

# Elderhostel

Neither Old Nor Hostile



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in Coos Bay, Oregon

# Presentation Objectives

1. I will explain the concept and history of the Elderhostel program.
2. I will show you what kinds of programs Southwestern and other Oregon schools are providing.
3. I will show how Elderhostel is beneficial to a college and its housing/conferences program.
4. Finally, I will show how you can create an Elderhostel program on your campus.

## First, the name ...

- Marketing gaffe? Elderhostel
- These elders act “young.” Moreover, participants can be children.

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- Elderhostel challenges the popular notion of what it means to be a senior or retiree.

“Nobody wants to be elder, and nobody wants to be hostile.”

- David Bianco, co-founder of Elderhostel, excerpted from *The Ventura County Star*

# Brief History

- Elderhostel began as a summer residence life program in 1975 for 220 participants on five college campuses.

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- They were both interested in providing educational opportunities to seniors in a residential setting.
- The first programs were one-week long, “rustic,” and inexpensive.



Elderhostel co-founders Martin Knowlton and David Bianco

# Elderhostel Today

- Elderhostel quickly became an independent not-for-profit organization and a serious business headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts.
- Today, it is the world's first and largest educational

# Elderhostel

- It offers more than 10,000 programs a year in all 50 states and in more than 90 countries.
- Some programs are as short as three days and as long as three weeks.

*“Elderhostel should be a complete failure [but it is] obviously one of the most successful educational ventures to date.”*

- Excerpt from “The Story of Elderhostel”

# Who participates ...

- The program is for people 55 years of age or older. These people can bring younger

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- Participants are usually:
  - college educated and/or intellectually curious.
  - retired and have financial means (but are conscious of value).
  - mentally and physically healthier.
  - risk takers.



## ... and why?

- Elderhostelers want to be active, visit new places, and continue learning and growing.

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- They want to meet new people and be part of a greater community.
- They want a great deal with convenience and ease.

[As opposed to a typical summer resort,] I wasn't sitting in a rocking chair waiting to go in to eat again."

- Elderhostel participant Nathan Baker, excerpted from "The Story of Elderhostel"

# How does it work?

- People 55 years of age or older select a program using a paper catalog or the

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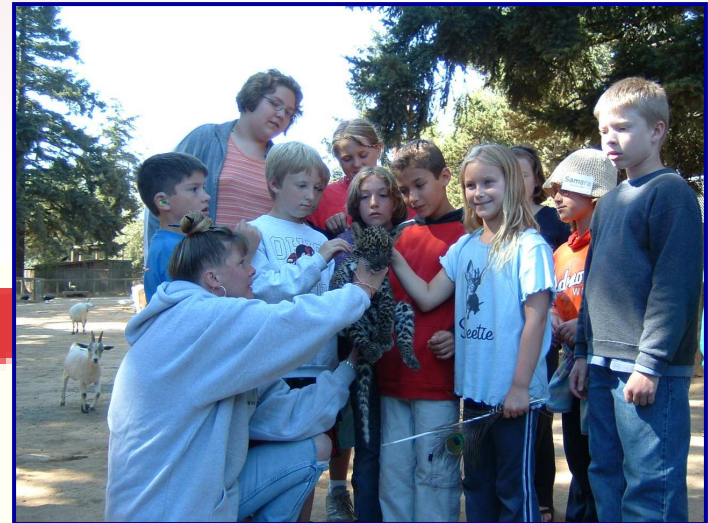
- However, once they arrive at the site, almost all of their needs (food, housing, field trip expenses and tips) are prepaid.

# Types of Programs

1. Traditional
2. Exploring North

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3. Service Programs
4. Intergenerational
5. Adventures Afloat Programs
6. Intergenerational



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# Program Providers

- Program providers were originally exclusively colleges and universities.

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- Providers do not simply house and feed the participants, they organize all of the activities.



