

## Six Degrees of Collaboration:

### A heart-thumping story that will get older adults off their feet

By Tyke Arbaugh

Forget about six pack abs. Here are three facts that helped spark a six-part story that could benefit thousands of older adults in Forsyth County.

- **By age 75, one in two women and one in three men get no physical activity at all.**
- **Of the 60,000 people in the County who are over 65, one in six live alone.**
- **In Forsyth County, there are 4,800 people over 55 who have no transportation.**

#### Part 1

Faced with these and other alarming statistics about the health forecast for the area's older adults, the Forsyth County Aging Services Planning Committee (FCASPC) searched for ideas to help address the situation.

#### Part 2

FCASPC reached out to Leadership Winston-Salem for recommendations on ways to spur older adults to be more active and adopt healthier lifestyles. The leadership group had a program that could tap into an "action team" to drum up options to help address the issue.

#### Part 3

The action team, comprised of six leaders from various occupations and skill sets, attended gatherings of older adults and learned firsthand the challenges they faced in terms of access to transportation and availability of health-oriented programs geared to their needs. After weeks of meetings, the action team struck on the idea of an index that would aggregate a list of activities, programs and special events available to older adults in the county. No such set of aggregated data has ever been available for older adults in the area.

#### Part 4

The action team connected with Forsyth Tech's Jim Pierson, Department Chair & Program Coordinator for the Database Curriculum, who was interested in the idea of an index. He saw the potential to give his students a real-world challenge, rather than the typical scenario-based problem.

#### Part 5

Pierson's idea took hold and his students embraced the project. They worked closely with a sub-committee from FCASPC to develop a broad list of activities and programs. Together, over months of collaboration, they birthed a digital index that categorized and detailed the activities in an easy-to-use format.

#### Part 6

The "iParticipate" website (<http://www.iparticipatenc.org>), designed to give the area's older adults a convenient and easy way to find activities that promote a healthy lifestyle, was launched. It was the final piece in a medley of community leaders, planners, students, faculty and others who collaborated to find ways to get hearts-thumping for the area's older adults.

