



NEWS RELEASE – Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

Release Date: Tuesday, October 13, 2020

Contact: Jenni Lewis, Community Outreach

F-32 URG PO Box 500

Rio Grande, OH 45674

Phone: 1.800.582.7277, ext. 22224

E-Mail: jlewis@aaa7.org

**AAA7 and Shawnee State University “Fall-Free Fridays”
Episode Features Information About Your Health and Falls**

According to the National Council on Aging, falls remain a leading cause of injury for people aged 65 and older. Falls threaten older adults’ safety and independence and generate enormous economic and personal costs. The good news is that they are preventable and there are proven steps people can take to reduce their risk.

The Area Agency on Aging District 7 (AAA7) recently began featuring “Fall-Free Fridays”, a live, weekly interview with two Shawnee State University (SSU) Occupational Therapy graduate students who provide community education on a falls-related topic and information about falls, risk factors, and helpful prevention tips. The series takes place every Friday at 10:00 am through December 4th on the AAA7 Facebook page.

The last episode on October 9th featured the topic “Your Health and Falls”, presented by SSU Master of Occupational Therapy students Elaina Davenport and LaShae King.

The students shared information about what occupational therapists do and what their goal is in helping people engage in activities that they want or need to do.

The education focused around maintaining your individual health in order to lower the risk of having a fall and what to do if you do have a fall. Being independent at home or in the community is important for people of all ages, but when falls happen, it can create a barrier.

Advice for reducing the risk of falls in the home includes being aware of loose rugs and cords, and making sure the area is well lit. Grab bars are beneficial to install in areas that may be difficult to walk through or maintain balance. Broken, uneven steps and clutter in the house can also increase the risk of a fall.

Physical and behavioral issues can have an impact on fall risk in terms of strength, balance, cognition and confidence. Vision problems can contribute to a risk in falls. It is important to keep up with eye exams and install brighter lights. Side effects from medications, loss of bladder control, chronic illnesses, and leg weakness or numbness such as that experienced with neuropathy can also increase the likelihood of a fall. It is important to talk with your doctor or pharmacist about your individual health issues and side effects from prescription and over-the-counter medications that you take.

If someone has already experienced a fall, the likelihood of falling again increases. Each year, three million older adults are hospitalized for injuries related to a fall and one out of five falls causes serious injuries including broken bones such as arms, wrist, ankles and hip fractures. More than 95% of hip fractures are caused from a fall and brain injuries are quite common as well.

If you fall, make sure you tell your physician. With a fear of falling comes a reduction in exercise, which causes weaker muscles that could affect your balance, so staying active is very important. Falling can also be quite traumatic for mental health with the feeling of losing independence and confidence after a fall. It is important to talk to your physician or healthcare provider about your fear of falling and to ask for help when needed.

To find out if you are at risk for a fall, a healthcare provider can conduct an assessment that will identify personal risk factors for you. Items that can be reviewed during the assessment are the layout of the home, medicines you take, the help you have throughout the day, and health conditions you may be facing.

The AAA7 and SSU OT students are also offering Falls Prevention Coaching for anyone who is interested. To learn more about the coaching, please call Hannah Hollingshead at the AAA7 at 1-800-582-7277, extension 247 or e-mail info@aaa7.org. The coaching can take place over the phone or through a virtual format.

If you missed the live broadcast on October 9th, a recorded version is available on the AAA7 Facebook page or a dedicated page on the AAA7's website for the Fall-Free Fridays education. To find the educational information, log on to www.aaa7.org, click on the "Fall-Free Fridays" box mid-way on the Home Page, and find the date you are looking for.

The next Fall-Free Fridays episode on Friday, October 16th at 10:00 am will feature a discussion about the importance of exercise in the prevention of falls. Two new SSU Master of Occupational Therapy students will present on the topic and be available for questions during the live presentation.

For more information about Fall-Free Fridays, call the AAA7 at 1-800-582-7277 or info@aaa7.org, or Dr. Christine Raber with the Shawnee State University Occupational Therapy Program at (740) 351-3530 or craber@shawnee.edu.

Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. provides services on a non-discriminatory basis. These services are available to help older adults and those with disabilities live safely and independently in their own homes through services paid for by Medicare, Medicaid, other federal and state resources, as well as private pay. The AAA7's Resource Center is also available to anyone in the community looking for information or assistance with long-term care options. Available Monday through Friday from 8:00 am until 4:30 pm, the Resource Center is a valuable contact for learning more about options and what programs and services are available for assistance.

Those interested in learning more can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277 (TTY: 711). Here, individuals can speak directly with a specially-trained Resource Specialist who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs. The Agency also offers an in-home assessment at no cost for those who are interested in learning more. Information is also available on www.aaa7.org, or the Agency can be contacted through e-mail at info@aaa7.org. The Agency also has a Facebook page located at www.facebook.com/AreaAgencyOnAgingDistrict7.

###

