

## Coaches Are the Cornerstone of A Matter of Balance Success



### *Program Graduates Have Tools to Avoid Becoming Covid Couch Potatoes*

By Jennifer Davis

As we follow the advice to stay at home during the Covid-19 pandemic, maintaining exercise as part of the daily routine is challenging for all of us. It may be particularly difficult for older people with limited mobility due to disabilities, or who may be afraid of falling. Graduates of [A Matter of Balance \(MOB\)](#) may well be the exception.

MOB is a program designed to reduce the fear of falling and increase activity levels among older adults. It includes eight two-hour sessions for a small group of 8-12 participants led by a trained facilitator. This nationally recognized program was developed at the Roybal Center at Boston University.

Participants who benefit from MOB are part of the equation that explains the program's success. The other, and arguably the most important part are the coaches who run the programs. Without their time, effort, and commitment this beneficial program would not be possible. Jousette Anaya, Wellness Pathways Program Coordinator for [Greater Lynn Senior Services](#) is one of those individuals.

Jousette is a retired therapist/minister who is particularly interested in working within underserved communities. She has served as an MOB trainer for a year and sees firsthand the program's value in promoting good health among older people by keeping them active.

Jousette describes a participant in one of her workshops who had such a hard time getting out of her chair. By working with her, the coaches were able to develop a method to help her get up from her seat, and with coaching she was able to get up at the first try. "I see the big difference it makes in their lives," says Jousette. "By the end of the eight weeks you see the change in how much more movement they have."

She goes on to say, "The social aspect of the program is huge. Participants love meeting new people and learning how to stay or get healthy. They are open to learning new things and love that they can do more once they practice what they have learned."

Jousette is a MOB Master Trainer, which means she is trained to both lead workshops and train other coaches. This "train the trainer" model is essential for ongoing sustainability of the program. Master trainers are able to: recruit and train volunteers to lead A Matter of Balance classes; coordinate the program in their communities; market the program to older people; and evaluate outcomes.

"I am a master trainer which means that I am certified to train leaders to go into the community and teach the MOB class," says Jousette. "My training was an intense 16 hours of course work."

This investment in time has been well worth the effort according to Jousette. "Gratitude, is always present. The participants are happy that we have come out to teach them," she says.

Recruiting and training MOB trainers has been made possible in part by a [grant](#) from [Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation](#). Funding of regional trainings began in September of 2018. Since then, 38 additional Master Trainers in MOB have been trained, for a total of 76 new program practitioners, coaches and master trainers in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine.

A Matter of Balance is an example of the Evidence-Based programs supported by [Elder Services of Merrimack Valley and North Shore's Healthy Living Center of Excellence](#), which means their benefit has been proven or informed by research and evaluation. These programs are designed to promote healthy aging among older people.

