



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

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AAA7 and Shawnee State University “Fall-Free Fridays” Episode Features Information About “Home Safety for the Kitchen, Stairs and Laundry Room”

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 now through December 11th on the AAA7 Facebook page.

The last episode on November 13th featured the topic “Home Safety – Kitchen, Stairs and Laundry Room” presented by SSU Master of Occupational Therapy (OT) students Jaclyn Strohmeyer and Brenna Schroeder.

Occupational therapists help people with all the tasks that they want and need to do in their lives. They provide education about how to prevent mishaps, such as falls, and also help individuals get back to their daily activities or “occupations” after something has caused a change in their life and they may need to re-adjust.

The students offered helpful tips to prevent falls in the Kitchen:

- Make sure the most often used kitchen items are located in lower shelves or easy to access pantries.
- Have appliances at waist level.
- Make sure cabinet doors and drawers are able to be easily opened and closed.
- Use a reach tool for items you need to grab at a higher level.
- Make sure if you use a step-ladder that it has handles.
- Ask someone to help you rotate seasonal items so that you have what you need in close reach.
- Remove rugs in the Kitchen so that you do not slip and fall. A rug underneath the sink can help catch water. Make sure the rugs have a non-skid bottom without fringe.
- Clean up spills or sticky foods or liquids on the floor right away to avoid slips.
- Discard any old items you do not use so you can easily find what you need. Also discard any expired foods.

- Use a wheeled cart if you need to carry a lot of ingredients for cooking to other areas of the Kitchen.
- Try sitting to do some Kitchen chores if it takes extra time or requires additional energy.
- If you have pets, make sure that their food and water bowls are out of your walkway.
- Stay out of the Kitchen if it has been freshly mopped.
- Make sure the area is well-lit.

Falls-prevention tips for the stairs include:

- Remove any rugs from the top and bottom of the stairway.
- Remove any furniture near the landing of the stairs so that the pathway is not blocked.
- Make sure stairways are well-lit so you can see each step.
- Have rubber tread on stairs that are non-carpeted.
- For carpeted stairs, make sure carpet is tight and not loose.
- Handrails should be installed on both sides of the stairway.
- Do not carry a lot of items going up and down the stairs.
- A stair lift or elevator can be used if an individual has problems with using the stairs.
- It is important to make sure to take your time going up and down the stairs.

Falls-prevention tips for the Laundry Room include:

- Using a front-load washer and dryer is safer and easier to use when transferring laundry.
- Pedestals can be used to raise the washer and dryer if needed.
- Make sure detergent or other laundry items are stored in areas that are easily accessible on a lower shelf so you do not have to reach.
- Keep area free and clear of clutter.
- Make sure no water or soap is on the floor as that can increase falls.
- If rugs are in the area, make sure they are non-skid.
- Utilize hampers that have wheels.
- If your Laundry Room is on a different floor from the Main Floor, perhaps utilize a laundry chute or place dirty laundry in an empty pillowcase and toss down the stairs.

The students also referenced the AARP HomeFit Guide which provides tips, illustrations and suggestions for making your home a fall-free zone. It is available online at <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/housing/info-2020/homefit-guide.html> or you can also order a printed version through AARP.

If you missed the episode, the broadcast can be viewed by watching a recorded version that is available on the AAA7's Facebook page or at the AAA7's website at www.aaa7.org. At the Home Page, find the "Fall-Free Fridays" promotional ad and then find the "November 13th" episode information.

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.

The next Fall-Free Fridays episode on Friday, November 20th at 10:00 am will feature the topic of “Out and About – Things to Consider”. 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.

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