

# A sense of discovery

## highlights Active Aging Week 2013



### **The wellness community joins together to celebrate the value of active aging**

A community is a group of people who have the same interests, or who are located in the same geographic area. A community also is a fellowship of people, united by shared beliefs and values. All these meanings intertwined in 2013 during Active Aging Week®, the annual health promotion event led by the International Council on Active Aging®.

From September 22 to 29, communities across North America were inspired to embrace this year's theme of "Discover Your Community." Participants connected with their neighbors, explored their neighborhoods, traveled farther afield to explore their cities or towns, and found new discoveries within the dimensions of wellness. As the hosts of Active Aging Week events—who plan activities best suited to their populations and environments—announced their offerings and reported their outcomes, several trends emerged:

- Reaching out to people of all abilities, there was a particular effort to bring Active Aging Week to people in assisted living, nursing and home care environments.
- Taking to heart the theme, there were plenty of trips to discover local community resources (parks, museums, gardens), and work with community partners. Partnerships brought experts, volunteers and participants together.
- Income levels were accommodated by having free activities in places such as parks, recreation and community centers, municipal buildings, and shopping malls. Money was not a barrier, which is a principle of Active Aging Week.
- Falls management programs were frequent, in part to participate in Falls Prevention Awareness Day, which occurred on September 22.

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*Chris Freytag leads a 'WALK! with Aegis Therapies' event at GoldenLiving Center-Hillcrest of Wayzata, Minnesota.  
Photo: Tim Pearson*



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- Perhaps a signature event of Active Aging Week, walks were held in parks, on sidewalks, on trails and along shores. Corridors and building spaces became walking paths. After the walk, T-shirts, lunches, drinks and the ever-popular smoothies rewarded participants.

An impressive amount of whole-person wellness activities took place across all participating locations. Physical activities are a core offering, and this year included everything from bocce ball to SilverSneakers® fitness classes. There were also volunteer activities, intellectual challenges and games, art and craft shows, reflections on nature and history, educational lectures, and talks on nutrition and healthy eating, a topic that seems to increase in prevalence each year.

## Making the most of the Active Aging Week theme

The theme of any event is intended to anchor activities and inspire partici-

pants. Many hosts put a literal spin on this year's Active Aging Week theme, encouraging participants to explore their areas and relationships.

"Discover Your Community" served as inspiration for the weeklong program at Westminster-Canterbury on Chesapeake Bay in Virginia Beach, Virginia, explained Courtney Jackson in the marketing department. A trip along the boardwalk at the Neptune Festival and attending the Norfolk Symphony meant travel to the larger community. So did the trip to the airport for hang gliding. "Just because you've celebrated your 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, you don't stop living," said

resident John Dean, who along with wife Pearl participated in the hang-gliding adventure to celebrate their wedding anniversary. "Next year Pearl thinks we should try parachuting."

To encourage residents to discover activities closer to home, Westminster-Canterbury organized Zumba Gold classes, a concert by a student musician and a lemonade social in the sun followed by "Tea Across America," a tea dedicated to the families of victims of 9/11. For the grand finale, residents from Atlantic Shores, another Virginia Beach retirement community, traveled to Westminster-Canterbury to compete

## Active Aging Week® calendar

Each year, the International Council on Active Aging® promotes Active Aging Week® during the last full week of September, from Sunday through Saturday. The purpose is to host events as close as the calendar permits to October 1, the International Day of Older Persons. Dates for upcoming years include:

**2014:** September 21–27

**2015:** September 20–26

**2016:** September 25–October 1

Organizations that wish to host the week with slightly changed dates—for example, Monday through Sunday—are welcome to do so.



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in bocce, cornhole (bean bag toss), ping-pong and croquet on the banks of the Chesapeake Bay.

The great outdoors likewise called to residents of Covenant Village of the Great Lakes in Grand Rapids, Michigan. On a bright, beautiful and very windy day, walkers gained the end of the Pier at Grand Haven, Michigan, and journeyed to Fallasburg Park to visit a covered bridge and walk the river trail.

