care Hubs can organize referrals, delivery partners, data, payment, and accountability across a region.

Connection is not a soft outcome. It is part of how people stay mobile, confident, and independent.



Questions and Discussion

Please share your questions or comments in the Q&A box.

Thank you!

- Please complete the survey which will be displayed in your browser after Zoom closes.
- The recording will be available on www.committtoconnect.org/events
- For further questions, contact us at: info@committtoconnect.org

