



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

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AAA7 and Shawnee State University
OT Program Partner on “Functional Fridays”

The topic of managing function in your everyday life is the feature of “Functional Fridays,” a weekly livestream presented by the Area Agency on Aging District 7 (AAA7) and the Shawnee State University (SSU) Occupational Therapy program. The series is ongoing each Friday now through April 30th on the AAA7 Facebook page.

Each Friday at 10:00 am, two graduate students in the Occupational Therapy Program at Shawnee State discuss further on a specific topic related to managing function.

According to the American Occupational Therapy Association, occupational therapy is the only profession that helps people across the lifespan to do the things they want and need to do through the therapeutic use of daily activities (occupations). Occupational therapy practitioners enable people of all ages to live life to its fullest by helping them promote health, and prevent—or live better with—injury, illness, or disability. The students in the Occupational Therapy Program at Shawnee State incorporate educating the community as a part of their studies in providing additional resources and information about occupational therapy and the many ways it can be used to help individuals.

During the month of March through the Functional Fridays livestreams, the students discussed a number of topics from everyday activities during a stroke to safety awareness for older adult drivers.

Below is a summary from each of the livestream broadcasts throughout the month.

Everyday Activities After a Stroke: Ways to Manage Changes in Movement

- A stroke can affect an individual’s ability to function in everyday activities in daily living and may cause difficulties for individuals when moving their arms and/or legs.
- Adaptive equipment can be used to make these activities easier and safer. Some examples include adaptive jar openers, bed canes to help with bedside movement, tools to help grab items such as a “reacher,” and a shoehorn to help with putting shoes on.
- Recovery after a stroke is a process and improvements to function can continue to occur over time.

Older Driver Safety Awareness: Anticipating Changes That Affect Driving

- Aging can cause many changes to your body, and these changes can have potential effects on your abilities in daily activities.
- Potential changes include changes in movement, changes in vision and/or hearing, and concentration changes and/or temporary memory lapses. These changes could affect your driving ability.
- Self-assessments of driving are a good option if you want to assess your abilities and safety on the road.

Older Driver Safety Awareness: Family Conversations

- Family and friends play a major role in discussions about driver safety. The earlier the conversations are started, the better.
- Early conversations should be focused on lifestyle choices, and staying fit and flexible.
- Conversations should not be about “stopping” driving but instead focus on small changes that can be made in travel methods.
- Start conversations naturally, focus on solutions to issues, and ask for help from health professionals about adaptations.
- Agree to a “safe mobility contract” which includes making a family plan together.
- A self-rating questionnaire can also be found through the Automobile Association of America (AAA) that can help assess an individual’s driving ability.

Older Driver Safety Awareness: Screenings and Evaluations

- Screenings and evaluations help to check on your ability to drive and identify strengths and any changes in vision, physical ability and/or cognition that may be a risk for driving safely. It can also offer recommendations for how you might strengthen skills or adjust for weakness.
- As you get older, physical, visual and cognitive abilities needed for driving can change.
- Types of evaluations can include: self-assessments, and a comprehensive driving evaluation by an occupational therapy certified driver rehabilitation specialist (CDRS).
- Many self-assessments and screening measures can be found online. Those mentioned during the livestream include the “Fit to Drive,” “The SAFER Driving Survey,” and resources from AARP.

All of the broadcasts can be watched on playback on the AAA7 Facebook page or a dedicated page on the AAA7’s website for the Functional Fridays education. To find the educational information, log on to www.aaa7.org, click on the “Functional Fridays” box mid-way on the Home Page, and find the date you are looking for.

For more information about Functional 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 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.

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