IT’S NOT EVERY DAY that an opportunity to climb a two-story rock wall materializes. And it’s certainly not every day that such an opportunity is pursued by seniors ranging in age from 70 to 80 years old. But that’s exactly what happened when Sodexo recently hosted a health and wellness field trip to Gettysburg College for residents of Gettysburg Lutheran Retirement Village in Gettysburg, PA and Luther Ridge Retirement Community in Chambersburg, PA.

Organized by Sodexo’s Wellness Director, Kathy Stevens, the field trip provided more than 15 energetic seniors with a day filled with fun, social engagement and plenty of physical activity. All of the activities were caught on film by a photographer and videographer, each working to capture the highlights as well as the residents’ sheer excitement surrounding the overall event. The outcome of the live footage will be a promotional video that Sodexo and Lutheran Social Services (LSS) can use to encourage resident engagement in health and wellness initiatives. It will be a part of LSS’s marketing efforts to recruit prospective residents, as well.

While the star attraction of the trip was without a doubt the rock climbing experience, residents also had the chance to take part in other activities, including basketball and a soccer kick-around. Regardless of the activity, the entire trip was orchestrated to ensure residents had ample opportunity to get active and take part in something fun and rewarding.

I was a little nervous when I started going up that rock. I was nervous that I might fall, that I wouldn’t be able to do it and humiliate myself in front of the others. I think Sally, my wife, was rather proud of my rock climbing feat today. As I climbed higher, I began to gain confidence and started taking risks. Today has been challenging, but it was exciting and I’ve met new people. It has added zest to my life.

Jim Boice
Resident, Luther Ridge

THE SYNTHESIS

1. **Initiatives** like the rock climbing field trip illustrate a community’s commitment to health and wellness, and engage residents in a more meaningful and memorable manner.

2. **Wellness activities** that are new or different address the growing trend of today’s residents who are interested in full body wellness, as well as programming that focuses more on complete physical and cognitive fitness.

3. **Innovative programming** that includes activities like the rock climbing field trip creates an environment of multi-dimensional wellness for residents, contributing to their independence, vitality and overall happiness.
Resident Benefits

Residents who participated in this health and wellness field trip reported a number of important benefits including the opportunity to:

- Engage with fellow residents and build community camaraderie
- Interact with senior community staff members
- Try something new and exciting
- Stay active and enhance their health and wellness
- Experience the reward of personal achievement

MAINTAINING AN ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

The field trip kicked off at Gettysburg Lutheran Retirement Village with fresh, healthy smoothies being served to participants to help start their day with an added boost of energy! In addition, a Sodexo registered dietitian interacted with the residents and provided information about the importance of maintaining an active lifestyle and making nutritious food choices to get the most out of their everyday meals. From there, the group took a brief side trip through Gettysburg’s historical Civil War battlefields before arriving at Gettysburg College for a delicious lunch.

Then, it was time for the rock climbing which, as it turned out, wasn’t a new experience for all the seniors. Gettysburg Lutheran resident Robert Karsteter noted that he used to rock climb while in the ROTC in college, but hadn’t climbed in more than 20 years.

Mr. Karsteter stated, “Rock climbing is not all that new to me. The experience today has been a sort of déja vu since I used to do this quite frequently. This has been a great confidence booster for people who are getting into their late 70s. You can do this!”

Click here to watch a short video featuring activity footage and resident interviews from the rock climbing field trip.
One of the added bonuses of health and wellness activities like this rock climbing field trip is the opportunity for registered dietitians and wellness staff to interact with residents on a more comfortable and engaging level. These interactions allow residents to receive one-on-one consultations while also obtaining important information about maintaining an active lifestyle.