

SENIOR NUTRITION PROGRAM

CELEBRATE • INNOVATE • EDUCATE



CELEBRATE! ACTIVITY IDEAS & EVENT TIPS

Activity Ideas

After 50 years of hard work and dedication, it's time to celebrate! Each of these suggestions can be tailored to suit your needs and the interests of your community. Make the following ideas your own and then promote what you're planning through check-in phone calls, a flyer handed out with home-delivered meals, social media, or any other way you're connected to your community.

STORIES

Stories build community. They can connect us even when we can't be physically together. They are also a great way to look back on how far your program or community has come—whether it's over the last 2 years or past 50! If you're interested in celebrating through story, try these ideas.

- Interview seniors, partners, staff, volunteers, and/or other people in your community who can speak to the value and impact of your program. Everyone has a story. Interviews can be shared as written pieces, videos, or even social media posts and quotes.
- Arrange for older adults to share their stories. Use video chat technology to hold a storytelling party. Select a theme or question to focus the content. Give each person about five minutes to tell a story that relates to that topic. For those who may not want to speak in public, encourage them to write down their story and submit it for someone else to read.

SOCIAL MEDIA

More and more, technology is a part of our lives—and part of our communities. Online spaces allow us new ways to continue the activities we used to do in person, from networking and sharing information to finding support and building relationships.

- Organize a selfie challenge. Create a theme phrase, such as "I love my senior nutrition program because..." or "[Program name] matters because..." and related hashtag (e.g., #SNP50, #SeniorNutritionProgram). Ask seniors and/or other community members to fill in the blank and take a photo of themselves (or have someone take their photo) holding a paper with the sentence, and then post on social media using your hashtag. You can even design a simple template with the phrase that can be printed out to make it easier for those who want to join in. Add your logo and hashtag to the design, if possible.

Accommodations:

- » Offer an email address where someone who is not on (or comfortable with) social media can submit their photo. Share it – anonymously, unless otherwise requested – on their behalf.
- » Anyone who does not want their photo used can take a picture of the sign by itself or write in their response via email or comment on social media.
- » For those who can't print their sign out at home using the template, have them write out the sentence on a regular piece of paper.

- Ask your followers to share their wisdom or tips online—either using a unique hashtag or by posting to a webpage or forum you manage. Be sure to provide guidance, such as length or word limits, what you'd most like to hear, and a contact person for questions. When choosing a specific theme or question to guide responses, be sure it is easy and fun to answer (e.g., the best healthy thing you ever ate). The posts do not necessarily have to be *about* the program. Rather, the point is to generate online connection and promote—even indirectly—the program. Lots of activity under your hashtag means lots of attention in general.

 Tip: This activity works well for involving partners and community leaders.

EVENTS

A community event is a great way to celebrate and promote your program. There are countless approaches to this kind of activity, and all can be done virtually. Consider planning your event around one or more of the anniversary theme elements: celebrate, innovate, educate. Here are examples:

Celebrate: Invite community members to a special event celebrating the anniversary. This could be a safely distanced parking lot event, a virtual group meal, an in-person social gathering, or a special program like storytelling. Invite a community leader or similar keynote speaker to give remarks. Consider contests, awards, raffles, games, and themes (like 1972!) to make the event fun and festive.

 Tip: Check out these [Senior Nutrition Program Activity Guides](#) for ideas.

Innovate: Host an event focused on something new. This could be a brainstorm-style session where seniors and others contribute (or react to) ideas for new programming features such as unique menu items or creative activities. Break into teams to develop ideas and then vote for a favorite.

Alternatively, an "innovate" event could focus on addressing a specific issue, like finding imaginative ways to get vital nutrients at each meal. Consider a game or moderated chat format to keep it light.

Educate: Coordinate a class, workshop, or lecture related to nutrition, socialization, or health and well-being. This type of event could be anything from a fun, motivational session on nutrition tips to a physical activity session focused on balance and/or strength.

For something more relaxed, consider an activity around self-expression, like painting, that allows everyone an unconventional way to share what the program – or community – means to them in an inspired way. This is a great way to produce something to showcase, either in person or online.

5 "Ps" for Event Success

PLAN

Set clear goals. Identify people who can help, including volunteers and vendors. Communicate regularly with your planning team and track major decisions. Select your event date and time early in the planning process. Create an agenda as one of the first steps and be sure that speakers, special guests, and key stakeholders have the time reserved.

 Tip: Before making decisions about the event format and agenda, finalize a budget.

PARTNER

Join forces with others in your community who can provide in-kind services, volunteers, or materials. They may also have connections to speakers or entertainers. Local businesses, like restaurants, may agree to provide door/game prizes, such as gift cards. Partners also can help to draw attention to your activities online, reaching a wider audience.

 Tip: Contact existing *and* would-be collaborators – events are a great way to create new relationships.

PROMOTE

Develop a publicity plan to promote your event. Use traditional strategies, like newspaper ads and community board flyers, as well as newer media—your website, blog, and/or social media accounts. Communicate early and often. You might also consider contacting a local reporter. See these [quick tips for working with the media](#).

Conduct registration online via any of the free options available. If you have an existing email distribution list, use it. Virtual invitations can make your email stand out. Don't forget that there are premade materials available, including a [customizable event flyer](#)!

 Tip: Not ready to open registration? Create and send a save-the-date first.

PRODUCE

Virtual: Choose a platform that fits your budget. Free or low-cost options may work for smaller events of up to 100 people. Make sure the platform is accessible for participants and includes any special features you need (e.g., recording, whiteboard, breakout rooms). Conduct a dry run well in advance to refine logistics and troubleshoot technical issues. Remember, attention spans are shorter online. Aim for an hour-long event and include breaks if it will be longer.

Assign at least one moderator to answer questions, engage participants, and keep time. Interact as much as possible, engaging people with nutrition-related games, polls, and/or Q&A segments.

In person: Safety must come first. Be sure to use a space large enough to allow for distancing – outside, if possible. Bring ample supplies such as hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, and masks.

- Follow [local health department](#) guidelines.
- Check with your [state health department](#).
- Read [CDC activity and gathering guidance](#).

Beyond safety, think about other logistics – is the location accessible? Is there ample parking? Do you need to rent any equipment, furniture, or supplies?

Bring plenty of supplies and other resources. Beyond personal protective equipment (PPE), consider these standard event items:

- Refreshments (consider asking a local business to donate snacks).
- Public address (PA) system/microphone.
- Other audio/visual equipment, such as a laptop and projector for slideshows.
- Pens and notepads.
- Welcome/registration table materials such as name badges.
- Handouts, brochures, and similar material.
- Decorations and giveaways.

- Transportation or related information for participants.
- Inclement weather plan for event outdoors.
- Photo release forms to gain permission to use images after the event ([sample release](#)).

 Tip: Ask coordinators and volunteers to wear matching shirts or dress in the same color.

PUBLISH

Post a summary of the event on your website and highlight key aspects on social media. Make sure to tag the accounts of any partners who helped you, include [#SeniorNutritionProgram](#), and for anniversary events, add [#SNP50](#). Include photos or graphics to gain traction for your posts. If possible, gather feedback on what participants liked/disliked, so you can use it to inform future events.

 Tip: Include a call to action. Promote upcoming activities, drive traffic to your website, or ask for something else.