



Active seniors at Sabes Jewish Community Center enjoy get-togethers, fitness and other activities. Left: Ruth Goldberg; top right: Rae Frishman and Evelyn Shapiro; bottom right: Sherwood Shapiro and Henry Gagner.



More Than Fitness for 50+

Sabes Jewish Community Center offers endless opportunities for engagement.

SABES JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER SONI COHEN has a question for you: When is a fitness center more than a fitness center? Step into Sabes JCC any day of the week, and you'll have an answer. While the JCC fitness center is popular for its small, intimate size, amenities and convenience (including lots of parking), it's only a fraction of what Sabes offers St. Louis Park and neighboring communities, particularly the 50-plus demographic.

Mort Kane, a retired Golden Valley resident, frequents the fitness center. In the winter, you'll find him there four or five times a week, working on strength and aerobic conditioning. What he enjoys most, however, is the community—the people he works out with, the staff and his friends. Two of his favorite programs

at Sabes are the Jewish Film Festival, opening this year October 22, and the Jewish Humor Festival each January. "[The programs are] so popular, many nights they sell out," Kane says. He also enjoys the related activities scheduled around both festivals: On the night of a movie, for example, an actor, writer or director from the film may speak before or after the screening.

The annual film festival, along with weekly Matinee Mondays (free movie and popcorn), are held in the approximately 300-seat theater, along with oodles of other great programming for the over-50 crowd. This fall, in partnership with the Israel Center of the Minneapolis Jewish Federation, performing arts director Claire Avitabile is arranging events and shows that focus on Israeli artists. Lihi Lapid, an Israeli author and journalist whose books and weekly column deal with

contemporary women's issues, will speak at Sabes on October 14.

Member Louise Ribnick is one of thirty 50-plus artists who participates in the Jewish Artist's Laboratory, which provides a "twice-monthly opportunity for deep engagement with other artists" around thematic and religious topics, says facilitator and director of visual arts Robyn Awend. Ribnick also takes Pilates classes at the JCC fitness center, and she loves her personal fitness trainer, who "understands the fitness goals of an aging woman," she says.

Other classes, activities and events are designed specifically for active adults ages 60 and up. Activities include pickleball (a combination of ping-pong, tennis and badminton), swimming lessons, First Fridays (a current events discussion group) and a host of other choices. A year-round class called "Let's Paint, Draw and Have Fun!" meets weekly for three hours. Some participants have an art background, but some don't—and word on the street is that participants are so engaged they rarely take the built-in break time.

Lyudmyla Petrenko, director of programming for active adults 60-plus, is planning a screening and discussion of *The Age of Love*, a film about older adults' continuing needs for intimacy and connection. If speed dating intrigues you, says Petrenko, keep an eye on future 60-plus scheduling.

Fitness, movies, dating, art and discussion groups—what else does Sabes JCC offer the 50-plus crowd?

"Most of all," says Cohen, "we want to be a place of welcome." Fitness center membership is required for gym use, but all of the center's other activities are open to the public. Some, like the Twin Cities Jewish Film Festival, charge admission at affordable prices. Many other events are free or low-cost. Sabes' 50-plus programming is stellar, but with offerings for kids and families, Jewish and not, the center has an unprecedented level of inclusion. "We are driven by program excellence, mutual respect and welcome," says Cohen. She extends that welcome to the broader senior community in St. Louis Park. "Stop by," she says. "Create friendships. Be engaged. Be enriched." //

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