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A Guide to Seasonal Migration: Increasing Snowbirds' Longevity

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A Guide to Seasonal Migration: Increasing Snowbirds' Longevity

By

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A Scholarly Project

Submitted to the Occupational Therapy Department

of the

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master's of Occupational Therapy



Grand Forks, North Dakota

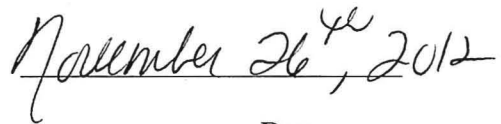
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Approval Page

This Scholarly Project Paper, submitted by Stephanie Haselkamp, MOTS and Jenny Styles, MOTS in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Master's of Occupational Therapy from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisor under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mr. Salome Lu", written over a horizontal line.

Faculty Advisor

A handwritten date in cursive script, "November 26th, 2012", written over a horizontal line.

Date

PERMISSION

Title: A Guide to Seasonal Migration: Increasing Snowbirds' Longevity

Department: Occupational Therapy

Degree: Master's of Occupational Therapy

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	1
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	3
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	7
III. METHODOLOGY.....	26
IV. PRODUCT.....	28
V. SUMMARY.....	30
REFERENCES	34

ABSTRACT

With the demographic shift of the aging population within the United States, and the push for preventative healthcare measures, occupational therapy (OT) practitioners need to adjust the way they are delivering their services to best meet this growing population's needs. Falls prevention is a method for occupational therapists to get involved in preventative care. The need for preventing falls is further supported by the concept of aging-in-place. Aging-in-place is popular amongst the older population, as older adults often wish to remain in their homes and natural contexts for as long as possible. Homes can come in many different forms; and for this scholarly project, the contexts of the recreational vehicle (RV) home and the recreational vehicle (RV) park are addressed to enable snowbirds to continue to engage in seasonal migration.

The purpose of this scholarly project is to provide the snowbird population with the opportunity to continue participating in seasonal migration for as long as they desire. To achieve this objective, a series of checklists were created that will assist snowbirds, RV park owners, and occupational therapists in identifying potential safety hazards in their immediate environment; however, the checklists are not intended to be all inclusive. The overall product is intended to increase the snowbirds' safety, independence, and longevity in their occupation of seasonal migration.

The Model of Human Occupation (MOHO) and the Ecological Model of Human Performance (EHP) were used as a guide throughout the creation of this product. Concepts of MOHO, such as *volition*, *habituation*, and *performance capacity*, were

guiding factors in the product's development. The snowbirds' volition to participate in seasonal migration was analyzed, as well as their daily habits and routines within their environment. The safety of the snowbirds' environment was addressed to match a variety of performance capacities. The EHP model was also used to analyze the snowbirds' context and provide a safe environment for the snowbirds to perform their daily tasks. The intervention strategies such as: establish/restore, alter, adapt/modify, prevent, and create assisted in developing the series of checklists that are intended to increase the snowbirds' performance range in their natural contexts.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The elderly population is increasing at a rapid rate, which is shifting the demographic trends in the United States. With this shift, OT practitioners will need to adjust the way they are delivering their services to best meet this population's growing needs. According to the American Occupational Therapy Association's (AOTA) Centennial Vision, prevention is an emerging practice area that occupational therapists can focus on with their clientele (AOTA, 2006). Preventing falls for the aging population is a method for occupational therapists to support aging-in-place. Aging-in-place is growing in popularity, as older adults wish to remain in their homes and natural contexts for as long as possible. For this scholarly project, the contexts of the RV home and the RV park are addressed in an effort to enable snowbirds to continue to engage in seasonal migration.

The interventions for this scholarly project addressed environmental modifications for the snowbird population's natural environment. RVs and RV parks were analyzed and suggestions were made for adapting or modifying the environment to prevent falls, and increase safety for the snowbird population. Suggestions were made in the form of a series of checklists that were designed for use by the snowbirds, RV park owners, and occupational therapists. Depending on the user, the application of the intervention strategies will vary; however, OT has a role within each area addressed.

Through the literature review, the snowbirds' experiences and lifestyles, as well as their non-traditional RV and RV park environments were examined. To guide the intervention approach and development of the product, MOHO and EHP were used. The concepts of MOHO such as *volition*, *habituation*, and *performance capacity* were used to develop a product that would enable the snowbirds to safely engage in their habits and routines within their natural environments. To further increase the snowbirds' performance range in their contexts, the intervention strategies from the EHP model were used to guide the development of a series of checklists. These models also helped guide the review of literature. Below is a list of key terms and concepts presented throughout the literature review.

Key Terms and Concepts:

- **Snowbirds** are defined as individuals age 60 and older who occupy a Sunbelt state for longer than one month (Happel & Hogan, 2002). For the purpose of this scholarly project, to be considered a snowbird, individuals must also live in an RV and RV park.
- **Seasonal Migration** is the movement from a persons' regular living location, to another location, during specific times of the year. Snowbirds typically migrate to the Sunbelt states (Happel & Hogan, 2002).
- **Sunbelt States** include Arizona, Florida, and Texas (Happel & Hogan, 2002).
- **RV** is an umbrella term for motorized vehicles that include housing units. There are several types of RVs including: the Class A Motorhome, Travel Trailer, and Fifth-Wheel. The Class A Motorhome is the style in which the housing unit is connected to the truck and resembles a bus. This style is desirable because it

allows for complete access to all amenities while traveling. The Travel Trailer RV is the style in which the housing unit is pulled behind the vehicle. This style is easy to tow and comes in a variety of sizes. The Fifth-Wheel is a style of RV that is similar to the Travel Trailer but is towed differently and has stairs within it (S. Hallgrimson, personal communication, September 14th, 2012; Types of Recreational Vehicles, 2008).

- **RV parks** are the communities in which snowbirds reside in when they seasonally migrate. The RV parks analyzed throughout this scholarly project differ from traditional RV parks because of the population that resides there. For the RV parks in the Sunbelt states, the majority of the residents are of retirement age. This allows for similar characteristics between the residents of RV parks in this region and the residents of retirement communities.
- **Retirement communities** are defined as areas in which retired individuals reside. For the purposes of this scholarly project, the RV park is considered a type of retirement community.
- **Aging-in-place** is the term used to describe the elderly population as they age in their homes and communities, rather than entering skilled nursing or assisted living facilities (AARP, 2008; Cutchin, 2003; Fagan & Cabrera, 2009)
- **Modifying/Adapting** is changing the aspects or contexts of a task to facilitate successful performance in occupations (AOTA, 2008).
- **Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)** developed guidelines for public areas that would enable individuals of all capacities to utilize public facilities (Mayerson, 1992)

- **AARP** is a non-profit organization that adults age 50 and older can be a part of.

This organization supports independence for older adults (AARP, 2012)

The remainder of the scholarly project will progress as follows. Chapter II presents the results of a comprehensive literature review in addition to an overview of the product. Chapter III will present the methodology and the activities used to develop the product. The product, in its entirety, is available in Chapter IV. Finally, Chapter V is a summary of the project and includes recommendations and limitations of the product.

CHAPTER II

Introduction

Over the past couple of decades, a growing number of older adults have joined the popular trend of seasonal winter migration to the Sunbelt states including Arizona, Florida, and Texas (Happel & Hogan, 2002; Smith & House, 2006). These older adults, of retirement age, are commonly referred to as “snowbirds” (Happel & Hogan, 2002). For the purposes of this scholarly project, the term snowbird includes individuals age 60 and older, who occupy a Sunbelt state for longer than 1 month in recreational vehicles (RV) and recreational vehicle (RV) parks.

It is difficult to determine the exact number of snowbirds who participate in seasonal migration due to their temporary residency, and lack of a classification system by the U.S. Census Bureau (Smith & House, 2006). However, according to Happel and Hogan (2002), seasonal migration is expected to increase greatly in the next decade; as the elderly population in general is expected to increase. Goper (2002) indicates that Arizona’s elderly population will triple in size by 2050, representing nearly 26 percent of the total population. Thus, the snowbirds will inflate the elderly population of Arizona during the winter months by almost one-third. With this increase in number, it will be important to begin anticipating some of the snowbirds’ healthcare needs in an effort to form preventative measures. Considering the profession of occupational therapy (OT) aims to enable meaningful participation in occupations (AOTA, 2012), like seasonal

migration, occupational therapists are the appropriate healthcare professionals to assist this population.

Literature Review

There is considerable literature supporting OT's role with community-dwelling older adults. However, there is not currently any OT related literature regarding the unique needs of the snowbird population. In general, it is a challenge to find current data on this specific population across all literature, as significant research on this population has not been conducted since the 1990's. As a result, much of the information presented in this literature review has been generalized from the experiences of older adults to represent the snowbird population as a whole. This review of literature will present the community environments, experiences, and general lifestyle of snowbirds. This is followed by identifying the unique needs of this population, as well as the challenges of the communities to meet those needs. The final aspect of this review will be the presentation of a program designed to meet the needs of the snowbird population by using the skills of an occupational therapist.

Community and Living Environments

There are three types of environments that will be presented to address the snowbird population's unique living situation including: retirement communities, RV parks, which are a type of retirement community, and the RV itself. Each of these environments may positively or negatively influence the quality of life of the residents. Considering snowbirds spend a large amount of time in these environments, it is important to examine each.

Retirement Communities

The physical and social aspects of the retirement communities play a large role in the health of the population that resides there (Masotti et al., 2006). Considering retirees spend the majority of their time in their communities, compared to those who are employed, it is hypothesized that some retirement communities are healthier than others. Masotti et al., (2006) defines healthy retirement communities as those in which environmental characteristics positively affect factors of health by allowing retirees to be more physically and socially active. This type of activity fosters a sense of well-being and community belonging (Jenkins, Pienta, & Horgas 2002; Masotti et al., 2006). Evidence has shown that with increased resources and opportunities for participation in various activities, older adults will be more likely to demonstrate improved health-related quality of life outcomes (Jenkins et al., 2002; Masotti et al., 2006). It is hypothesized that this would also apply to the snowbird population residing in RV parks because of the similar population.

