



# Health Happens In Libraries



## Hampton Public Library Zumba with Felicia

Hampton, Virginia / Community Size Served: 144,749

**Primary Partners:**

- Hampton Parks and Recreation
- Felicia Davis, Independent Zumba Instructor

### *Community Engagement*

In collaboration with the local Parks and Recreation department, Hampton Public Library sponsored an all-ages Zumba program that got 38 people moving and exercising together at the library. This event was held in June 2015, and was customized for all ages and skill levels by a local Zumba instructor who works frequently with Parks and Recreation to host events at local community centers. During the event, the library was able to cross-promote library and partner resources, including exercise DVDs available for check-out and community calendars for future Zumba opportunities. The high volume and total energy of this free event also drew people in from outside the library, who heard the music and decided to join the fun.

### *Organizing the Event*

Rita Scrivener, Reference Librarian at Hampton Public Library, was inspired to plan an interactive program to provide active learning and civic participation in a way that integrated city services. As a centrally located and visible city department with an established collection of health resources, the library is a natural place to raise awareness of local health resources and events in collaboration with other city departments.

After establishing a relationship with the Wellness Program Coordinator in Parks and Recreation, Rita was connected with Felicia Davis, an experienced community Zumba instructor. Together, and with marketing supporting from Parks and Recreation and the city marketing department, they customized an event held in two combined meeting rooms at the library. Space for the event was made fairly easily by simply moving the furniture out of the way. Safety accommodations were also considered, and participants were asked to sign a waiver acknowledging their participation in and responsibility for individual physical activity.

### *Factors that Contributed to Success*

📍 **Leadership support for innovative programming:** Rita has ongoing support from her library director to implement creative and inclusive programming as part of reference services. The reference department's programming relies on funds donated by the Friends of the Library and outside sources, and leadership support allows reference services to take shape in ways that are most meaningful to the community.

📍 **Reflection on previous activities:** Prior to planning this program, Rita reflected on previous informational sessions the library had provided on topics such as conducting health research online and dietary topics. She realized that attendance and engagement at these events was often limited, likely because they targeted narrow topics and therefore a narrow audience. By shifting a program focus to an activity for all ages and skills, active community engagement became the primary attraction, with relevant health information a secondary benefit for participants.

## Top 3 Tips

Rita shared the following tips for libraries interested in planning their own community health activities:

- 📍 **Consider a series of events:** When planning an event, if resources or capacity allow, try to line up a series of events to keep the momentum going. People often hear about programs through word of mouth, so having future events scheduled creates more opportunity for more engagement.
- 📍 **Establish goals, not anchors:** Let the event goals be your guides, not your anchors. Every community and partnership is different. Establish parameters for what you hope to achieve, but allow for flexibility in the process of getting there.
- 📍 **Ask good questions:** Ask your partners early and often, “What can we do for you?” As reciprocal relationships, partnerships can expand organizational capacity in many ways. Be sure to take the time to have those conversations with current or potential partners.

## Looking Forward

In response to a brief follow-up survey for the event, participants expressed a desire for more exercise opportunities at the library, including Zumba and yoga instruction, as well as nutrition resources. Hampton Public Library and the Parks and Recreation department will continue to collaborate to bring future fitness and nutrition instruction to the library. In planning this event, the library was connected to several other community-based organizations that provide wellness support, including the Hampton Senior Center. The library and Senior Center are now working together to cross-promote resources and events.

“*Health programming at the library is an opportunity for community members to have an experience together. Strictly informational programs, while useful, might attract a more self-selected audience. As we learned in providing our Zumba class, activities and events for all ages and skill levels truly excite and positively surprise patrons and partners, and pave the way for them to learn more about all the library has to offer.*”

–Rita Scrivener, Reference Librarian, Hampton Public Library