

Brain workouts put lobes in the know

February 25, 2016

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JASPER — Tennis balls bounced around the clubhouse at St. Charles Health Campus on Wednesday during the second session of a QualiCare brain workout program.

Qualicare, a home care company, developed the brain workout with help from neurologists at Rochester, Minn.-based Mayo Clinic to help people, particularly elderly people, keep all the sections of their brains active through relaxation, mental, social and physical activity (hence the tennis balls).

“(The Mayo Clinic neurologists) feel like a lot of the elderly are told to do crossword puzzles,” said Amy Gehlhausen, owner of Qualicare of Southwest Indiana in Jasper. “But what they have found is that much more plays into your brain working than just word searches.”

Each activity in the brain workout is designed to stimulate a different part of the brain. The physical exercise stimulates the frontal lobe, the music works the parietal lobe, the art activates the occipital lobe and the relaxation exercises triggers the temporal lobe. When seniors do only word searches or other puzzles, just one section of the brain is active. The frontal lobe works. The remaining parts idle.

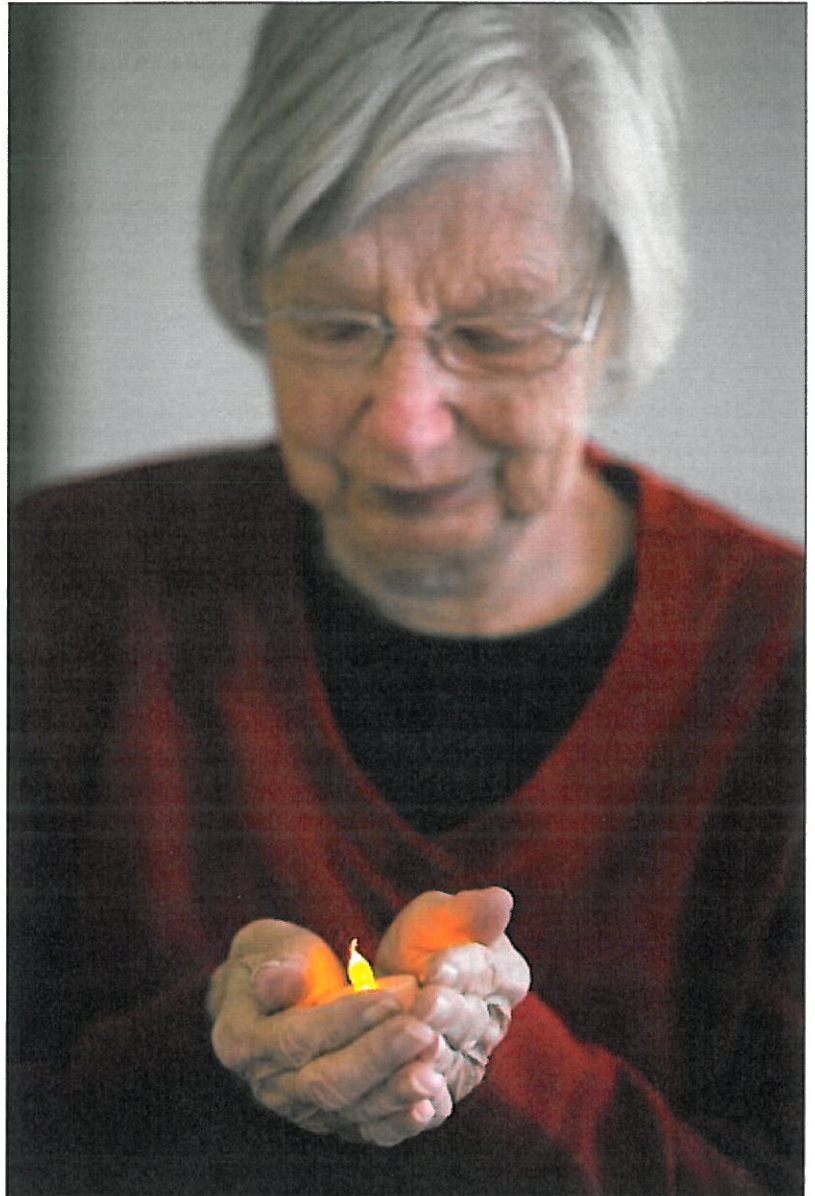
“It’s a very holistic approach” Gelhausen said.

