

Dr. Kosik: 'Cognitive decline is not inevitable' : Cognitive Fitness and Innovative Therapies holds inaugural 'BrainCare' gala

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The program that was once just an idea in the mind of Dr. Kenneth Kosik to help people live a healthier cognitive life celebrated its first anniversary and new, spacious digs on Thursday evening.

Cognitive Fitness and Innovative Therapies, or CFIT, held its inaugural BrainCare For Life: A Community Initiative Gala at its 2409 De la Vina suite offices. Along with entertainment, and hors d'oeuvres, the event was also part art exhibition and part fundraising auction.

"I think what (people) want to walk away with is a sense that there are things that you can do in a very proactive way to keep your brain healthy," said Dr. Kosik, who came from Harvard University to co-direct UCSB's Neuroscience Research Institute. He is also professor of molecular, cellular, and developmental biology. "Cognitive decline is not inevitable."

CFIT's purpose is to promote cognitive health through a variety of therapeutic programs. Clients work out a personalized list of activities that work the cognitive, physical, mental and even spiritual aspects of life. The therapies are accompanied by personalized evaluations and medical history monitoring. CFIT is the first therapeutic program of its kind in the country. Clients can do brain puzzles, get counseled, even play Nintendo's Wii Fit video game, or get tested for genetic factors.

CFIT has been likened to a gym for people who want to work out their brains and delay diseases like Alzheimer's, which, according to recent statistics, affects one in 10 over age 65, and 50 percent of those over 80.

Cognitive impairments have many causes and are affected by many things, among them diet, emotional balance, drugs and genetics.

While the clientele it serves in Santa Barbara is skewed toward senior citizens, CFIT is geared toward all ages, said Dr. Kosik. People can refer themselves into the program, or they can be referred by their physicians. Currently, 50 people are signed up with CFIT.

The grand welcome was attended by many supporters and well-wishers, among them "Mr. Santa Barbara" Larry Crandell, UCSB Chancellor Dr. Henry Yang and Cottage Health System President/CEO Ron Werft.

"This opportunity that we have to work together has never been greater than it is now," said Mr.

Werft. Using resources and research from both the Cottage Hospital system and UCSB, CFIT was hailed as a community collaboration.

"Above and beyond all of this, I think what has moved me more than anything is this community," said Dr. Kosik. "This community stepped up to endorse just simply an idea."