

BETTER BEYOND 50

August 12, 2009

By Jill Pfister, For the Post-Tribune

Village Park Enrichment Center at Banta

Two Inspiring People Transcend Their Ages

Why is it that many people assume that as we get older we need to slow down and take it easy?

If there is no physical reason to stop doing all of the things we enjoy doing, why slow down? Why stop reaching for the next challenge? Too often it is assumed that a person is limited physically and mentally due to his or her age.

On a recent trip to San Francisco, I had the pleasure of meeting two very inspiring people -- Max, a 75-year-old man born in China and living in San Francisco, and Pat, a soon-to-be 70-year-old woman from Wisconsin.

Pat just returned from China and Taiwan. We met at her dear friend's 80th birthday party near San Francisco.

She squeezed that in before leaving for Guatemala. She is no ordinary traveler. Her destinations are chosen by the bicycle trails.

She is definitely not getting old; she is growing older and would not change a thing.

I met Max on a playground near Fisherman's Wharf. I do not typically walk up and introduce myself to total strangers in strange cities, but his interaction with a group of young people made me want to find out more about him.

Max was alone when I first sat down on the park bench.

Within a few minutes seven very energetic young people in their mid-teens entered the playground area.

While they proceeded to laugh and enjoy the day, Max put on a pair of gloves and reached for the metal rings suspended six feet off the ground.

In one graceful, fluid motion, Max was hanging upside-down from the rings with his body perfectly straight and balanced.

The young people stopped dead and watched. Max gracefully lowered himself and smiled. He then invited a few of the boys to try.

I watched in amusement as two of the young men struggled to achieve the same grace and stability on the rings as Max.

They dropped to the ground laughing and rubbing their aching muscles.

Before leaving the playground they shook Max's hand. It was obvious the group had a much higher level of respect for this unique gentleman.

Max told me he has exercised like this for 30 years.

He, like Pat, has grown older. Many people choose to just get old. Max and Pat have truly grown.

UPCOMING VILLAGE PARK ENRICHMENT CENTER EVENTS

* "What Your Dentist Can Tell You" will be presented at 11 a.m. Friday, Aug. 28. Dr. Chris Gall will explain how your dentist can detect certain health conditions and problems during a regular checkup.

Boxed lunches will be provided through funding from Northwest Indiana Community Action Corp. Reservations are required and seating is limited.

* Purdue University Cooperative Extension Services of Porter County will present "Food Safety" at 12:15 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 20. Rita Patterson will provide information on how to keep food fresh and safe in the summer.

Enjoy a nutritious lunch with friends at 11:30 a.m. daily for only \$1.50. The meals, sponsored by the Northwest Indiana Senior Nutrition Program, are provided to qualified people 60 years of age and older.

* Fitness memberships are available to individuals 50 years of age and older at Village Park Enrichment Center at Banta.

Nu-Steps, water rowing and tread mills are on hand for a healthy workout without the crowds.

Jill Pfister is director of Village Park Enrichment Center at Banta, 605 Beech St., Valparaiso. Call 462-1301 or e-mail j.pfister@pinesvillage.org for more information on Village Park programs.