Some of the characteristics of healthy retirement communities include: physically and socially active neighborhoods with walking accessibility, amenities, and transportation (Masotti et al., 2006). Generally, involvement in activities is associated with better health outcomes including physical and psychological health (Jenkins et al., 2002). Supporting active physical and social engagement within the community, such as group exercise programs and community gatherings, would be a cost-effective preventative healthcare measure when compared to pricey hospital stays (Masotti et al., 2006). As a result, it is important to analyze the RV parks, which as stated previously, is a type of retirement community that the snowbirds typically reside in.

RV Parks

There are two striking features of many RV parks; the high concentration of residents and the large size of the parks. It is estimated that some of the RV parks, in Arizona, house anywhere from 300 to 1,800 RVs, depending on the size of the park (M. Sweeney, personal communication, October 5, 2012). Mings and McHugh (1989) state that such highly concentrated areas increase the likelihood of socialization opportunities. In fact, most RV communities have a centrally located community hall that encompasses different community facilities and even hosts events. Common features of community halls include utilizing the space for: meetings, dances, libraries, and swimming. Due to the increased level of social interaction and community activities, many residents take pride and are committed to their winter communities (Mings & McHugh, 1989).

According to Mings and McHugh (1989) the physical description of most of the parks is that they are well-kept and resemble suburban communities with homogeneous yards and decorative curb appeal. There are typically 10 to 12 lot sites per acre, with 30-35 feet wide and 70-80 feet long spaces (Northern Arizona University, 2001). The width of the typical lot space provides just enough room for the slide outs on the RV, but little space between neighboring RVs. This decreases the accessibility of the space. It is important to also analyze the internal environment of the RVs, as they are the primary homes to the snowbirds during the winter months.

RVs

According to Zafiroglu and Chang (2007), most RVs are built in a similar fashion. The RV's basic shape is a rectangle in which the body is split up into three separate spaces. The first space consists of a combined entryway, living-room, kitchen, dining-

room, and sleeping area, where couches can be transformed into temporary beds. Another space that is divided from the rest of the RV is the bathroom, which can either be one room or separated into two rooms across from one another. Finally, near the bathroom, there is a designated bedroom which is always located at the end of the RV to provide privacy. Some RVs may also have a slide-out, which is an area of the RV that, when parked, can slide out and make the interior space larger. This is often located in the living area or in the bedroom (Zafiroglu & Chang, 2007). Most snowbirds choose RVs that are spacious; considering this is their home for an extended period of time. The most popular is the class A motorhome, which is generally the most luxurious style because it enables access to all amenities while driving (Types of Recreational Vehicles, 2008). However, the large fifth-wheel, the style in which a truck is needed to pull, is also popular. These types of RVs range in size from 20 to 40 feet long, and 8 to 15 feet wide (Types of Recreational Vehicles, 2008).

AARP states that most homes are designed for able-bodied individuals (AARP, 2008). Like most homes, most RVs are also designed for able-bodied adults, and do not accommodate the needs of individuals with disabilities. For instance, almost all RVs have at least three steps to enter the home; providing a barrier for individuals who are wheelchair bound or with other disabilities. Having such barriers within the home may limit the snowbirds' ability to live both safely and independently. With such a unique living arrangement, it is important to understand the snowbirds' experiences and lifestyles as to why they choose to engage in seasonal migration.

Experience & Lifestyle

The majority of the snowbird population comes from Midwestern states and Canada (Goper, 2002; Smith & House, 2006). As a result, the majority of the research that is conducted on the snowbird population comes from the Midwestern states. Bjelde and Sanders (2010) conducted a qualitative research study that examined the experiences of snowbirds in this region. For the participants of this study, the climate is what initially attracted the older adults to begin seasonal migration (Bjelde & Sanders, 2010). Research has supported positive health benefits related to living in warmer climates. Specific diagnoses that have been linked to decreased symptomology include arthritis and various neuromuscular disorders such as Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), Multiple Sclerosis (MS), and Parkinson's (Arthritis Foundation, 2012; Nordby, Strumse, Froslic & Stanghelle, 2007). In addition to health related benefits, there are also other benefits of seasonal migration.

Bjelde and Sanders (2010) found there was a gradual increase in the amount of time spent in the Sunbelt states, as many of the participants found new activities and friendships in their communities. Some of the new activities included: volunteering, attending church, or community gatherings. These activities allowed the participants to remain not only active, but social. While the climate may have been what initially attracted these participants to the Sunbelt states, it was the close knit friendships that greatly contributed to their willingness to return. As a result, when changes in family situations such as a decline in health, or a loss of a spouse occurred, many of the participants made adaptations to continue their seasonal migration. Therefore, seasonal

migration played a major role in promoting a meaningful and enhanced quality of life for the participants (Bjelde & Sanders, 2010).

A study by Mings and McHugh (1989) analyzed the lifestyle of snowbirds residing in retirement communities, as well as the features that the communities provided for their residents. Considering the snowbirds' lifestyles are based mainly upon leisure activities, the researchers found the therapeutic recreation staff, of these communities, to be significantly important. Some communities have as many as 75 different activities that they offer to the residents. Pamphlets and handouts of events are kept at central locations, such as a bulletin board at the community hall. Some popular activities that are offered include bowling, shuffleboard, potlucks, and community outings. Further research supports the immediate environment as a contributing factor to the snowbirds life satisfaction (Mings & McHugh, 1989). Specifically, the outdoor environment has been shown to facilitate positive health benefits such as physical activity and social interaction, further supporting the snowbirds' psychological well-being (Grahn & Stigsdotter, 2003).

McHugh and Mings (1996) conducted another study which compared the lifestyles of the snowbirds when in their summer residence to their winter residence. They found that snowbirds' winter communities allowed for a more active and social lifestyle compared to their northern summer homes. In fact, the large number of leisure and social activities that were available was one of the major factors that caused snowbirds to continue to come to their winter RV communities (McHugh & Mings, 1996). There is a sense of permanency in these communities, as many of the residents continue to come back year after year to the same location. Most residents stay for the

winter months starting from November and going through April, which further adds to their sense of permanency (Mings & McHugh, 1989). McHugh and Mings (1996) found that what kept the snowbirds returning to their home states in the North were family ties and a break from the busy social atmosphere of their winter communities.

In summary, McHugh and Mings (1996) found that the snowbirds value both the busy lifestyle that the winter RV communities provide, and the calm atmosphere surrounded by family members in their northern summer communities. And while seasonal migration has become significantly important to those who participate in it, many fear the time when they will be unable to continue, secondary to a decline in health status. “Snowbirds’ desire to maintain a migratory lifestyle for as long as possible, [as] cessation of seasonal movements may be felt as a loss of home and identity” (McHugh & Mings, p.546, 1996). The snowbirds’ lifestyle and desire to continue participating in seasonal migration poses unique needs and challenges.

Unique Needs and Challenges

The snowbirds’ desire to continue to engage in seasonal migration coincides with aging-in-place. Aging-in-place is the term used to describe the elderly population as they age in their homes and communities, rather than entering skilled nursing or assisted living facilities (Cutchin, 2003; Fagan & Cabrera, 2009). Aging-in-place encourages successful aging as it allows older adults to remain independent. This further facilitates control of their surrounding environment and enhances quality of life (Cutchin, 2003).

The importance of aging-in-place has significantly increased due to the current demographic trends in the United States, as the older population is increasing at a rapid rate (United States Department of Health and Human services, 2001). The snowbird

population, not only wishes to continue to remain living in their summer homes, they also wish to remain in their winter RV homes. However, many are often unable to age-in-place due to their home environments being incongruent to their declining physical abilities. A common issue with this decline in physical abilities is that it makes them more susceptible to falls.

Falls

Falls are one of the biggest safety issues for the elderly. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention, \$28.2 billion United States healthcare dollars were spent in 2010 due to falls occurring in the older population. The risk of falls is so high, 1 out of every 3 adults in the United States age 65 and older, fall each year; and 20% to 30% of these falls are severe enough to prevent individuals from returning home (CDC, 2011). Common injuries that occur from falls include: head injuries, fractures, and lacerations (Ganz, Higashi, & Rubenstein, 2005). Due to the injuries caused by these falls, older adults may experience a decrease in functioning as well as develop a fear of falling again (Fuller, 2000; Tennstedt et al., 1998). Falls are a serious public health concern because they decrease independence and increase institutionalization; negatively affecting quality of life. As a result, it is beneficial to determine the common causes of falls in an effort to prevent their occurrence.

According to Fuller (2000), common causes of falls for this population include but are not limited to: decreased balance, increased weakness, medications, alcohol, acute illnesses, cognitive impairment, hypotension, visual disorders, nutrition, central nervous system disorders, or accidents due environmental risks. While one may not be able to control the health related risks associated with falls, he or she does have greater control of

the environmental risks. The snowbirds reside in a unique living environment that poses additional environmental risks for falls when compared to traditional retirement communities. The snowbirds' environment is a significant issue for those wishing to age-in-place.

Environmental Risks

Environmental risks are defined as, "any part of the environment in the home areas (the kitchen, the bathroom, the bedroom, the stairways, and the sidewalk); transition areas (the entrance or back door); and outside areas (street or sidewalk) which are associated with falls" (Huang & Acton, 2004, p. 248). According to Northbridge, Nevitt, Kelsey, and Link, (1995) environmental hazards account for about one third to one half of older adult's falls; and are an important predictor of this population's risk of falls. The first fall that an older adult experiences is most commonly related to the environment and its risks (Northbridge et al., 1995).

The bedroom is the most common area to fall within the home. However, other rooms such as the kitchen, bathroom, and dining room are also fairly prevalent. Environmental hazards such as rugs, clutter, loose grab bars, and poor lighting have been shown to increase older adults fall risk (Northbridge, et al., 1995). These types of hazards exist on a larger spectrum for the snowbirds, as they have less storage space to store their belongings which often leads to clutter. The snowbirds' compact living arrangements provides barriers for ambulation. This increases their likelihood of falls, especially for those with ambulation devices or who are physically impaired. Their tight living quarters also limit the number of modifications that may be made to facilitate aging-in-place. Typical homes may be modified with grab bars and shower chairs; however, the RV

homes may not be as compatible secondary to the types of material many RVs are made out of. These factors place the snowbirds at a unique disadvantage when compared to the rest of the aging population.