The Holmstad, a Covenant community in Batavia, Illinois, blended a tour of the historic area with a lecture on Batavia's windmills. Residents at Masonic Village in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, also were treated to area history in a presentation on the Amish religion and lifestyle, a hallmark of the region's cultural history.

Adding fun to discovery, residents of Bellingham Retirement Community in West Chester, Pennsylvania, went on "Chester County's Best Kept Secrets Tour." They traveled to a new home that duplicates the area's historical style (part of a ranch of alpacas), lunched at a '50s diner, toured a farm and cheese factory, and visited an antique shop. "Discover Dance Day!" ended the week, with participants learning how to "scoop" to *My Guy*, dance the Cupid Shuffle and cha-cha, then master stepping skills during line dances.

For the first year hosting Active Aging Week in Green County, Stephanie Hafez, Wellness & Prevention Specialist at the Aging & Disability Resource Center of Southwest Wisconsin, embraced the theme by reaching out to local agen-

cies. Partners Behring Senior Center and the Green County YMCA were supported by presenters or staff assistance from the Alzheimer's and Dementia Alliance of Southwest Wisconsin, Green County Health Department, Monroe Clinic, Monroe Manor & Rehab, and Monroe Public Library. Participants enjoyed a coffee social, weeklong falls-prevention activities, free exercise classes, and presentations on technology, junk food, and healthy aging for brains.

The dimensions of wellness were a key part of the "Discover Your Community" theme at 12 communities supported by the National Institute for Fitness and Sport (NIFS). The week was planned to

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connect diverse activities with resident discoveries in their environment, with their neighbors, through their fitness program and in their broader community, said Emily Davenport, Assistant Director, Active Aging Services. Activities included resident-guided nature walks, a *Jeopardy*-style get-to-know-your-neighbors social event, exercise classes, healthy living demos and a charitable donation drive.

To emphasize that “wellness” is not only the role of the wellness department but involves everyone, planning for Active Aging Week at White Horse Village in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania, included representatives from dining services, resident services, chaplaincy, marketing, properties and facilities, housekeeping, healthcare recreation, and healthcare. Wellness Supervisor Todd Canfield also revealed that the community partnered with the National Football League’s Philadelphia Eagles for a featured event during the week.

White Horse Village’s multidepartment team definitely worked within theme. For example, Active Aging Week kicked off during a special Sunday vesper service with the message, “The Blessed Community.” A social gathering titled “Telling Our Stories” was an opportunity to discover connections with one another and build stronger relationships. As part of a “Discover Walk,” residents paired up to learn facts about White Horse Village people and places. Facts became clues to the walk’s different destinations. And, for Falls Prevention Awareness Day, an interactive lecture on better balance was followed by the announcement of an eight-week Balance Camp—a new class that was filled with in 24 hours and now has a waiting list.

At WesleyLife in Johnston, Iowa, the “Discover Your Community” theme “provided the framework for all of the programs held throughout the week,” said Heidi Long, Director of Health &

Wellbeing. “We coupled that with Iowa’s Healthiest State and Blue Zones initiatives that focus on discovering the community within and around us by moving more, eating wisely, having the right outlook, and being connected.”

Within the “move more” philosophy, WesleyLife’s activities during Active Aging Week included a ping-pong tournament, an introduction to qigong, a fishing trip (some residents fished for the first time), a Better Balance class, salsa lessons, laughter yoga, tai chi, and a three-wheeled bicycle ride. Nature was discovered with walks through a local arboretum and on campus, capped off by a picnic lunch and walk around the trails at Lake Red Rock. A high point was an outdoor exercise class partnering residents with four- and five-year-old preschoolers as part of SKIP—Seniors and Kids Intergenerational Program.

## Walking to discover health and help others

At Aberdeen Heights in Kirkwood, Missouri, residents each received a pedometer decorated with the community’s logo, and then were challenged to walk across the United States during the week, reported Lifestyles Coordinator Zoe Taylor. To help individuals attain more steps, two walks were scheduled every day, along with a daily walk from the book *Walks and Rambles in St. Louis*.