Suzanne Neukam of Dubois and Bonnie Wininger of Jasper were both drawn to the class through curiosity and were glad they attended.

Neukam said the relaxation exercises she learned will help her combat everyday stress. Wininger got some new ideas for brain exercises she can do on her own.

“At my age, I like to stimulate my brain,” she said.

She enjoyed the physical part of the sessions, when the group played with the tennis balls, bouncing them off the floor in a game of catch to improve hand-eye coordination. She figured she could do that at home, too.



Photos by Sarah Ann Jump/The Herald

Suzanne Neukam of Dubois held a battery-powered tea candle as she was guided in a Reiki relaxation exercise by Amy Gehlhausen of Qualicare during Tuesday’s brain workout session at St. Charles Health Campus in Jasper. When thinking of the candle with their eyes closed, participants could sense warmth as though there was a real flame. “It felt peaceful,” Neukam said.

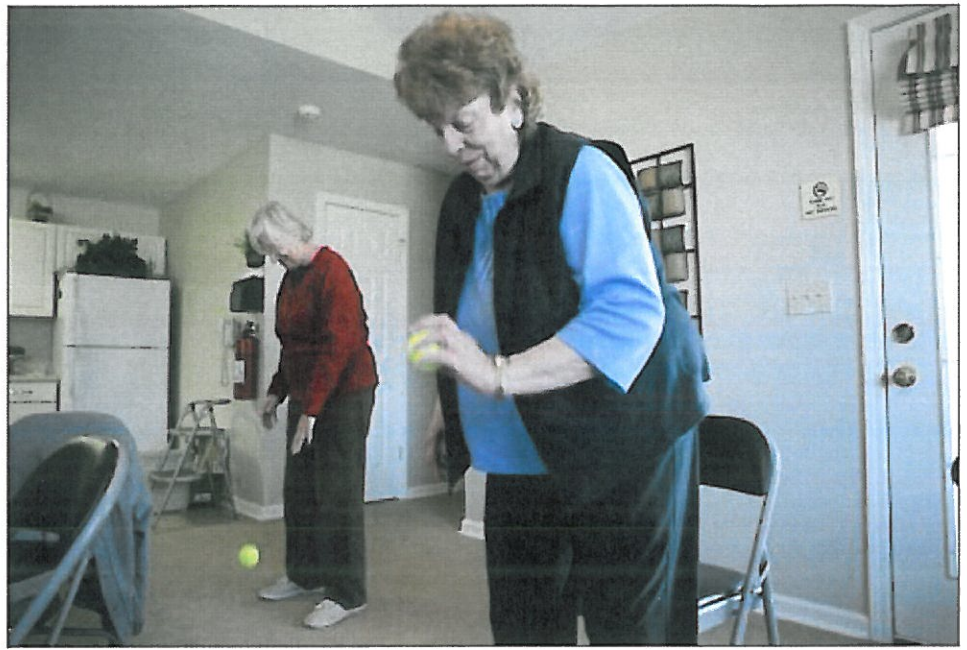
"I'm not very mobile in my walker, but those kind of exercises I can do," she said.

Gehlhausen anticipates the program growing and hopes to eventually have 50 or more regular participants.

Although the sessions are being held at St. Charles Health Campus, they're open to anyone of all ages. The sessions are part of St. Charles' community outreach efforts and are free of charge.

"I think naturally when people think about brain health, we think about the elderly, but there's nothing to say people of any age couldn't come," Gehlhausen said.

Sessions are the last Tuesday of each month at 10 a.m. in the clubhouse at St. Charles Health Campus, 3150 St. Charles St., Jasper.



Suzanne Neukam of Dubois, left, and Bonnie Wining of Jasper bounced tennis balls during Tuesday's brain workout session at St. Charles Health Campus in Jasper.