According to Li et al., (2006), half of the general population's falls occur in the outdoor environment; and most outdoor falls occur as a result of environmental hazards of the neighborhood or community. Those hazards include uneven outdoor surfaces such as: sidewalks, parking lots, gravel, or grassy terrain. Stairs in both indoor and outdoor environments have also been shown to be hazardous for the elderly population. In addition, poor outdoor lighting, and slippery surfaces secondary to weather conditions, may also put older adults at a greater risk for falls (Li et al., 2006).

The outdoor environment of the RV parks may also include many of these hazards. According to Mings and McHugh (1989), many residents of RV communities personalize their yards by adding yard decorations. This, along with the close arrangement of RV lots, increases the snowbirds' likelihood of falling. In addition, the stairs that are required to enter most RVs are often narrow and without handrails, adding to the risk of falls (Startzell, Owens, Mulfinger, & Cavanagh, 2000). Lastly, the gravel terrain that encompasses the majority of RV park surfaces may also be a hazard. Considering walking is the most commonly reported physical leisure activity across all age groups, and the greatest percentage of outdoor falls occurs while walking, greater attention should be paid to the outdoor environment (Chippendale & Bear-Lehman, 2011). This may be done through environmental modifications.

Environmental Modifications

According to Leschin-Hoar (2008), adapting recreational parks to fit the needs of older adults would be beneficial due to the expected increase of the elderly population. By adapting and modifying the environments of RV parks and the RVs, snowbirds will be able to continue to engage in seasonal migration, with decreased risk for falls. Adapting homes has been supported in the literature, as it allows for individuals to perform functional tasks within their homes more safely and effectively (Cumming et al., 2001). Considering seasonal migration is important to snowbirds, and has helped them to remain physically and socially active, it is important to assist them with these types of environmental modifications. Seasonal migration further contributes to the snowbirds' successful aging process and enhances their quality of life. This next section will specifically address environmental modifications that may be made to the snowbirds' outdoor and indoor environments.

Outdoor Modifications

The outdoor environment of the RV parks may be adapted for enhanced accessibility and safer mobility (Leschin-Hoar, 2008). It is important for RV park owners to analyze the types of surfaces that the walkways, restrooms, and/or walking trails are made out of, to ensure they are smooth and safe for ambulation (Leschin-Hoar, 2008; Sugiyama & Thompson, 2007). Maintaining trimmed grass and bushes, as well as removing clutter, is an inexpensive way for RV park owners to modify the environment (Wentzel, Rose, & Rockwood, 2001).

Leschin-Hoar (2008) recommends marking the distance and level of difficulty of walking trails, so that one may decide if the trail is an appropriate fit based on his or her

physical capacity. Another recommendation is to place benches, or other resting areas along the path so that individuals may take rest breaks as needed. RV park owners could provide comfortable supportive seating throughout the park, that is shaded and out of the sun, so that residents may have additional locations to rest. Lastly, providing larger print signs and brochures is recommended to accommodate the needs of those with visual impairments (Leschin-Hoar, 2008). Not only will the snowbirds benefit from these adaptations, but so will the RV park owners by increasing their occupancy.

Park owners of Scotts Creek Park, a city park in Portsmouth, Virginia, have made adaptations to better accommodate the aging population. This park has wide walkways which increases the accessibility of the park. It also has many areas for people to sit down and rest. The owners selected plants with different scents and vibrant colors for the visually impaired to enjoy as well. Although the park owners encourage visitors of all ages, they do not allow bikes, skateboards, or other items that could defer older adults from wanting to visit the park (Leschin-Hoar, 2008). Similarly, owners of RV parks are also starting to consider the elderly when designing their parks (M. Wright, personal communication, July 26, 2012; S. Flynn, personal communication, July 30, 2012).

Through the development process, park owners should seek input from representatives of persons with disabilities, engineers, and other qualified personnel, (Hultsman, Cotrell, & Zales-Hultsman, 1987) such as occupational therapists. Developing facilities that are universally designed, following guidelines identified by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), would increase the accessibility of the park, as well as increase the confidence and use of facilities by residents (Leschin-Hoar, 2008).

Snowbirds should also consider making adaptations to their immediate outdoor environment. One way in which the snowbirds may do this is by adapting their current stairs that enter the RV to make them safer. The snowbirds may do this by building a small platform deck equipped with handrails and a wide base of support for ambulation. The deck may be built on site at the RV park, or transported there with a truck and trailer combination. Many RV parks have volunteers that build decks within their communities (M. Sweeney, personal communication, October 5, 2012). For those who are wheelchair bound, a ramp may be built for accessibility. Snowbirds should consult a contractor when building a ramp on site. By making these adaptations, the environment will be more accessible, enhancing the general population's ability to mobilize within the park. Similarly, snowbirds may also make adaptations to their RVs indoor environment to increase accessibility.

Indoor Modifications

While there are aging-in-place guidelines for adapting a home, there are currently no guidelines for adapting RVs. According to AARP (2008), a well-designed home, or one that has been adapted to meet the needs of individuals of all ages and abilities, includes the following features:

- At least one entry-way into the home without stairs
- Entrance door widths at least 36 inches wide, interior doors at least 34 inches wide, hallways at least 42 inches wide
- Light switches, outlets, and thermostats at a height that can be reached from wheelchair level
- Lever-style door knobs/faucets

- Reinforced bathroom walls that would allow for installation of grab bars if necessary

Considering the physical modifications that would need to occur in an RV to meet the accommodations of persons with a physical disability, many of these changes would not be plausible to an RV. This is mainly because of the type of material used to build RVs and the limited amount of space within the RV. As a result, snowbirds would benefit from the services of an occupational therapist that is skilled at evaluating and modifying the environment, as well as providing compensation strategies to meet his or her clients' needs.

Conclusion

The environment plays a large role in the snowbirds' experience and ability to participate in seasonal migration. The outdoor environment provides opportunities for socialization and physical activity, which have been linked to positive health outcomes. However, the outdoor environment may also serve as a barrier if it is not accommodating to the needs of older adults. Similarly, the indoor environment of an RV can either facilitate or inhibit the snowbirds' ability to continue to engage in this valued occupation. While some RVs are originally designed for individuals with disabilities, many do not meet the AARP Home Fit Guidelines (2008) recommended for aging-in-place. It is for these reasons that it is important for snowbirds to evaluate the indoor and outdoor environment of their residency. It is equally as important for park owners to consider the RV park environment to ensure that it is congruent with the aging population. Because of the unique aspects of the RV and RV environment, snowbirds and park owners would benefit from the skills of an occupational therapist.

Role of Occupational Therapy

OT is a profession that addresses all persons across the lifespan in order to help them participate in occupations, or everyday activities, that are important to them.

Occupational therapists' view the person holistically, and take into account each person's physical and mental health; as well as their home and community environments.

Occupational therapists' consider the client to be the expert, and develop client-centered treatment plans collaboratively to meet their needs (AOTA, 2012).

According to AOTA (2012) OT's practice areas include health promotion, prevention, and facilitation of independence at the individual, community, and population level. Therefore, occupational therapists should collaborate with RV park owners and engineers to develop facilities that enable safe mobility and are universally designed. It is within OT's realm to assist snowbirds in selecting an RV and RV park that would allow them to best age-in-place. This would further support aspects of successful aging such as physical and social involvement.

There is considerable research available to support occupational therapist's role in environmental modifications (Chippendale & Bear-Lehaman, 2011; Cohn & Lew, 2010; Cumming et al., 2001; Leland et al., 2002; & Tse, 2005). However, no research on adapting the indoor environment of an RV was located; and there is limited research on modifying the outdoor environment. As stated previously, much of the research on the snowbird population in general is dated. It is for these reasons that a product called *A Guide to Seasonal Migration: Increasing Snowbirds' Longevity* was developed. This product was designed to meet the unique needs of the snowbird population identified through the literature review.

Proposed Program

A Guide to Seasonal Migration: Increasing Snowbirds' Longevity is a product that contains a series of checklists for the snowbirds, RV park owners, and occupational therapists to consider in regards to seasonal migration. The checklists target many of the snowbirds' needs that would enable them to continue participating in seasonal migration with increased independence and safety. The checklists were designed to assist each of these populations with analyzing their environments and making appropriate modifications.

Theory

The Model of Human Occupation (MOHO) and the Ecological Model of Human Performance (EHP) were used to guide the development of a product to meet the specific needs of the snowbird population. These two models were chosen because of their compatibility with the snowbirds' unique characteristics and contexts.

MOHO, a conceptual practice model developed by Kielhofner, served as a guide throughout this scholarly project in determining how *volition*, *habitation*, and *performance capacity* influenced the snowbirds' participation in the occupation of seasonal migration. The term *volition*, coined by Kielhofner, is related to one's choice or will to engage in activities (Kielhofner, 2009). Throughout the literature review it was found that climate, health benefits, and social and physical activities motivated the snowbirds to continue to engage in seasonal migration. The term *habitation*, refers to the patterns of behaviors that are within an occupation (Kielhofner, 2009). While in their Sunbelt states, the snowbirds developed habits and routines that revolved around the communities in which they resided. The snowbirds networked with other residents in

their communities and developed a more active and social lifestyle. These patterns further increased their motivation to continue participating. Lastly, the term *performance capacity*, is the physical and mental abilities that underlie performance in occupations (Kielhofner, 2009). Considering the snowbirds are part of the elderly population, they too will experience a natural decline in their physical and cognitive abilities. With this decline in performance capacity, the snowbird population is at an increased risk for falls. It is for this reason that the EHP model was used to examine the environment in which the snowbirds reside to facilitate intervention strategies that meet the needs of the snowbird population.

The EHP model focuses on the relationship between the person, task, and context (Cole & Tufano, 2008). Through this relationship, a person's performance range is dependent upon a person's abilities, the task at hand, and the context. The snowbirds' tasks and contexts were analyzed throughout the creation of the product in an effort to encompass their unique needs related to continued participation in seasonal migration. The intervention strategies such as establishing/resorting, adapting/modifying, altering, preventing, and/or creating were used to develop the various checklists in the product. The goal of the checklists is to increase the snowbirds' overall performance range (Cole & Tufano, 2008).