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Robert Rubright, the book’s author, visited the community to talk about how he discovered these walks. Other activities included a dance with live music, a health fair, a poetry reading, and the finale of a 5K that could be completed at each person’s pace. According to Taylor, 78 residents recorded their daily steps, walking a total of 1,200 miles—nearly half the country!

In New Jersey, Middlesex County Office of Aging and Disabled Services sponsored a Senior Health and Fitness Walk in an area park, cosponsored by the county’s seniors centers. Surrounding the walk were T-shirts, health screenings, entertainment, as well as a boxed lunch and a raffle. “This event is always so much fun for the residents who participate,” said Freeholder Kenneth Armwood, who chairs the county’s Community Services Committee. “It also keeps us focused on staying fit and living healthy.”

An Arthritis Walk raised awareness and money for the Arthritis Foundation

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as part of Active Aging Week events at Brightwater in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Calling themselves the “Bright Walkers,” residents and employees undertook the walk as a team. Staff and residents also joined together at Osprey Village in Amelia Island, Florida, to join a local Walk to End Alzheimer’s. In addition, to celebrate Falls Prevention Awareness Day, residents had their balance assessed by Genesis Rehab Services, while a local speaker presented tips to reduce the risks of polypharmacy.

**Spreading the word across large populations**

Some organizations have the capacity to reach large numbers of older adults because they have multiple locations or can influence large populations. However, it still takes a coordinated effort by com-

munity partners, staff and older adults to send the messages of Active Aging Week.

The fifth annual “WALK! with Aegis Therapies” program was celebrated at more than 650 participating locations, including Golden LivingCenters, Good Samaritan Society–Ambassador, Monterey Park Nursing Center, and Miami Jewish Health Systems. Home care agency AseraCare, which along with Aegis Therapies is a Golden Living company, used a customized guide to bring the walk to at-home participants.

“Building on previous years’ successes, active-aging participation was the largest and most successful in the WALK!’s five-year history with an estimated 10,000 participants,” said Sarah Meche

at Golden Living. “Additionally, participants tracked the miles they walked for a combined total of more than 115,400 miles.” Communities also featured chef’s discussions on healthy cooking and eating, dances, concerts and other activities.

For the first time, Tealwood Senior Living and Senior Care Communities encouraged all 16 assisted living communities and 19 skilled nursing centers to host Active Aging Week. To promote a successful outcome for this companywide effort, each facility received an “Active Aging Week Planning Binder” containing step-by-step instruction, resources/tools and contacts for budget and communication. Racey Ihde, Direc-

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tor of Wellness Initiatives, said that the “Discover Your Community” theme strongly influenced events held at each location. “Various community businesses held presentations; officers and public officials were part of small socials; residents/tenants ventured to museums, lakes and apple orchards; and schools joined in the fun,” reported Ihde. Embracing the dimensions of wellness, activities included new exercise options, a tree planting ceremony, themed trivia, donating to the local food pantry and sharing creative writings.

Atria Senior Living celebrated Active Aging Week with gusto across more than 130 communities. Among the many events were belly dancing, yoga classes, a drumming circle, a ride in a surrey, and a walk across the Brooklyn Bridge, revealed Cara Slider, Corporate Public Relations Specialist. “Residents of Atria Woodbridge in Irvine, California, engaged in a version of the Senior Olympics,” Slider added. These individuals “enjoyed friendly competition in the putting green challenge, shot put tournament, billiards tourney and ping-pong challenge; and finished with ‘a day at the races,’ a simulated racing game built by resident and engineer Al LaDine.”

At the 46 Benchmark Senior Living communities that celebrated Active Aging Week, residents and staff joined Memory Walks for the Alzheimer’s Association or did Think Pink Events for Breast Cancer Awareness. Kisco

Senior Living and its 20 communities also participated in the week, inviting members of local communities to join residents in a variety of intergenerational, fitness, lifelong-learning and arts activities, along with spirituality and meditation. The company’s website featured full events calendars for all 20 locations.

