

2026 HFI FUNDING REQUEST

REQUESTING ORGANIZATION

DEKALB COUNTY COUNCIL ON AGING

Address: 1800 E. 7th Street, Auburn, IN 46706

Phone: 260-925-3311

SIGNATORY

Beth A. Eis

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the DeKalb County Council on Aging, Inc., a not-for-profit agency, is: To improve the quality of life of the seniors, disabled persons and others in our community through services and programs that meet their physical, mental, emotional, intellectual and mobile needs.

PROJECT:

We welcome individuals from our community and surrounding areas who are seeking accessible fitness options. As demand for the fitness room grows and more community members seek to improve their health and well-being, we recognize the need to expand our fitness room to those that rely on our cost-free programs and exercise equipment. e work outs. . The NuStep offers a low-impact cardio exercise, which is particularly beneficial to individuals managing chronic conditions. The bike will help improve lower-body strength, reducing the risks of falls and help with mobility which is especially important for older individuals and those recovering from surgery or injury. The dumbbells will help maintaining muscle mass, and bone density. Both of these will help with boosting metabolism. We plan to continue and strengthen our partnerships with a local physical therapy business to provide community-based exercise in a familiar, supportive environment.

TARGET POPULATION:

Our idea target population would serve older adults 55 and above, with a primary focus on individuals who are at risk for sedentary lifestyles, social isolation, or chronic health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and arthritis. Our center is open and accessible to all older adults in our community, with a focus on those who may not otherwise have access to consistent wellness programming. Many in our target population are on fixed incomes and cannot afford memberships to fitness centers such as the YMCA or private activity centers. Additionally, a portion of the population experiences transportation, mobility, or social challenges that further limit their ability to participate in traditional wellness programs. Our center provides a no-cost, easily accessible wellness option that removes these financial and logistical obstacles. Accessibility has always been at the forefront of our thinking. Our facility is equipped with handicap-accessible doors, and our fitness room is located just a short distance from the parking lot, making it easy to access even for those with limited mobility or difficulty walking long distances. These features allow us to create a safe, welcoming environment where older adults can participate confidently in physical activity. So far in 2025, our center has 551 active

members. Our fitness room has served 102 individuals, representing approximately 18.5% of our total active membership. As we intend to build and enhance our exercise room, we aim to welcome 25 new participants this year, which would be a 24.5% increase over our current engagement.

OUTCOMES:

This year alone our fitness room has logged 102 unduplicated participant check ins, with 1,225 total duplicated check-ins for a total of 1,119 hours of physical activity among our members. With the addition of another NuStep Recumbent Cross Trainer and a complete set of dumbbell weights with a dedicated storage rack, we anticipate a 20% increase in exercise room usage, raising average monthly check-ins from 306 to at least 370 within the first six months. We are hoping to gain at least 25 new participants in 2025, particularly individuals with mobility challenges by offering more inclusive, low impact fitness options. We are hopeful that at least 50% of our current users will increase their frequency of visits from once to twice per week. These goals will be tracked through our kiosk check ins and participant feedback surveys. We will be collecting qualitative feedback by truly listening to our seniors and gather their personal experiences and insights. We will ask participants specific questions about their experiences with the NuStep Recumbent Cross Trainer, dumbbells, and other equipment. This type of feedback is essential for understanding the real impact of our programming beyond numbers alone. We will use this data to continuously improve the program and ensure it is meeting the needs of the population we serve.

HEALTH EQUITY STATEMENT:

Approximately one year ago, Parkview DeKalb Hospital closed its public gym, which had previously been a key resource for seniors in the community. The gym is now restricted to only cardiac and pulmonary patients, and access is limited to those who have a physician's prescription. In response to this need, our handicap-accessible facility has stepped in as one of the few remaining no-cost options for seniors to stay active and improve their health in our community. Our handicap-accessible facility ensures that those with mobility limitations can participate comfortably, the NuStep Recumbent Cross Trainer is designed specifically to meet the needs of older adults at various ability levels. By removing cost, transportation, and accessibility barriers, we are increasing access to preventive wellness care, which is a critical component in managing chronic conditions, improving functional independence, and reducing the long-term burden on the health care system. Our center is frequently recommended by local doctors as a trusted, inclusive alternative, particular for patients who cannot afford private pay rehabilitation or fitness programs. We are hoping with adding another NuStep Recumbent Cross Trainer, and a complete set of dumbbells, we will increase capacity, reduce wait times, and better serve seniors with chronic health conditions or physical limitations. Many of the individuals we serve live on fixed incomes, have limited access to fitness and health resources, and face financial, mobility, and transportation challenges that restrict their ability to engage in preventative care and wellness activities. As a result of these, more seniors regardless of income or insurance status will have the opportunity for physical activity and social connection needed to support healthy aging. Here at the Heimach Center, we witness the profound impact that positive health can have on our members every day. One particular story that stands out is that of Jackie. Jackie had been a dedicated member of our center, coming in everyday to use the NuStep Recumbent Cross Trainer. However, in mid-December she was hospitalized because her chronic pain in her legs and back became unbearable. After being hospitalized and undergoing surgery, she spent a few months recovering in rehab. While her support group from the exercise room visited her, she continually expressed how she could not wait to get back to the center. Jackie's support group, the fitness routine and especially the NuStep Recumbent Cross Trainer, were all integral parts of her recovery plan. In mid-March after her doctor released her for activities and exercise, she returned to the center and worked out using the NuStep Recumbent Cross Trainer, almost daily. The moment she walked

through the doors, she was greeted with warmth and encouragement. She got back on the NuStep Recumbent Cross Trainer and has slowly regained her strength and mobility. Jackie has reconnected with a community that cheered her on every step of the way. With many members using the equipment regularly, there are times when Jackie must wait for the bike to become available. Given how important the NuStep Recumbent Cross Trainer has been in Jackie's recovery, and its popularity among older adults in our community is the reason we are requesting support to purchase an additional NuStep Recumbent Cross Trainer.

BUDGET REQUEST:

\$7,496.00

BUDGET JUSTIFICATION:

Requested amount \$7,495.99; Breakdown: NuStep T5 Recumbent Cross Trainer \$6,595.00; Shipping \$776.00; Neoprene Hex Dumbbell Weight Set w/ Vertical A Frame Rack \$124.99. We are a tax-exempt organization under the IRS code 501 (c) (3). No taxes on any of these purchases since we are

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN:

We are committed in keeping the Heimach Senior Activity Center and the fitness room free and accessible for all of DeKalb County and surrounding areas. We will allocate a portion of our general operating budget annually toward equipment maintenance and upgrades of the NuStep Recumbent Cross Trainer. We already maintain all existing fitness equipment in our exercise room through a regular inspection and maintenance schedule. Purchasing directly from NuStep they offer a 30-day moneyback guarantee, along with a 10-year frame, a minimum three-year part, and a one-year labor warranty. After consulting with the company, I determined that the T5 is the most appropriate choice to meet the diverse needs of our clients. Its design allows for safe and accessible use by individuals who use walkers, as well as those who are able to transfer from a wheelchair. This makes the T5 a versatile and inclusive piece of equipment that will enhance our ability to serve older adults and individuals with limited mobility, ensuring that all members of our community have equitable access to physical activity and the associated health benefits. Our organization will continue building partnerships with local health providers, aging services, and community organizations to support referrals, shared programming, and resource sharing. These collaborations will help extend the reach and impact of the program without requiring significant new financial resources. In the last six months, we have partnered with Choice Therapy, who provided physical fitness support and led wellness-focused activities at our center. We plan to re-engage Choice Therapy and explore similar partnerships with local health and wellness providers. These partnerships add professional value at low or no cost and help us maintain programming that is dynamic, inclusive and guided by current health and wellness standards. The Heimach Center will continue to collect data on equipment usage, attendance, and participation feedback. Personal stories like Jackie's are documented to highlight the life changing impact of the program and help us communicate value to funders and stakeholders.

DIGITAL SIGNATURE:

Beth A. Eis