A series of checklists for the RV park owners were developed to help them alter their current environment, or create a more accessible park that would better fit the needs of their residents. Another series of checklists was created for the snowbirds to assist them in selecting an RV and RV park that would best meet their current and future needs. In addition, recommendations for modifications and adaptations were provided within

each product to support the snowbirds in their contexts. Lastly, checklists for occupational therapists were created to assist with RV home and RV park evaluations. The intention of the entire series of checklists is to assist in modifying current environments and preventing falls. The overall goal of the product is to increase the snowbirds' performance range by encompassing the snowbirds abilities, tasks, and context.

Organization

The product has been organized based on the population and environment being addressed. Four products were designed that can be used independently to meet the needs of the specific population. The titles of each product are clearly defined so that the population wishing to utilize the product can quickly retrieve the appropriate information. "Increasing Snowbirds' Longevity in Seasonal Migration" is outlined below in the Table of Contents of the product:

- I. Choosing an RV: For Snowbirds
- II. Choosing an RV Park: For Snowbirds
- III. Creating an RV Park: RV Park Owners
- IV. Evaluating the Snowbird Environment: Occupational Therapy

The product in its entirety is available in Chapter IV. Chapter III will present the methodology and the activities used to develop the product.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The topic for this scholarly project was generated based off of the student therapists' mutual interest in emerging practice areas of OT including wellness, prevention, and aging-in-place. The snowbird population was chosen as the main target area after one of the student therapists visited her grandparents, who are snowbirds, in an RV park in Arizona. The student therapist identified needs based off of the indoor and outdoor environments of that particular RV park that were not currently being met. After discussing these unmet needs, and how they could be addressed by occupational therapists, the student therapists decided to utilize this subject as a scholarly project topic.

For the RV parks in the Sunbelt states, the majority of the residents are of retirement age. This allows for similar characteristics between the residents of RV parks in this region and the residents of retirement communities. Due to the lack of current research on snowbirds and their environments, literature was gathered from retirement communities and outdoor parks. Additionally, personal communication with RV park owners and snowbirds also served as a resource for information that was difficult to obtain elsewhere.

Healthy factors of environments, such as providing social and recreational activities, are identified throughout the literature and are incorporated into the suggestions provided in the end product. The AARP Home Fit Guide (2008) provides guidance for addressing specific aspects of the indoor environment to increase one's

safety and independence within the home. The recommendations for the RV park environment follow guidelines by ADA. The guidelines identified in ADA can allow for individuals of varying abilities to continue participating in seasonal migration for as long as they desire.

To gain more information on the indoor RV environment, a tour of a local RV dealership occurred. This provided the opportunity to evaluate the different styles of RVs and identify potential hazards that would increase the snowbirds' likelihood of falling. Further information was gathered through personal communication with an RV dealer. Based on the snowbirds' age related factors that make them more susceptible to falls, literature was gathered on falls prevention techniques and aging-in-place.

To tie in OT's role with this specific population, literature was also gathered on OT's role in environmental evaluations and modifications. Through this process, a product was developed for the snowbird population, RV park owners, and occupational therapists to assist them in identifying potential safety hazards in the environment; however, each series of checklists is not all inclusive. The product was also created with the intention of occupational therapists being involved in all aspects of implementation.

Principles of teaching adults and older adults were guiding factors in the creation of the product, as it was intended to be an educational tool. These teaching strategies directed how each series of checklist was written and designed. Therefore, with the exception of the OT checklists, the remaining checklists did not exceed an eighth grade reading level, as each checklist was written to match the its intended audiences' literacy. In an effort to prevent overwhelming the snowbirds and park owners, clear learning

objectives were identified, a table of contents was provided, and the pages were designed with large font and pictures throughout.

CHAPTER IV

Product

The purpose of this scholarly project was to provide the snowbird population with the opportunity to continue participating in seasonal migration for as long as they desire. To achieve this objective a series of checklists were created that would assist snowbirds, RV park owners, and occupational therapists in identifying potential safety hazards in their immediate environment; however, the checklists were not intended to be all inclusive. The overall product is intended to increase the snowbirds safety, independence, and longevity in their occupation of seasonal migration.

Checklists were created for the owners of RV parks. These checklists address ways in which park owners may create or adapt their facilities to increase safety and independence, as well as increase accessibility. Making these changes to the RV parks may help prevent falls, as well as provide equal access to all of the park's amenities. These modifications may attract more snowbirds, and allow for current residents of varying abilities to continue residing there.

Another series of checklists were created to assist snowbirds when selecting an RV. These checklists provide recommendations of what to look for, and consider, prior to purchasing an RV. Many of the recommendations follow the AARP Home Fit Guidelines (2008), which would enable the snowbirds to participate in seasonal migration for longer. The snowbirds may also use these checklists to modify their current RV if they are unable to purchase a new one. Another series of checklists were developed to

assist the snowbirds in selecting an RV park. These checklists focus on the outdoor environment and the parks amenities. By utilizing the checklists, the snowbirds will be better able to choose an environment that facilitates safety and independence.

Lastly, two checklists were created to assist occupational therapists in conducting RV home evaluations and RV park evaluations. These two tools were created based off of the guidelines by AARP and ADA. Each series of checklists were created to be used independent of the other checklists; however, they may also be used in combination with one another. There is a role for OT with each population addressed in this product.

MOHO and EHP were used as a guide throughout the creation of this product. Concepts of MOHO, such as *volition*, *habituation*, and *performance capacity*, were guiding factors in the product's development. The snowbirds' volition to participate in seasonal migration was analyzed, as well as their daily habits and routines within their environment. The safety of the snowbirds' environment was addressed to match a variety of performance capacities. The EHP model was also used to analyze the snowbirds' context and provide a safe environment for the snowbirds to perform their daily tasks. The intervention strategies such as: establish/restore, alter, adapt/modify, prevent, and create assisted in developing the series of checklists that are intended to increase the snowbirds' performance range in their natural contexts.

Objectives

- To help you choose an RV that best meets your needs and matches your physical abilities and daily routines.
- To provide recommendations of ways to change the RV environment to increase your safety and independence and prevent falls.
- To learn about occupational therapists and ways they can help you stay as safe and independent as possible in your RV and at your RV park.

Choosing an RV: For Snowbirds



Permission obtained from: John MacDonald, (2012)

By Stephanie Haselkamp and Jenny Styles
University of North Dakota Occupational
Therapy Students
Advisor: Dr. LaVonne Fox

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
RV Entrance Checklist and Recommendations	2-3
Kitchen and Dining Room Checklist and Recommendations.....	4-5
Living Room Checklist and Recommendations	6-7
Bathroom Checklist and Recommendations	8-9
Bedroom Checklist and Recommendations	10-11
What to look for throughout the RV Checklist and Recommendations.....	12-13
Occupational Therapy.....	14
Resources.....	15

Introduction

When choosing an RV it is important to find one that meets your current and future needs and abilities. Finding an RV that is safe and easy to get around in, and is able to be adapted to fit your needs, will allow you to be a snowbird for as long as you would like. The following checklists are provided to help you choose an RV that you can grow older with.

When buying an RV you can take these checklists with you to help you examine each part of the RV for safety concerns. Being aware of these safety concerns may help you be more safe in your environment, and prevent falls. These checklists cover the following areas:

- What to look for when entering the RV
- What to look for in the kitchen and dining room
- What to look for in the living room
- What to look for in the bathroom
- What to look for in the bedroom

After each checklists there is a recommendation sheet for making simple adaptations without having to custom make your RV. That way, if you already have an RV you can use some of these recommendations to make it safer. There is also information about the role of an occupational therapist and how he or she can help you be safer in your RV and RV park. The recommendations and checklists were created using the AARP Home Fit Guide. Go to AARP.org for more information.

Entering the RV



Image from Microsoft Office Clipart

If you notice that you have marked "No" more than "Yes" on the checklist, the RV may not be right for you.

	Yes	No
Is there an outdoor automatic light?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a grab bar to hold on to when climbing the stairs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there more than one entrance to the RV?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the door easy to open?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the door wide enough to easily get through?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the threshold 3 inches or less when entering the RV?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the entryway free of rugs and clutter?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there open space when you first enter?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Recommendations for the RV Entrance

- Increase lighting around the entry of the RV so you can see where you need to step.
- Install motion sensor (automatic) lights.
- Build a deck or patio. This will provide you with a safer method of getting in and out of your RV. The stairs on a deck are larger and more stable (Contact your local contractor to help you build your deck.)
- If possible, build your deck free of stairs. If steps are necessary, install handrails by the stairs.
- Have a bench or surface near the door to set things down if needed. This will also give you a place to rest.
- If able, clear the space when you first enter the RV. This will allow you to enter without the risk of tripping on something.
- Add contrasting colored tape to the edge of stairs to make them more visible.



Main living area: Kitchen and Dining room

	Yes	No
Do the counters have round corners?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you able to reach the top of the counters from a seated position?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you able to reach the sink from a seated position?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you able to reach the stove from a seated position?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the microwave at counter height?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If not, is there room on the counter to put a microwave?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the sink have a lever faucet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the cupboards easy to open?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you open the refrigerator doors easily from a seated position?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the dining room table have removable chairs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the kitchen and dining rooms free of rugs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



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Recommendations for the Kitchen and Dining Room

- If corners of counters are too sharp, tape foam or other soft material over the edge to make them safer in case you fall or lose your balance.
- Have a high stool or chair for taking a break while in the kitchen.
- Move all frequently used items to the front of the cupboards so that you can reach them more easily and safely.
- If possible, move the microwave to the counter so that it is easier to reach.
- Install lever handles on cupboard doors so that they are easier to open.
- Only use step stools that have non-slip steps and a handle to hold onto. Try not to go higher than one step.
- Removable or moveable furniture in the dining room would allow for future changes if needed, such as making room for a wheelchair or walker.

The open layout of this kitchen allows you to move around safely.