Each year, communities under the CRSA umbrella hold a friendly competition, mentioned Gaye Tidwell, Assistant to COO/Community Life Services Resource Team for CRSA/Life Care Services. In 2013, Westminster Village West Lafayette won the trophy by counting 6,600 participants during Active Aging Week, including residents, staff and family members. While there was a lot going on that week, it seems that “Paintball Picasso” brought out the artistic marksman in participants. The Westminster Village initials (WVWL) were taped on four 2’ x 3’ pieces of canvas and the blank canvas was “painted” using paintball guns; after the paint dried, the tape was peeled off to reveal the artwork. Employees and residents “loved” the activity, according to Fitness Coordinator Jordan Morrow.

And, with a large resident population, The Villages in Florida held its first Active Aging Week program this year. More than 2,000 residents participated in activities that focused “Spotlight” days to promote the community’s opportunities in sports, arts, nutrition, water activities, “Eastern exercise,” dance and softball.

“Many of our volunteers, who are residents themselves, shared what a great experience it was to be able to share their passion for an active lifestyle and their own special skill sets with their fellow Villagers,” reported Becky Talley-Maholick, Recreation Supervisor-Chatham. “Participants loved learning new ways to be healthy and active, new friendships were formed, and many of the participants have already joined up

with the groups they met at the Active Aging Week events.”

## Changing perceptions of aging

Aging as a positive experience is the philosophy that guides Active Aging Week. This philosophy is found in the events that hosts coordinate, as well as among the older adults who help implement the activities or benefit from them.

In addition to a full schedule of regular activities, Brightview East Norrington added 18 speakers, presenters, musicians and other professionals to enliven Active Aging Week. Among them was an “Aging Is Not For Sissies” talk. “The presentation focused on how elders can turn the perception of aging on its head, by not only overcoming obstacles, but turning them into positives,” wrote Jodi K. Wendl, ADC, Vibrant Living Director at Brightview. Another presentation, titled “The Great Peacemakers and How They Can Inspire Your Life,” cited such greats as Mother Teresa, Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., to encourage listeners to make a positive difference in their own lives and the lives of others.

In Winnipeg, Manitoba, the Wellness Institute at Seven Oaks General Hospital held its fifth Active Aging Day. The event featured an open house with talks on health, falls management and crime prevention; physical activities; health screenings; and an inspiration board. A Tree of Life was a popular interactive feature, with visitors adding paper apples with their “secret” to healthy aging. Popular suggestions? Not sweating the small stuff and regular exercise. In exchange for hanging an apple on the tree, visitors received an apple that they could eat.

Several hundred people attended Active Aging Day. They were welcomed by Active Aging Ambassadors who served as role models, with their personal stories displayed both near the entrance and on

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## Resources

### Active Aging Week Official Facebook Site

[www.facebook.com/activeagingweek](http://www.facebook.com/activeagingweek)

### International Council on Active Aging: Active Aging Week

[www.icaa.cc/aaw.htm](http://www.icaa.cc/aaw.htm)

# SilverSneakers® award spotlights inspiring older adults



*Award-winner George Jacobs leads an active, fit lifestyle that inspires others. Image courtesy of the Healthways SilverSneakers® Fitness Program*

## **Fitness program celebrates the life-changing stories of five individuals during Active Aging Week® 2013**

Five years ago, 80-year-old George Jacobs began a lifestyle metamorphosis through the Healthways SilverSneakers® Fitness Program, an exercise program designed for older adults. The Charlotte, North Carolina, resident walked into his first SilverSneakers class—and never looked back.

“After enrolling at the gym and joining the SilverSneakers class, I began my whole mind and body makeover,” Jacobs says. “I gained back all my independence, lost 80 lbs. and completed my first 5K.”

Jacobs had never set foot inside a fitness facility before he became a

SilverSneakers member, much less attended any type of group class, but he quickly took the program’s “Fitness, Fun and Friends” philosophy to heart. He attended classes, incorporated healthy life choices, and led social activities for his classmates. And when the program was no longer available at his location, he rallied more than 60 class members and his class instructor to find a new location.

Recently, the SilverSneakers Fitness Program recognized Jacobs as the national recipient of the 2013 Richard L. Swanson Inspiration Award. The SilverSneakers award honors a member whose healthy behavior has made a difference in his or her own life while motivating others. Founded by Mary Swanson, the award preserves the memory of her father, Richard L. Swanson, who also inspired the award-winning fitness program.

