



Pole Power Walking

By Rita Marcojohn

We were looking for a fast and easy way to burn some extra calories when an article in Prevention Magazine caught our attention.

Simply adding poles to a regular walk could burn those extra calories in less than two weeks—a weight-loss “silver bullet.” Well, it is that and so much more.

Out for a morning “Pole Power Walk” at The Villages Golf & Country Club, San Jose. Left to right: Maxine Morse, Edith Olson and Ronnie Vierra.

As with any hobby or sport you love, you want to share it. In our case, we decided to share it with the very active residents of The Villages Golf & Country Club in south San Jose. This gated retirement community comes with golf courses, a country club, swimming pools, tennis courts, hiking trails, stables and some of the most scenic countryside in the South Bay.

It is a great place to walk and enjoy the outdoors just about any time of the year. Since we introduced our Pole Power Walking Clinics over nine months ago, more than 150 Village seniors have found a way to fit pole walking into their busy schedules.

Pole walking is a time-efficient, low-impact, total body workout anyone can do. Our program and technique is derived from Nordic Walking, a sport that began in Finland in the early 1900s to keep the Olympic Ski teams in shape during the off seasons.

In 1997, equipment advances made Nordic Walking a popular European fitness past time. In the U.S, it is a new sport and often draws snickers from spectators or snide remarks like “where’s the snow?”

What the onlookers don’t know is pole walking is a great workout that uses all the major muscles in the body. Recent studies by the Cooper Institute, Dallas, showed that Nordic walking increased oxygen consumption and calorie burn, and can be up to 46% more efficient than normal walking.

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value of the walk. The poles help with stability and balance while absorbing some of the load from lower joints so walkers with hip, knee or ankle damage can walk longer. Without pain or worry about balance and stability, pole walkers can enjoy the walk, sights and sounds of the outdoors.

For many of the residents at the Villages, it was Pole Walking to the rescue. Edith Olson, leader and organizer of The Pole Walkers walking club, has had hip surgery on both hips.

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Until age 77, she was an avid walker and logged four miles per hour walking or hiking daily. Then her hips “wore out.” The recovery from replacement surgery was difficult and her daily walks too painful to continue. Well, that was then.

Now Edith at 80 years old (you would never guess) is leading pole walkers on 20 to 60 minute walks through the beautiful Villages landscape three times per week.

Maxine Morse, 84, is a member of the pole walker club and juggles her busy schedule to find the time to walk with the group. She swims, lifts weights and now, pole walks, to keep her arthritis at bay. She is constantly recruiting pole walkers as she believes the balance and stability benefits are well worth the investment in the gear.

Maxine pointed out recently that “old people take little steps and

shuffle,” the poles help maintain a wide stride; a great benefit in mobility and image. You won’t mistake Edith for one of the old people.

For Caroline Cooper, “a daily walk refreshes my body and my mind. Pole walking takes me outdoors where I can breathe fresh air and tone my cardiovascular system with gentle aerobic exercise.”

“With the support of the poles, I can walk continuously for about 45 minutes without sitting down.

Pretty good for a 78 year old woman! Age has compromised my sense of balance but I have no fear of falling because the poles steady me on both sides.”

“On some days, I can walk easily at a normal pace throughout but on days when my energy level is low, I start out slowly but after ‘warming up,’ I find myself ending my walk at a normal pace. I simply listen to my body to direct my pace and stride.”

So the “much more” we referred to above is not just about pole walking and all of its terrific fitness benefits. It is about discovery and delivery of a fitness program that instantly improves the quality and enjoyment of life.

Rita Marcojohn is owner of We’ve Got Your Back in Los Gatos, CA. For more information about Pole Walking, call 408.395.1122 or visit Back2Active.com.