Permission obtained from:
John MacDonald, (2012)



Main Living Area: Living Room

	Yes	No
Is there at least 5 feet of open space in the living room?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the furniture removable or moveable if needed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the living room furniture easy to get up from a seated position?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the living room free of rugs and clutter?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



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Recommendations for Living Room

- Rearrange furniture so that there are less tripping hazards and more room to move around.
- Put chair risers on seats if they are too low to easily get out of.
- Make carpet corners or thresholds easier to see by adding colorful tape so that you do not trip.
- Remove clutter and rugs so you do not trip and fall.



Image from Microsoft Office Clipart

RV Bathroom

If you are looking at purchasing a RV, try each of these to see if it is safe and easy for you to do. It is better to know now than after you buy it.

	Yes	No
Is the toilet seat easy to get up from a seated position?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is it easy for you to get in and out of the shower or tub?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there enough space in the shower or tub for a shower chair?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there grab bars in the shower or tub?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a hand-held shower head in the shower or tub?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the bathroom vanity within reach from a seated position?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there lever handled faucets?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there lever handled cabinets?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there enough open space to move around safely?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Recommendations for the Bathroom

- If the toilet seat is too low, add a toilet riser with handles to make it easier to use.
- Built in shower or tub chairs are good for taking rest breaks, but they may not be the best option for safe bathing. Having the ability to add your own shower or tub chair, would allow you to get in and out of your shower or tub more safely.
- Add suction grab bars in the shower to have a place to hold onto when getting in and out of the shower or tub. Ask an occupational therapist on how to correctly install and use this device.
- Add non-slip strips on the shower or tub floor.
- To prevent slipping or tripping on floor rugs, only use rubber backed rugs.
- Install a hand-held shower head if there is not already one there.
- Install lever handles on faucets to make them easier to turn on.
- Install lever handles on cabinets to make them easier to open.
- Remove clutter so you do not trip and fall.



RV Bedroom

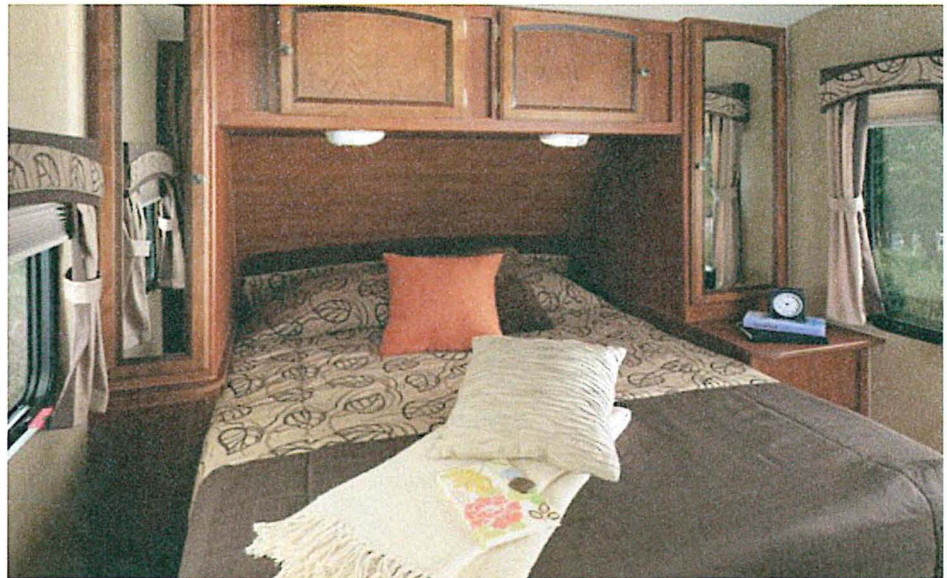
	Yes	No
Is the mattress height easy for you to get up and down from?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there enough walking space on each side of the bed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you able to easily reach the hanging rod to hang up your clothes in the closet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there lever handles on the closet doors?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there lever handles on the dresser drawers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you able to get to your bedroom without going up stairs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the bedroom free of scatter rugs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



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Recommendation for Bedroom

- If the mattress is too low to easily get in and out of bed, add another box spring or buy a thicker mattress.
- A bed rail may help you get in and out of bed.
- Remove clutter and rugs in the bedroom so that you do not trip and fall.
- Install lever handles on closet doors and dresser drawers to make them easier to open.



Permission obtained from: John MacDonald, (2012)

Other Things to Look for in the RV

	Yes	No
Are the door widths within the RV wide enough to easily go through?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the inside of the RV free of stairs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the light switches easy to use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the light switches and outlets easy to reach?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there enough light throughout the RV to see when it is dark?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the carpet easy to walk on?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Permission obtained from: John MacDonald, (2012)

Recommendations for Adaptations

- If there are stairs in the RV, make sure the area is well lit. If you are having a hard time seeing the edge of the stairs, add colored tape.
- Replace light switches with rocker switches that are easier to use.
- If there is not enough lighting in certain areas of your RV, add night lights or other lamps.
- If you are finding that you are tripping on the carpet, replace it with a flatter type.
- You should avoid throw rugs because they are easy to trip on.
- You should avoid using extension cords because you could trip on them.

Occupational Therapists

Occupational therapy is a job that helps people to be able to do activities that they love to do, like seasonal migration. Occupational therapists are trained to be able to look at a person's environment and find areas that they can change to make them safer. They are also able to help people change the way they do things to make them safer.

Because there is not a lot of space inside an RV, it may not be possible to change the environment as much as you would like. In that case, an occupational therapist may be helpful. The occupational therapist could help you find ways to change areas of your RV that you may not have thought of. They may also be able to show you different ways to do things like getting out of bed, or getting into the shower. Occupational therapist want to make your environment safe so that you are able to do the things that are important to you, like seasonal migration. Ask your doctor for more information about how you can reach an occupational therapist.

References

For more information please see the following resources:

AARP (2008). The AARP home fit guide. Retrieved from

<http://www.aarp.org>

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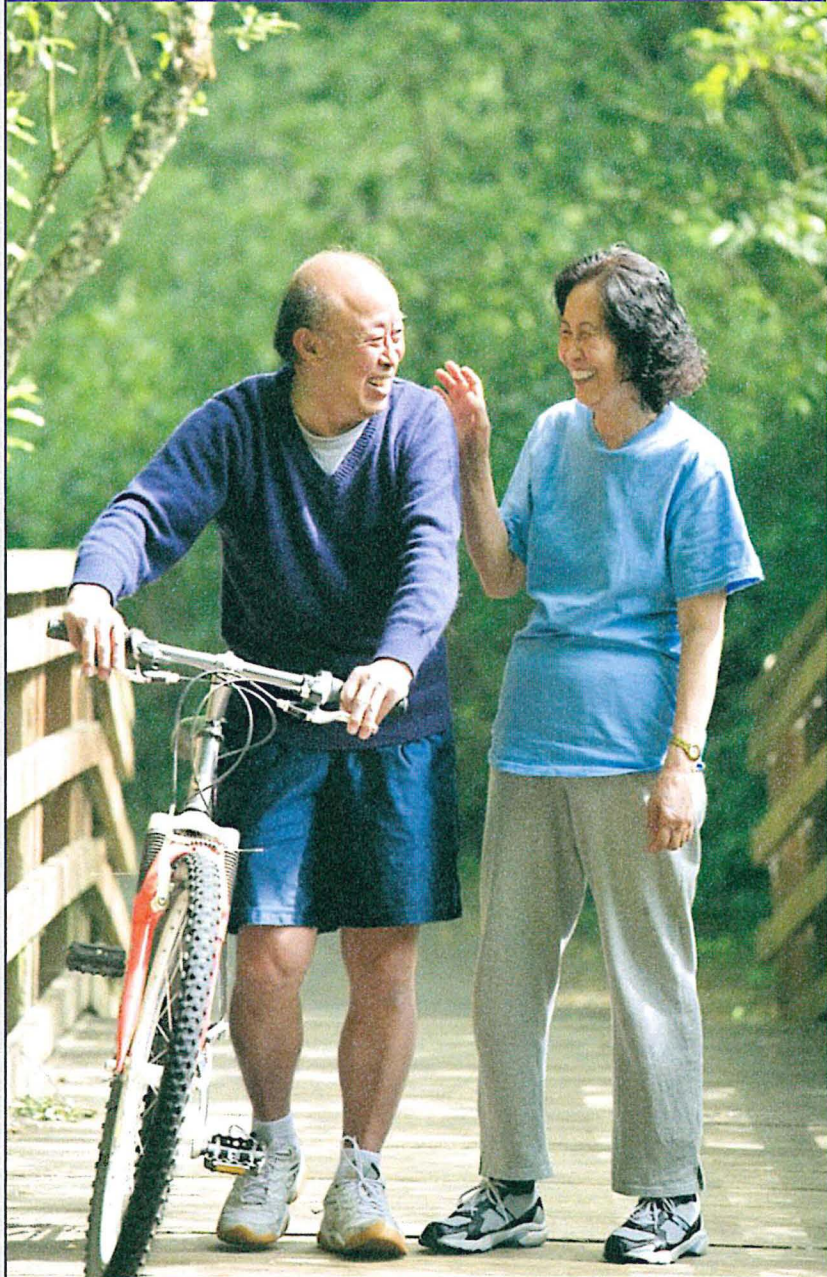


Objectives

- To help you choose an RV park that best meets your needs, and matches your physical ability and daily routine.
- To help you choose an RV park that may help you to continue to seasonally migrate for as long as you would like.
- To understand the benefits of being active, and how the RV park can support you having a healthy and active routine.
- To learn about occupational therapists and ways they can help you stay active and safe within your RV park environment.

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Choosing an RV Park: For Snowbirds



By Stephanie Haselkamp and Jenny Styles
University of North Dakota Occupational
Therapy Students
Advisor: Dr. LaVonne Fox

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Benefits of Being Active.....	2
Choosing an RV Park: Being Active.....	3
Benefits of Safety Features.....	4
Choosing an RV Park: Safety Features.....	5
Occupational Therapy.....	6
References.....	7

Choosing an RV Park: For Snowbirds

Introduction:

If you notice that you have marked “No” more than “Yes” on the checklist, the RV Park may not be right for you.