In addition to Jacobs, SilverSneakers named the following four finalists, whose inspirational stories were also selected from among the hundreds of nominations:

**Georgiann Ash** (Scott Depot, West Virginia)—Ash has attended SilverSneakers exercise classes five days a week for the past five years. According to Ash, the classes have allowed her to rebuild her flexibility and endurance, stabilize her balance, reduce stress and better manage her weight. She describes the classes as fun and energizing, and has seen great physical and mental health improvement.

**Linda and Charles Chapman** (Toledo, Ohio)—This husband-and-wife team supports each other’s fitness goals through SilverSneakers. Suffering from diabetes, Linda Chapman wanted to improve her health and made it a goal to be more active so she could really enjoy retirement. After a few weeks of

classes her doctor was able to lower her medications, and she is now working toward eliminating her insulin altogether. Impressed with Linda’s improvements, Charles Chapman started attending classes in hopes of losing weight and improving his overall health. After seven months, Charles lost 31 lbs. and today enjoys his new, healthier lifestyle.

**Bruce Meyer** (Englewood, Colorado)—After dodging any exercise for more than 30 years and suffering a heart attack, Meyer knew it was time to focus on his health and fitness. Reluctantly, Meyer went with his wife to his first SilverSneakers yoga class and was hooked. With improved health, Meyer has been attending classes weekly for the past four years and can even be found letting loose at a Latin dance class.

**Ruth Myers** (Hudson, Florida)—A socialite in her SilverSneakers Classic class, Myers makes time to introduce herself to new members and share stories with her old friends. The centenarian takes care of her health—both mind and body—to ensure she can continue to enjoy her classes, her friends and her life.

To spotlight these five inspiring older adults, SilverSneakers held Swanson Award celebrations in their hometowns throughout Active Aging Week®, the annual health promotion event in September led by the International Council on Active Aging®. The Healthways SilverSneakers® Fitness Program was a sponsor of this year’s event. 

*Healthways will start accepting nominations for the 2014 Richard L. Swanson Inspiration Award next spring. In the meantime, information about the Healthways SilverSneakers® Fitness Program is available at [www.silversneakers.com](http://www.silversneakers.com).*

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the event webpage. Decked in blue sashes, they encouraged active involvement in all the day's activities, showing their peers around and helping them navigate the plethora of options offered.

## Discoveries linger beyond the week

Active Aging Week is fun and educational, but the value really comes afterwards, when a seed that is planted encourages a positive lifestyle change, or the activities reveal a need for more information or support in a given topic. Hosts regularly report that they use the week to test new ideas, and often end up adding these to the regular schedule.

This was the case at WesleyLife in Iowa. With a goal of empowering people living with Parkinson's disease to believe the disease can be managed and does not need to define them, a "Living Well with Parkinson's" event included three breakout sessions, a healthy lunch and interactive educational experiences. Recognizing the need for ongoing support, WesleyLife is now launching a Parkinson's Support Group in coordination with the Iowa Chapter of the American Parkinson Disease Association.

Increased communication and bonding between residents, participants and staff is another positive outcome. As Jordan

Morrow at Westminster Village West Lafayette related, "Our Life Enrichment team bonded greatly over the past week and our residents were able to see a more intimate side of the employees that serve them each day. I believe our team took away a newfound inspiration to do the absolute best we can each day." Morrow "witnessed more positive emotion from residents in all levels of care in that one week than ... the entire time I have been here. We have had multiple residents and staff ask if we could do this every month!"

Engaging new people in the programs and increasing overall participation is

## Key to Active Aging Week photos

### Picture 1

State Senator Hardie Davis joined the 'WALK! with Aegis Therapies' at the GoldenLiving Center in Augusta, Georgia. Photo: Tim Pearson

### Picture 2

Residents of the Bartlesville Senior Citizens Apartments in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, enjoyed a guest speaker on the health benefits of social connections, a preview of the theater season, a catered banquet with entertainment, and visits from Mayor Tom Gorman and the City Council Ward Member, Dale Copeland.

