

## A Matter of Balance Albanian Translation, August 2021

By: Steve Anable



We want people to encourage everyone to take charge of their health, which is why we have an ongoing effort to reach as many people as possible, all over Massachusetts. This effort includes offering programs in languages other than English, including Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Albanian. This year, in partnership with the Family Health Center of Worcester, we were the first agency in the nation to host a virtual A Matter of Balance (MOB) program in Albanian.

A Matter of Balance is an Evidence-Based program designed to help older adults prevent falls. The program instructors acknowledge the risk of falling but emphasize practical strategies to cope while reducing fear. These strategies include viewing falls and fear of falling as controllable; setting realistic goals for increasing physical activity; changing the home environment to reduce fall risk factors, such as keeping electrical cords out of highly traveled areas and throwing out throw rugs; and promoting exercise to bolster strength and balance.

To offer the virtual MOB in Albanian, Healthy Living Center Database Specialist Edlira (Edi) Roshi worked with the Family Health Center of Worcester. That city has a large concentration of Albanian Americans living there.

“On the ‘Welcome to Worcester’ sign, the second message, right below the greeting in English, is in Albanian,” says Edi.

Two years ago, the Healthy Living Center was given permission to translate MOB into Albanian. Subsequently, the Family Center of Worcester presented the program successfully using an in-person format. Then COVID-19 appeared, curtailing the schedule.

So, this year, Edi teamed with Teuta Kodra, a 69-year-old retired physician, to migrate the program online. Nine people are taking this pioneer virtual program together, including three couples. The group is meeting for nine sessions, including an introductory session that explains the program, its goals, and the basics of how to use Zoom. Participants use tablets loaned by the Family Health Center. Edi and Teuta review course materials and provide support as they teach the program.

Edi found the class an easy sell because she describes Albanians as highly sociable, enjoying gathering to eat and talk. Still, she keeps the pressure on, stressing that attendees take responsibility to complete their exercises three times per week. Some found this challenging but ultimately rewarding.

One woman remarked to Edi, “You woke me up!” And for Edi, that is exactly the intention of the class.

The virtual program is overcoming some expected cultural issues.

“Albanian women like to get all dressed up, but I told them they can’t go for a walk in the park in high heels, that it’s OK to wear sneakers or comfortable shoes,” Edi says.

In addition, older Albanian men often balk at exercise, so this resistance needed to be addressed. Edi and Teuta emphasized that exercise is for everyone. In addition, all the people in this virtual class were referred by a physician, so that endorsement encouraged successful compliance with instructions.

“The participants constantly thank HLCE for making it possible to them to offer this workshop in Albanian and are looking forward to joining other workshops offered in their language,” Edi says.

Other Healthy Living Center programs include the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program, the Diabetes Self-Management Program, Healthy IDEAS, and the Savvy Caregiver Program. All are presented free of charge.

For information, please visit:

<https://www.healthyliving4eme.org>