Choosing an RV park is an important decision for you, as a snowbird, to make. To help you decide which park is best for you, checklists were created for you to use to help you when choosing an RV park. The checklists look at what things the park has to offer that may make them a more safe and healthy environment for you. The goal is for you to be able to have an active and healthy daily routine, and for you to be able to continue to seasonally migrate for as long as you want. Choosing a park that is safe and meets your needs may help you to do that.



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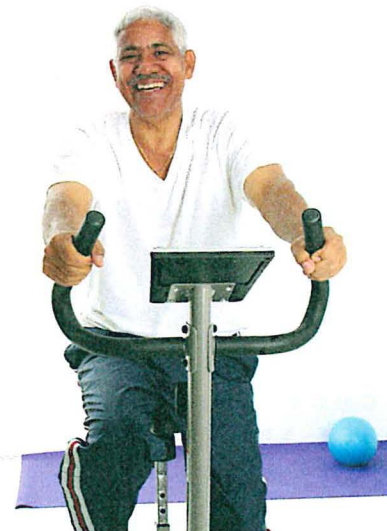
Benefits of Being Active

- Staying healthy and being active is important because it helps you stay strong and healthy as you age. Being healthy and active may also help increase your physical abilities. Finding an RV park that has exercise classes, and or activities, may help you to stay healthy, active, and able remain a snowbird for longer.
- Having social programs that you find to be enjoyable is important. Being social and active has been linked to improving your health.
- Having public transportation close to your park, or having your own personal vehicle, allows you to get around in your community easier. It also provides you with more choices for activities in the community.



Choosing an RV Park: Being Active

	Yes	No
Does the park have recreational programs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the park have social programs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a place to exercise in the RV park?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the RV park have any exercise classes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there public transportation close by?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are lots big enough to fit your RV and one vehicle?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Benefits of Safety Features

- Having enough light around the park and your RV lot, may help you to see where you are walking. This can decrease your chances of tripping and falling.
- Having paved surfaces that are flat help reduce the risk of tripping.
- Having enough space around your RV, and having a clear path to your hookup site, may lower your chances of tripping and falling.
- Decrease clutter, such as yard decorations, in your RV lot to help lower your risk of tripping.
- Choosing a park that is well-kept, may reduce the chances of you falling. Be aware of loose gravel, overgrown plants, and cluttered yard decorations.
- Having places to sit around the park allows you to take a rest break when needed.
- There are rules for facilities to help them create buildings so that people with different levels of ability are able to enter and use all that the building has to offer. It would be helpful to find an RV park that follows these rules so that you are able to get into and use the buildings now and in the future. These rules are under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.
- Having front load washers and dryers are suggested for older adults, as they are easier to reach and use. Having laundry tables allow for more space to safely fold laundry.

Choosing an RV Park: Safety Features

	Yes	No
Is there enough light to see at night when it is dark?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there paved walking surfaces?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you able to safely get to your hookups?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the landscape well-kept?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there areas to sit and rest around the park?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If you were in a wheelchair, would you be able to safely get into all of the buildings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the laundry room have front load washers and dryers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there tables to safely fold clothes in the laundry room?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Occupational Therapy

Occupational therapy is a job that helps people to be able to do activities that they love to do, like seasonal migration. Occupational therapists are trained to be able to look at a person's environment and find areas that they can change to make them safer. They are also able to help people change the way they do things to make them safer.

Occupational therapists may help you to be more active and safe in your RV park environment. They may do this by changing the way you get around in the RV park.

Occupational therapists may also help identify safety concerns in the RV park to prevent or reduce your chances of falling.

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- Masotti, P.J., Fick, R., Johnson-Masotti, A., & MacLeod, S. (2006). Healthy naturally occurring retirement communities: A low-cost approach to facilitating health aging. *American Journal of Public Health, 94*(7), 1164-1170.

HASELKAMP-STYLES

Objectives:

- To understand the importance of creating a safe environment for your residents so that they can engage in their habits and routines within your park.
- To understand how to use the checklists for evaluating your RV Park.
- To understand different ways to make your current RV Park safer.
- To learn about occupational therapists and ways they can help you make your RV Park more safe for your residents.

Creating an RV Park: RV

Park Owners



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By Stephanie Haselkamp and Jenny Styles
University of North Dakota Occupational
Therapy Students
Advisor: Dr. LaVonne Fox

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Outdoor Environment and Checklist.....	2-3
Ways to Design or Modify Your RV Park	4
Indoor Environment and Checklists	5-7
Ways to Improve Your Indoor Environment	8
Providing Activities and Resources and Checklist.....	9-10
Ideas of Activities and Resources	11
Occupational Therapists.....	12
Resources.....	13

Introduction

When creating or adapting an RV Park, it is important to keep in mind your residents. For the most part, many RV Parks have large numbers of older adults living there. This group of people has a natural decline in strength, balance, and reaction time as they age. This group of people is also more likely to fall if the right precautions are not taken to prevent falls.

The outdoor and indoor environment can impact older adults' chances of falling. Because of this, checklists were created by occupational therapists to help you look at the safety of the outdoor and indoor environment of your RV Park. The checklists will also help you to look at:

- the laundry and bathroom facilities,
- the programs that you offer, and,
- other available resources.

You can also use the checklists to modify your current RV Park to better meet the needs of your residents and help them to participate in healthy routines. Using these checklists will keep your residents safe and increase the use of your park.

Outdoor Environment

Almost half of the falls that happen each year occur outside. Most of those falls occur as a result of hazards in the community.

Hazards include:

- Uneven walking surfaces
- Loose gravel
- Long grass
- Stairs
- Slippery surfaces
- Poor outdoor lighting

Use the following checklists to examine your outdoor and indoor environment of your RV Park. If you have marked “NO” more than “YES”, the RV Park may need to be modified to better meet your residents’ needs. After each checklist, there is a list of ways to make changes that will increase your residents’ safety.

Checklist for Outdoor Environment

The reasons for making the changes identified in this checklist are on the next page.

	Yes	No
Is there enough light throughout the park for your residents to walk safely when it is dark?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all walking surfaces even?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there paved walking trails around the park?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a limit to the amount of clutter allowed in residents' yards?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the landscape well-kept to avoid falls?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there seats around the park for your residents to take a rest on when walking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are RV hookups easy to get to when an RV is parked?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there plants with bright colors and scents around the park?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are lot sizes at least 30 feet wide by 80 feet long to allow plenty of room for your residents to safely walk around their lots?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Ways to Design or Modifying your RV Park

- Make sure there is enough light around the park so that your residents can see where they are walking at night. This will help to prevent falls and lawsuits.
- Research has shown that paved smooth surfaces reduce the risk of falls. When possible, try to avoid gravel or other types of material that requires a large amount of maintenance. It is also helpful to clearly mark the distance and level of difficulty of walking paths so that residents can determine if the path is appropriate for them.
- You can take an active role in reducing your residents' risk of falls by maintaining the landscape. Make sure your grass and bushes are always trimmed. Planting plants with vibrant colors and scents is attractive to the older population.
- Provide comfortable seating around the park. This will allow your residents to take a rest break when they are walking around.
- Make sure your hookups are easy to get to. Most of your residents are older and have a harder time getting to those hard to reach places.
- Make sure that your lot sizes are at least 30 feet wide by 80 feet long. This will increase your residents' safety when walking around their lots. You can also reduce the amount of items allowed in your residents' lots to increase their walking safety. Having cluttered yards is a safety hazard.

Indoor Environments: Looking at Your Facilities

Your residents may also be at an increased risk of falling inside of your facilities if there are safety hazards.

Common hazards include:

- Scatter rugs
- Bathroom mats without rubber backing
- Flimsy grab bars
- Hard to reach shower heads
- Washers and dryers that require too much bending to use

Checklist for Indoor Environment: Laundry Room

	Yes	No
Is there at least one entrance without stairs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there an automatic door system for hands free entry?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the door width entering the laundry room at least 36 inches wide?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there at least 5 feet of open space within the entry?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there front load washers and dryers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

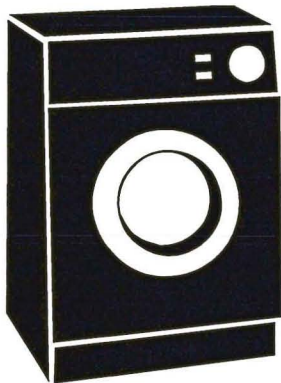


Image from Microsoft Office Clipart

Checklist for Indoor Environment:

Bathroom

	Yes	No
Are there handicap accessible bathroom stalls?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there grab bars in all of the bathroom stalls?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the toilet seats at least 17-19 inches above the ground?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there handicap accessible shower stalls?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there grab bars in all of the shower stalls?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the thresholds entering all showers less than half an inch?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there built-in shower chairs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there hand-held shower heads in the shower?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the bathroom sinks accessible from a seated position?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there lever handled faucets?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Ways to Improve Your Indoor Environment

The checklists for the laundry room and bathroom were created following recommendations from AARP and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. AARP is a non-profit organization that adults age 50 and older can be a part of. This organization supports independence for older adults. Go to AARP.org for more information about how to make your facilities more user friendly for older adults.

Quick Tips:

- Front load washers and dryers are easier for older adults to use because they do not have to bend as far down to retrieve their clothes. This would make doing laundry safer for the residents.
- Having a place to fold laundry that is also low enough for a person to sit while doing it, would help older adults to conserve energy while folding their laundry.

