

Seniors reap benefits of UTEP fitness program

Eighteen months after it started, the Physical Fitness in the Golden Age program, organized and directed by the Department of Kinesiology at the University of Texas at El Paso, is more popular than ever.

Under the leadership of director Sandor Dorgo, assistant professor in kinesiology and a specialist in strength and conditioning, 60 El Paso seniors have achieved new levels of health and physical fitness. Program participants, on average, gained 50 percent in their muscular strength, cardiovascular fitness, flexibility and balance. The program has high participant retention rates, and more than 90 percent of the participants rated program enjoyment as high.

The program is undergoing a



major expansion, as about 100 new participants are being recruited. New participants will start in September in the Kinesiology Department's new Fitness Research Facility at UTEP.

They will participate in three fitness training sessions a week and be guided by peer mentors of their own age. Through a structured and scientifically based physical conditioning program, participants will increase their level of fitness and health.

The program is expected to

further expand in the future.

"We are hoping that this program will soon have a substantial positive impact on the community by improving the health and fitness of our senior citizens," Dorgo said.

The project is a cooperative venture that provides kinesiology senior and graduate students the experience of working with real clients, while it also provides service to the community.

This program is unique for UTEP and the department, and is poised to become a showcase of service to the community while providing learning experiences to the students.

"We have the personnel, facilities, knowledge and the skills to serve the older adults in El Paso with a high quality health-

related physical fitness program at no cost to the participants," said Harry Meeuwssen, chairman of the Kinesiology Department. "We will educate our participants in the areas of health and fitness and encourage them to become mentors for other citizens in El Paso. I am not aware of any other organization that has taken this approach."

The program is fully funded by the Paso del Norte Health Foundation and is free. People interested in the program may call the Department of Kinesiology at 747-7245.

Sandor Dorgo, Ph.D., is assistant professor of the kinesiology program in the UTEP College of Health Sciences. Send questions or suggestions to SALSA, 1100 N. Stanton, Suite 610, El Paso, TX 79902.