### Picture 3

As part of the Active Aging Expo at Masonic Village, orchard supervisor Tad Kuntz from the Masonic Village Farm Market showed residents how to cook apples from the on-campus orchards. Individuals enjoyed samples of the sweet treat complemented with dried cherries.

### Picture 4

Longhorn Village resident John Henderson was named Honorary Captain at the University of Texas football game on September 21. At 100 years old, Henderson is the oldest living University of Texas Longhorn football letterman. He is also an avid walker, logging

about 10 miles a week (you can see his pedometer on his belt).

### Picture 5

Several hundred people attend the open house presented by the Wellness Institute at Seven Oaks General Hospital in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Photo: Darin Kachanosk

### Picture 6

Residents of Covenant Village of the Great Lakes in Grand Rapids, Michigan, braved a windy day to walk along the shores of Lake Michigan.

### Picture 7

At Kisco Senior Living, water welcomed participants in the aquatics experience.

### Picture 8

No bridge was too far for the Shoc & Awe hiking club members living at Twin Lakes Community in Burlington, North Carolina, who trekked on a 2.5-mile hike through a nearby park.

### Picture 9

Batik is a method of decorating fabric using wax and dyes. This art form was discovered by residents at Bellingham Retirement Community in West Chester, Pennsylvania, during Active Aging Week.

### Picture 10

Members and guests of Gold's Gym, Linglestown, discovered their community during the week's capstone, a SK Active Aging Walk-a-Thon at Wildwood Park in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Walkers strode out in their Active Aging Week T-shirts.

### Picture 11

Eleven hang gliders from Westminster-Canterbury on Chesapeake Bay soared 2,000 ft. above the Eastern Shore and thrilled to the glorious views of the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean.

### Picture 12

At Royal Estates Wichita Falls in Wichita, Texas, local school students and residents determined to rediscover the courtyard by painting props and statues. As you can see, other things were painted besides the courtyard decoration.

### Picture 13

A trip to the farmers market was enjoyed by residents and the chef at Covenant Village of Golden Valley in Minneapolis, Minnesota. After shopping for fresh, local ingredients, the chefs prepared a fruit and vegetable medley that many residents sampled.

another benefit. "Active Aging Week was a huge success," summarized Todd Canfield at White Horse Village. "It helped us to shape the culture of wellness within our community for residents and staff and captured the attention of a lot of new (willing) participants. There is a buzz around here as everyone is talking about Active Aging Week."

Explained Canfield, "We tied-in many planned programs (i.e., balance camp, incentive program, resident walk club) and accomplished the task of knocking down interdepartmental silos, so everyone at White Horse Village can take ownership or at least contributor-ship of helping maintain and increase the level of wellness with the resident and staff population."

Five days of discovery at Danberry at Inverness in Birmingham, Alabama, included competition, volunteer activities, a scavenger hunt and talent show, intellectual games and numerous other activities, including a laughter yoga session. About half the residents participated, according to Mary Guthrie, Director of Resident Services. "We had residents attend events who have never attended anything before. I even had a caregiver come to me after laughter yoga to tell me that she was about to give a resident some anxiety medication because he was having such a tough morning, but they sat in the back and watched the [session] and it changed his entire day. He was telling people all about the fun that he had. That," Guthrie added, "is what this industry is all about." 🐾

*Active Aging Week 2013 was a tremendous success. The International Council on Active Aging® thanks this year's hosts and sponsors for their exceptional efforts to spread the messages of Active Aging Week and to promote wellness for older adults.*

# Congratulations!



## Thank you for a successful Active Aging Week

The International Council on Active Aging® congratulates host organizations and sponsors of ICAA's Active Aging Week® 2013. By spreading the message that people can stay active, healthy and engaged in life at any age, you are making a difference.

Thanks for teaming with ICAA to highlight wellness for older adults and help participants discover their communities in the last full week of September.

Share your Active Aging Week experiences at [Facebook.com/activeagingweek](https://www.facebook.com/activeagingweek)



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