Providing Activities and Resources

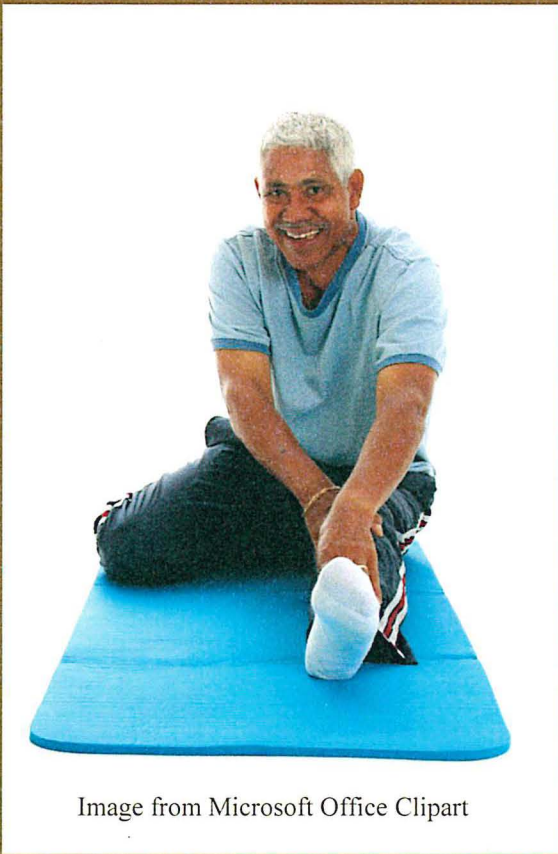


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- To help your residents stay strong and healthy, provide fitness classes and fitness centers. Maintaining strength will help reduce your residents' risk of falling. It will also allow them to keep coming back to your park.
- Research supports that keeping older adults socially active increases their happiness.
- It is recommended to provide a large range of community activities to help your residents be more socially active. They will also be more likely to recommend your park to others.
- All of these recommendations will help your residents to develop healthy habits and routines, which will increase their overall physical and mental performance.

Providing Activities and Resources : Checklist

	Yes	No
Are there recreational programs at your park?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there an exercise group?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there workout classes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a fitness facility?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, is the building accessible for people who are wheel-chair bound?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there social activities offered in the park?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there public transportation within walking distance to the park?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a centrally located bulletin board that would allow your residents to stay up to date with community events?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are signs around the park in large and bold font?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Ideas of Activities and Resources

- Making signs with large print and bold font make it easier for residents, who may have visual impairments, to read.
- Being near public transportation provides those residents who are unable or unwilling to drive, the chance to use services outside the RV park.
- Having a centrally located bulletin board, where recreational events can be posted, allows for residents to know where to look to see upcoming events.

- Shuffleboard
- Potlucks
- Bowling League
- Pilates
- Tai Chi
- Walking Club
- Bingo
- Card Club
- Group Water Aerobics
- Dances
- Yoga
- Exercise Classes



Occupational Therapists

Occupational therapy is a job that helps people to be able to do activities that they love to do, like seasonal migration. Occupational therapists are trained to be able to look at a person's environment and find areas that they can change to make them safer. They are also able to help people change the way they do things to make them safer.

Occupational therapists may help you to make your park more safe for your residents by identifying hazards throughout your park. Another way they can help you to create a safer environment is by suggesting programs and activities that will keep your residents healthy and strong. Contact your local hospital to reach an occupational therapist.

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Objectives:

- To understand the snowbirds' environment and their unique needs.
- To understand how theory was used to create the checklists.
- To understand how to use the checklists for evaluating the snowbirds' environment.
- To identify ways in which occupational therapists can help snowbirds.

Evaluating the Snowbird Environment: Occupational Therapy



Permission Obtained from John MacDonald (2012)

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University of North Dakota Occupational
Therapy Students
Advisor: Dr. LaVonne Fox

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Using Theory as a Guide	2-3
The RV Environment	4
The RV Park Environment	5
How to Use the Checklists.....	6
Ways to Help Snowbirds	7
Occupational Therapy: RV Home Evaluation Checklist.....	Appendix A
Occupational Therapy: RV Park Evaluation Checklist.....	Appendix B
References.....	8-9

Introduction

Home evaluations are not a new concept for occupational therapists. Occupational therapists are experts at evaluating a persons' context and adapting and or modifying the environment to better fit their needs. Although the idea of home evaluations are not new for this profession, doing a home evaluation in a recreational vehicle (RV) is. With the aging population in the United States, and their desire to age within their homes and natural contexts, occupational therapists will need to be able to evaluate all of the different types of contexts in which they choose to live.

According to Happel and Hogan (2002), over the past couple of decades, a growing number of older adults have joined the popular trend of seasonal winter migration to the Sunbelt states. These older adults, of retirement age, are commonly referred to as "snowbirds" (Happel & Hogan, 2002). Because many of these snowbirds are choosing to reside in RVs, occupational therapists should become familiar with this particular environment and its unique needs in regards to the population that resides in them. To meet this need, checklists were created for occupational therapists to use when conducting evaluations in the snowbirds' environment.

Using Theory as a Guide

The Model of Human Occupation (MOHO) and the Ecological Model of Human Performance (EHP) were used to guide the development of a product to meet the specific needs of the snowbird population. These two models were chosen because of their compatibility with the snowbirds unique characteristics and context.

MOHO

MOHO, an occupation-based model developed by Kielhofner, served as a guide throughout the creation of these checklists in determining how *volition*, *habituation*, and *performance capacity* influenced the snowbirds' participation in the occupation of seasonal migration.

Volition, coined by Kielhofner, is related to one's choice or will to engage in activities (Kielhofner, 2009). Climate, health benefits, and social and physical activities have been known to motivate snowbirds to continue to engage in seasonal migration (Bjelde & Sanders, 2010).

Habituation, refers to the patterns of behaviors that are within an occupation (Kielhofner, 2009). While in their Sunbelt states, the snowbirds develop habits and routines that revolve around the communities in which they reside. The snowbirds network with other residents in their communities and develop an active and social lifestyle. These patterns further increase their motivation to continue participating (Bjelde & Sanders, 2010). The following checklists were created to help snowbirds establish safer habits, routines, and behaviors.

Performance capacity, is the physical and mental abilities that underlie performance in occupations (Kielhofner, 2009). Considering the snowbirds are part of the elderly population, they too will experience a natural decline in their physical and cognitive abilities. With this decline in performance capacity, the snowbird population is at an increased risk for falls. Through the use of these checklists, the occupational therapists will better be able to make modifications to match the snowbirds performance capacities.

EHP

The EHP model focuses on the relationship between the person, task, and the context. Through this relationship, a person's performance range is dependent upon a person's ability, the task at hand, and the context. The snowbirds' motivation, tasks, and context were analyzed throughout the creation of the checklists in an effort to encompass their unique needs related to continued participation in seasonal migration. The intervention strategies such as establishing/restoring, adapting/modifying, altering, preventing, and/or creating were used to create the following checklists (Cole & Tufano, 2008).

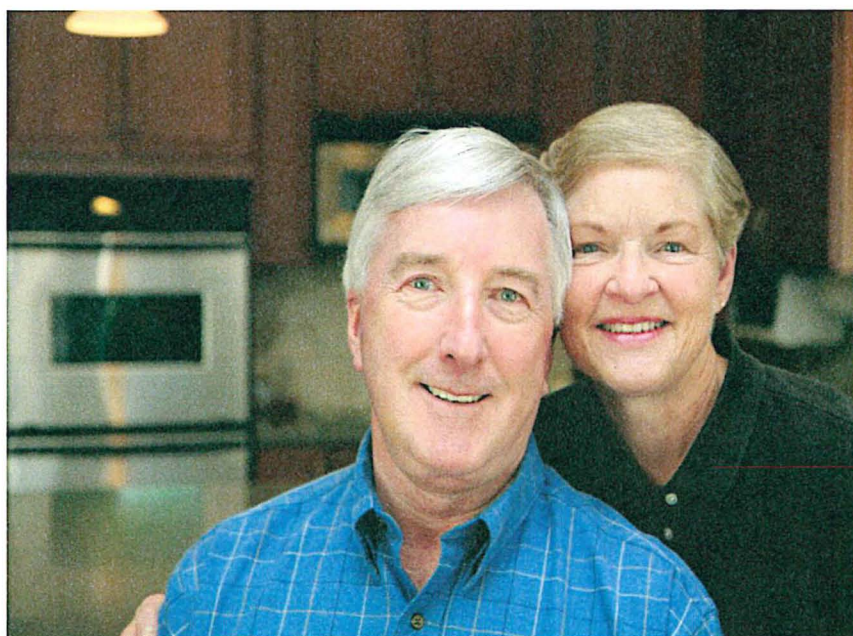


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The RV Environment

Unique environmental risks exist for the snowbird population. The snowbirds' compact living arrangement provides barriers for safe ambulation. This increases their likelihood of falls, especially for those with assistive devices or who are physically impaired. The snowbirds' tight living quarters also limits the number of modifications that may be made to facilitate aging-in-place. Typical homes may be modified with grab bars and shower chairs; however, the RV homes may not be as compatible. These factors place the snowbirds at a unique disadvantage when compared to the rest of the aging population.

While there are aging-in-place guidelines for adapting a home, there are currently no guidelines for adapting RVs. According to AARP (2008), a well-designed home, or one that has been adapted to meet the needs of individuals of all ages and disabilities, includes the following features:

- At least one entry-way into the home without stairs
- Entrance door widths at least 36 inches wide, interior doors at least 34 inches wide, hallways at least 42 inches wide
- Light switches, outlets, and thermostats at a height that can be reached from a wheelchair level
- Lever-style door knobs/faucets
- Reinforced bathroom walls that would allow for installation of grab bars if necessary

Considering the physical modifications that would need to occur in an RV to meet the accommodations of persons with a physical disability, many of these changes would not be plausible to an RV. As a result, snowbirds would benefit from the services of an occupational therapist who is skilled at analyzing and modifying the environment, or providing compensation strategies to meet the individual's needs.

Along with the creation of these checklists, other checklists were created as well. Two checklists were created that are meant to be used by the snowbirds when choosing an RV and an RV park. The other checklist that was created was for RV park owners to use to evaluate the RV park environment. This checklist also provides ideas of how to modify an RV park, or create a new one to best meet the snowbirds' needs. You may use these checklists and give them to the snowbirds as necessary.

The RV Park Environment

Half of the general population's falls occur in the outdoor environment (Li, Keegan, Sternfield, Sidney, Quesenberry, & Kelsey, 2006). Most outdoor falls occur as a result of environmental hazards of the neighborhood or community. Those hazards include uneven outdoor surfaces such as: sidewalks, parking lots, gravel, or grassy terrain (Li et al., 2006). Stairs in both indoor and outdoor environments have also been shown to be hazardous for the elderly population. In addition, poor outdoor lighting, and slippery surfaces secondary to weather conditions, may also put older adults at a greater risk for falls (Li et al., 2006).

