

Never too late to stay in shape

Senior Center offers exercise class to fight osteoporosis

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SARATOGA SPRINGS — When Edna Van Volkenburg died, she said she didn't remember a thing.

"Eleven minutes I was gone. You know how people say they see this bright light? Well, I didn't see anything," recalled the 82-year-old Saratoga woman. "I guess God doesn't want me yet."

Today, Van Volkenburg is one of the group leaders teaching an exercise class twice a week at the Saratoga Springs Senior Center. Her 11-minute brush with death occurred after she passed out and suffered a fall at home. Thankfully, a neighbor was with her at the time to help her get medical attention.

Van Volkenburg is afflicted with COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease), a lung problem that obstructs airflow and which caused her to pass out. The fall resulted in her hitting the side of her head on a stepstool as well as cracking a rib. She was brought to the hospital and waiting for X-ray results when she "died."

Despite all her medical issues it hasn't seemed to slow down the ultimate comeback kid.

"I can't believe I'm here talking to you right now. Eleven minutes. You know, 10 years ago I had a bypass and I'm also a diabetic. You name it and I



Edna Van Volkenburg works with weights at the Saratoga Springs Senior Center. Van Volkenburg, who has battled various conditions yet still leads an active life including leading a fitness class at the center.

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its people surviving and living longer than ever before.

According to a 2006 report from the US Department of Health's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, life expectancy has been showing a long upward trend. In the 20th century alone, life expectancy increased from approximately 50 years of age to nearly 80. Eighty is the new 50. Van Volkenburg said what ultimately put her on the comeback trail was therapy she underwent at Northwoods Health Sys-

es to the physical therapists and the occupational therapists. If anyone has to go to rehab, I would say they need to go there," she said of the organization's Niskayuna center where she spent approximately four weeks working on physical and occupational therapy.

Physical therapy works with the body and occupational therapy focuses on what a person needs to do to be comfortable in their own home, said Dana Perry, director of rehabilitation at Northwoods Health System, which has

training as well as working on skills like bathing, dressing, grooming, the activities of daily living," Perry said. "Everybody is different but the average length of stay is between 20 and 30 days. By the time she left, Edna was able to walk out," she said.

"My feet swelled so much I couldn't even walk," recalled Van Volkenburg. "I'm feeling that they brought me back," she said, turning her attentions back inside the senior center where she led the group through a 90-minute ses-