# What do providers do?

- Providers create an itinerary for each program.
- They send a letter to each participant six to eight weeks before the program. The letter includes:
  1. instructions on how to get to the program site
  2. accommodations information
  3. things to bring
  4. a preliminary itinerary
  5. participant information/ acknowledgement of risk forms for grandparents and children (to be returned)
- They create name badges, folders, gifts, and copies of all the handouts (campus map, brochures, biographies of presenters, etc.).
- During the program, they monitor the enjoyment, health and welfare of the participants.
- After each program, the provider reviews evaluations.

# Support for Program Providers

- While Elderhostel gives program providers much independence, they do

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- At El-Star, program providers can:
  - look at and use program participant information.
  - look at all the upcoming programs.
  - submit financial verification.
  - submit changes to programs.
  - read evaluations written by participants.

# Southwestern's Programs

- Intergenerational Programs (4)
- Traditional Programs:

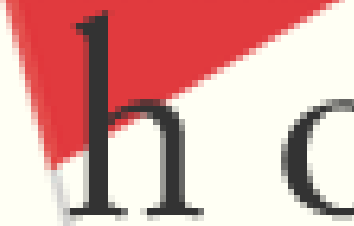
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- All of Southwestern's programs focus on experiential learning and local interests.

# Intergenerational Programs

- Southwestern focuses on activities that both the grandparents *and* the grandchildren will enjoy.
- We take participants on field trips to:
  - the Oregon Coast tidepools and beaches

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- a forest and estuary
- cranberry bogs
- petting zoo
- Local educators present information either on site or at the College.
- We provide fun activities just for kids: journal and activity books, making and decorating kites, and building sand castles.

# DVD Video

- As a parting gift, Southwestern gives a DVD video chronicling their week-long

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- Other providers give videos, group photos, books, as well as branded memorabilia like folders, pens, t-shirts, etc.

# Traditional Programs

- While we do many of the activities featured in the intergenerational program,

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depth.

- The new culinary program will feature the most hands-on learning experiences.

# George Fox University's Programs

- George Fox is a four-year private school located in Newberg, Oregon.
- They have their own retreat center called

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- Bridges and Beacons of Northwest Oregon (2)
- Garden, Orchards, and Vineyards of the Willamette Valley (2)
- Life at the End of the Oregon Trail - Intergenerational (2)

# Southern Oregon University's Programs

- Southern Oregon University is a four-year public school in Ashland, Oregon – home of the world-renowned Oregon Shakespeare Festival.
- Their program is neither limited to their campus

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- Hiking Nez Perce Country: Natural History of Northeastern Oregon
- What's So Funny? Dramatic Comedy, Shakespeare Through Today
- Lewis and Clark's Journey: Along the Columbia River to Winter Quarters

## The pros ...

- Elderhostel is a way for colleges and universities to reach a *different* non-traditional population and to meet their goals of providing continuing

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- Elderhostel exposes the college and university to a national audience.
- Elderhostel can provide tremendous personal fulfillment for both participants and providers.

## ... and cons of Elderhostel

- These programs are challenging to administrate.

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- There are many precautions you must take for Elderhostelers (including the children).
- *Some* of your participants will be “hostile elders” because they expect a lot.

# How do I become a provider?

- Before you begin:
  1. Make sure you have funding and administrative support.
  2. Make sure you have staff and faculty available – especially a coordinator.
  3. Make sure you have a sustainable educational theme – preferably associated with your locale.
- Write a New Program Concept and submit it to your Elderhostel regional headquarters for approval.
- If approved, write a New Program Proposal and complete an Elderhostel Budget Form.

Thank you for attending!



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Questions or discussion?

# Presentation Sources

- “The Story of Elderhostel” by Eugene S. Mills

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[tilikum.georgefox.edu](http://tilikum.georgefox.edu)

- Southern Oregon University Elderhostel at [www.sou.edu/elderhostel](http://www.sou.edu/elderhostel)

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