According to Mings and McHough (1989), many residents of RV communities personalize their yards by adding yard decorations. This, along with the close arrangement of RV lots, increases the snowbirds' likelihood of falling. In addition, the stairs that are required to enter most RVs are often narrow and without handrails, adding to the risk of falls (Startzell, Owens, Mulfinger, & Cavanagh, 2000). Lastly, the gravel terrain that encompasses the majority of RV park surfaces may also be a hazard. Considering walking is the most commonly reported physical leisure activity across all age groups, and the greatest percentage of falls outdoors occurs while walking, greater attention should be paid to the outdoor environment (Chippendale & Bear-Lehman, 2011). This may be done through environmental modifications.



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How to use the Checklists

To help you address the unique needs of the RV and RV park environments, the following checklists may be used as a guide.

An additional comments section is provided to assist you in noting specific features of the environment that are hazardous. The checklists also allow for you to better match the snowbirds' performance capacity to their unique environments.

The two checklists are provided for you in Appendices A and B. The checklists focus on:

1. Evaluating the RV park and;
2. Evaluating the RV home.



Ways to Help Snowbirds

You can help snowbirds in many different ways.

- You can get involved with Park Owners or RV designers to help them modify an existing environment, or create a new environment, that best meets the needs of the snowbird population.
- You can help snowbirds choose an RV and RV park that would best meet their needs now and in the future.
- You can go into existing RVs and assist snowbirds in modifying or adapting their environments to make them safer and more accessible. This would allow them to age-in-place and continue to engage in their important occupation of seasonal migration.
- You can go into an existing RV and teach snowbirds how to adapt or modify the way that they get around and engage in occupations within the RV to make them safer.
- You can create and lead programs within the RV Park that would promote health and wellness.

Resources for more ideas:

American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA.org)

The AARP home fit guide. (<http://www.aarp.org>)

Addressing these areas would help prevent falls and injuries within this population. It would also allow the snowbirds to continue to engage in their meaningful occupation of seasonal migration. Addressing the environment to better meet their needs would also increase their performance range and would allow them to engage in more activities within their natural environments.

Appendix A

Occupational Therapy: RV Home Evaluation Checklist

Conducting a Home evaluation in an RV	Yes	No	Comments
Entrance to RV:			
Is there an outdoor motion sensor light?			
Is there a grab bar at the entrance?			
Is there more than one entrance to the RV?			
Do the stairs entering the RV have a handrail?			
Main living area (Kitchen, dining room and living room):			
Do the counters have round corners?			
Are the counter tops accessible from a seated position?			
Is the sink accessible from a seated position?			
Is the stove accessible from a seated position?			
Is the microwave at counter height?			
Does the sink have a lever faucet?			
Are there lever handles on all of the cabinets/cupboards?			
Is the refrigerator a side-by-side design?			
Does the dining room table have removable chairs?			
Is the living room furniture removable?			
Is the main living area free of clutter, scatter rugs, or other tripping hazards?			
Bathrooms:			
Are there grab rails around the toilet?			
Is the toilet seat at least 17-19 inches above the ground?			

Is there a shower?			
If yes, is the threshold no more than half an inch in height?			
Is there a tub?			
Are there grab rails in the shower/tub?			
Is there a built-in shower/tub chair?			
Are there hand-held shower heads in the shower/tub?			
Is there a non-slip shower mat in the shower/tub?			
Are all of the rugs in the bathroom made with rubber backing to reduce the risk of falls?			
Is the bathroom vanity accessible from a seated position?			
Are there lever handled faucets?			
Bedroom:			
Is the mattress height at least 22-27 inches above the ground?			
Are there 36 inches of walking space around each side of the bed?			
Can you hang clothing in the closet from a seated position?			
Are there lever handles on the closet doors?			
Are there lever handles on the dresser drawers?			
Is the bedroom free of clutter and scatter rugs?			
Common Accessories throughout the RV:			
Are the door widths entering and within the RV at least 36 inches wide?			
Is the RV layout free of stairs?			
Are the light switches within reach from a seated position?			
Are the outlets within reach from a seated position?			
Is there adequate lighting throughout the RV?			

Appendix B

Occupational Therapy: RV Park Evaluation Checklist

Conducting an RV Park Evaluation	Yes	No	Comments
Outdoor Environment			
Is there enough light throughout the park for the snowbirds to walk safely when it is dark?			
Are there plants with vibrant colors and scents around the park to stimulate individuals with sensory impairments?			
Is the landscape well maintained to prevent falls?			
Are there paved walking trails throughout the park?			
Is the surface that the snowbirds will be walking on even?			
Are the lot sizes at least 30 feet wide by 80 feet long?			
Are the RV hookups easily accessible?			
Is there seating throughout the park for the snowbirds to take a rest break when walking?			
Programs Offered			
Are there recreational programs available at the park that would allow for social participation and leisure exploration?			
Is there an exercise group available that promotes health and wellness?			
If yes, are there workout classes available for all levels of abilities?			
Is there a place within the park for snowbirds to go and exercise on their own?			
If yes, is the building accessible for persons of all abilities?			
Laundry Facilities			
Is there at least one entrance without stairs?			
Is there an automatic door system for hands free entry?			
Is the door width entering the laundry facility at least 36 inches wide?			

Is there at least 5 feet of open space within the entry?			
Are there front load washers and dryers?			
Is there a counter top space that is low enough to fold laundry from a seated position?			
Bathroom Facilities			
Is there at least one entrance without stairs?			
Is there an automatic door system for hands free entry?			
Is the door width entering the bathroom at least 36 inches wide?			
Is there at least 5 feet of open space within the entry?			
Are there handicap accessible bathroom stalls?			
Are there grab bars in all of the bathroom stalls?			
Are the toilet seats at least 17-19 inches above the ground?			
Are there handicap accessible shower stalls?			
Are there grab bars in all of the shower stalls?			
Are there thresholds entering the showers less than half an inch?			
Are there built-in shower chairs?			
Are there hand-held shower heads in the showers?			
Are the bathroom sinks accessible from a seated position?			
Are there lever handled faucets?			
Available Resources			
Is there public transportation within walking distance to the park?			
If yes, is the public transportation accessible for individuals of varying disabilities?			

Is there a centrally located bulletin board that would allow the snowbirds to stay up to date with community events?			
Are signs around the park in large and bold font?			

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CHAPTER V

Summary

The purpose of this scholarly project is to enable the snowbird population to participate in seasonal migration for as long as they desire by creating a safe environment for aging-in-place. The literature review, identified that while the snowbirds greatly value their experiences traveling south during the winter months, they fear the time when they will be unable to continue migrating. The snowbirds feel that this loss in occupation would also lead to a loss of occupational identity (McHugh & Mings, 1996). Considering the snowbirds' immediate environment posed unique challenges compared to the rest of the aging population, literature was reviewed on ways to facilitate aging-in-place.

The product, created through this scholarly project, addresses the environments of the snowbird population in an effort to increase the snowbirds' safety and independence. Both the snowbirds' indoor and outdoor environments were analyzed and compared to guidelines recommended by AARP and ADA. The series of checklists within the product are created for the snowbirds, RV park owners, and occupational therapists; with the intention that each separate audience may use their series of checklists independent of the other series, or as a combination approach. There is also a role for OT with each audience.

Possible Implementation

There are several ways this product can be implemented to facilitate aging-in-place for the snowbird population. Occupational therapists can take an active role in

implementing a falls prevention program in an RV park, by using the series of checklists created in this product for that purpose. Using a fee-for-service reimbursement strategy, occupational therapists can conduct RV home evaluations, provide wellness classes aimed at falls prevention, and provide consultation services for RV park owners. The purpose of the product is to guide the users in considering aspects of the immediate environment that may not be conducive to the snowbird population's aging needs.

Limitations

There were several limitations in completing this scholarly project:

1. There is limited research in general on the snowbird population and their unique living environment.
2. The research that is present is dated and mainly limited to the Arizona region.
3. There is also a lack of research connecting OT's role with the snowbird population. As a result, much of the literature found represents retirement communities, the elderly population, and OT's role with aging-in-place. Therefore, the literature has been generalized and applied to the snowbird population, as a whole, to best identify their unique needs.
4. Due to the lack of a tracking system, there is limited statistical evidence on the amount of individuals who actually participate in seasonal migration. This can impact the credibility of the need for a program for this particular population. However, it is well-known that many individuals do participate in this occupation.

5. While many of the potential safety hazards are identified through the use of the checklists, they are not all inclusive. For instance, cognitive deficits were not addressed.

Conclusion

Although limitations are present, there is a need to begin discussing the needs of this population. Demographic changes indicate that the baby boomers are going to engage in seasonal migration in larger numbers. As a result, RV park communities and healthcare professionals, need to begin preparing for this. Occupational therapists can take an active role in preventing injuries and supporting independence for this population by providing RV home and park evaluations so that snowbirds can truly enjoy their valued occupation for as long as they desire.

Recommendations

There are several recommendations for future studies:

1. Future researchers may wish to focus on the driving aspect of seasonal migration. This is also a large part of the snowbirds' experience and it could not be addressed within the confines of this product.
2. Researchers may choose to create a protocol for increasing independence with the occupation of driving while hauling an RV. Health related recommendations for traveling with large vehicles and complex health factors could be provided.
3. It would also be beneficial for researchers to conduct a rigorous quantitative study on the benefits of implementing a falls prevention

program within an RV environment to determine the effects of utilizing the tools that were created in this scholarly project.

4. Future programs may also be made to target RV developers to help them design an RV that incorporates AARP guidelines and a universal design. Because of the cramped space of RVs, and the type of material that they are often made out of, adapting and modifying them is difficult and not always feasible. That is why designing RVs that meet these needs would be desirable. Occupational therapists could provide consultation services to RV developers to create safer RV home environments and support aging-in-place. The occupational therapist could use the checklists from this scholarly project as a guide to create a new checklist that would target the RV developers.
5. Occupational therapists may wish to adapt this product as the snowbird population grows and their needs change. For instance, occupational therapists may choose to provide recommendations for individuals with cognitive impairments.

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