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News

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas
5323 Harry Hines Boulevard Dallas, Texas 75235 (214) 688-3404

CONTACT: Dr. Hanno Weisbrod
214/688-2820

*****Gerontologists recruiting older people for life-enrichment course.

DALLAS--A group of older people have been participating in a life-enrichment program at the Episcopal Continuing Education Center at St. Matthew's Cathedral for the last three months. The goal of the program is to help the participants to become more active.

"The program is dedicated to the idea that our senior years can be productive and fulfilling," says Dr. Hanno Weisbrod, instructor in gerontology at The University of Texas School of Health Sciences at Dallas and the director of training for the program.

Because today's society is youth-oriented, older Americans are segregated from the mainstream of life, Dr. Weisbrod says. He believes this program has given the participants "a feeling of belonging to an extended family. They report feeling more positive about themselves and their ability to communicate with others."

Dr. Helen West, director of the program, expressed hope that such efforts will reverse some of the negative attitudes toward aging and the aged. She noted that the cumulative effect of many of our societal practices is to impress upon older persons that they are unwanted. Many older Americans accept this negative self-image, and retreat into isolation.

Dr. Barbara Raines, 70, is part of the teaching team. She says older people do not have to accept the stereotype of aging. "I think this program and the response from our participants prove that," she said.

Plans call for a new group to begin in the second week of January. At the same time the initial group of participants will continue into a second, service-oriented phase of the program. For further information about the program contact Dr. Weisbrod at (214) 688-2820.

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