

Reinventing the Senior Center Experience: Rufty Holmes Leads the Way



By Bonnie Jones, Marketing & Media Manager at Rufty Holmes Senior Center, Salisbury

Gone are the days when senior centers were merely places for older adults to gather, play cards and pass the time. Our area Senior Centers have embraced the role of Senior Center Reinventor, offering dynamic programs, fitness, impactful partnerships, and engaging travel opportunities that enrich the lives of older adults.

Beyond Socializing: A Hub for Enrichment and Adventure

While socialization remains an important part of what we do, Senior Centers are far more than just a gathering place. Some seniors embark on day trips and some enjoy two to three multi-day trips per year, including an international excursion. Whether it's a day trip to a museum or vineyard or a multi-day journey abroad, our travel opportunities are a testament to the active and adventurous spirit of today's seniors.

Community Partnerships That Make a Difference

Engagement with the broader community is a key part of our mission. We have established meaningful partnerships that allow older adults to learn, mentor and grow alongside others.

★Conversation Partners with UNC Charlotte

This innovative program connects college students from the Gerontology Department with seniors, fostering intergenerational relationships where students gain valuable insights while seniors serve as mentors. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, proving that knowledge and wisdom flow both ways.

★Rowan Literacy Council Partnership

Addressing a critical need in our community, we stepped up to mentor other adults who struggle with reading. This year, 40 individuals applied for assistance and Rufty-Holmes proudly answered the call.

Essential Services for Health, Independence, and Well-Being

We are deeply committed to ensuring that seniors have access to the resources they need to live independently and with dignity. Our programs provide crucial support, making daily life easier for older adults.

★CARS Program: Transportation for Independence

Many older adults struggle with transportation, which can lead to missed medical appointments and isolation. Our CARS (Connecting Across Rowan for Seniors) program provides transportation to essential destinations such as: medical appointments, grocery stores, banks, etc. Last year, we provided 758 rides, ensuring that seniors could access the services they need.

★HOME Program: Safety Starts at Home

The ability to remain safely in one's home is a priority for many older adults. Our HOME program provides critical home repairs such as: wheelchair ramps, repairing unstable porches, and installing handrails and grab bars. By enhancing home safety, we help seniors age in place with confidence and security.

• Lunch Club Program: Nourishing Bodies and Spirits

Nutrition and socialization go hand in hand at our Lunch Club sites – all at no cost to those aged 60 and over. This program is about more than just food; it's an opportunity for older adults to connect, engage, and avoid isolation.

• Caregiver Support Program

Caring for a loved one can be overwhelming, and caregivers often need time to rest and recharge. We partner with local agencies to provide respite services, giving caregivers the support they need.

• SHIIP Program: Navigating Medicare with Confidence

Understanding Medicare options can be complex, but our Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) provides free, unbiased guidance. Whether seniors are new to Medicare or looking for a better plan, our 30-minute appointments can save seniors money.

• Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program

Tax season can be stressful, but our VITA program ensures that seniors receive free tax preparation services from January through mid-April to help older adults navigate tax season with ease.

A Senior Center for the Future

We are not just redefining what a senior center can be – we are leading the way in creating a model for the future. By embracing adventure, fostering education, providing essential services, and building community partnerships, we ensure that older adults have the resources, connections, and experiences they deserve.

If you or someone you know could benefit from our programs, we welcome you to visit us and discover the difference. We are more than a senior center; we are a community of thriving, engaged, and empowered older adults- and we invite you to be a part of it.

★please check your area Senior Center for opportunities available there