

AARP Speaks with Leading Advocates for Older Adults Around the World

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Argentina

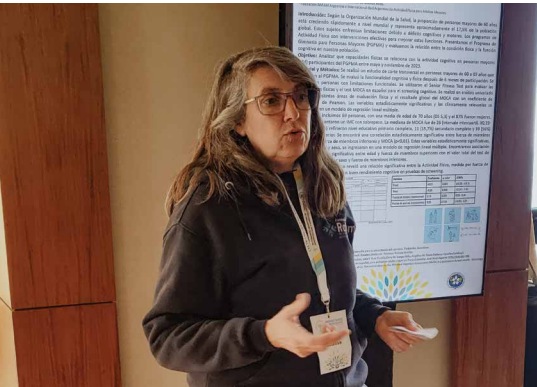
Red de Actividad Física para Adultos Mayores (RAFAM) is an NGO in Argentina that promotes healthy aging and active lifestyles in older adults through physical activity, sports, and recreational activities. Through their programs, RAFAM helps older adults live healthy and independent lifestyles. To learn more about RAFAM, AARP interviewed the founder and director Silvia Maranzano.

AARP How was RAFAM founded?

Silvia Maranzano I founded RAFAM in 2010. I used to teach physical activity classes for seniors, and the project I was developing had a positive impact on the community, attracting a lot of people. But I also heard about the benefits that the older adults commented on since they started in the classes. Thus, I looked into how to scale up this project so it could reach more seniors. That's how I connected with national and international physical activity professionals and I learned the importance of teamwork.

I contacted two professors who also worked with seniors and shared my idea of promoting our projects together. This is how we started networking, taking advantage of the World Days to carry out activities with seniors in public spaces. Along the way, new professionals joined us with their projects.





Enabling seniors to live independently and making it possible for them to solve their everyday problems themselves involves educating the body, movement, and the brain.

But networking was not enough to get the financial resources we needed, so we decided to establish the RAFAM Foundation in Argentina, which has been a legal non-profit organization since 2012. This gives us the proper institutional character and allows us to manage resources, even though it's still difficult in our country.

I co-founded RAFAM with M. de los Ángeles Sangermano and Ernesto Bardelli. We are all physical education teachers and gerontologists with undergraduate and graduatedegrees.

Today RAFAM has become the only “Red de Actividad Física para Adultos Mayores” (Physical Activity Network for Seniors) in the world.

AARP What are the major challenges that older people face in Argentina? How is Red Coenve addressing them?

SM The big challenge for older adults today is that old age has become the longest stage of life and what seniors are looking for is to live healthily. This iss why RAFAM has a great responsibility. Physical exercise is a medicine and working on building healthy habits is a great challenge.

Enabling seniors to live independently and making it possible for them to solve their everyday problems themselves involves educating the body, movement, and the brain. And we achieved these actions with RAFAM's experts through innovative programs such as: Gymnastics and Sports Classes: Newcom, FUTCAM, Badminton, Walking Program: Adopt a Sedentary Person.

AARP How does RAFAM define success? Which of RAFAM's projects has been most successful?

SM We consider it a success when seniors attend the programs and projects we offer. That's the best answer to our goals. But success is also built by enhancing the expertise of each of the specialists we have. Everyone in RAFAM needs to train to be able to work with seniors and create the desired impact.

When we work in a network to carry out an international campaign, it represents a challenge since we all must invite our students to join the event. And we see the commitment not only of the professionals, but also through the attendance of the seniors with their teachers.

AARP How does your team connect with new volunteers? What types of support do these volunteers provide?

SM The volunteers who join RAFAM do so because they see us on social media and identify with us, so they request to join the Network.

They support us through their professional knowledge. That is to say, the Network is interdisciplinary and the work we do is transdisciplinary, which allows us to understand how everyone works with seniors through different disciplines. Volunteers get professional training, visibility for their work, motivation, tools to improve as professionals, and social recognition.

AARP Can you describe a partnership or collaboration that has been especially successful? Who did RAFAM collaborate with? What made the partnership effective?

SM We have agreements with universities, institutions, and organizations. And sometimes, with the government. We are working together with the National University of Avellaneda in the creation of a postgraduate degree that specializes in the active and healthy aging of older adults.

With the Jewish Community Center (AMIA, Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina), we provide training on physical activity for seniors as part of a Caregiver for Older Adults course. With Comahue University, we implemented the XIII National Conference and the IV International Congress on Physical Activity for Healthy Aging 2023.

With the National University of José C Paz, we provided consulting and training to work on projects with the elderly community.

These are just a few examples of the many actions we are taking.

What makes RAFAM effective is that its leadership built and dedicates their lives to studying how to improve the quality of life of seniors. We are recognized for our expertise by institutions of higher education and universities both at the national and international level. Our work is visible and its real impact on the community is known, which guarantees the credibility of the projects and the desire to join our mission and vision.



AARP What are RAFAM's long term goals? What steps are the organization taking to achieve them in the coming years?

SM The long-term goals are:

- Create a national sports plan for older adults
- Have a dedicated space to set up the National Sports Training Center for Older Adults
- Edit the book *Envejecer en Movimiento III* (Aging in Motion III)
- Work to federalize sports for older adults

To achieve them:

We're working on partnerships with organizations that can help us, like the Confederación Argentina de Deportes (Argentine Sports Confederation.) We are looking to finance the book. ●