



Sedgwick County...
working for you

SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS
COMMUNICATIONS

NEWS

CONTACT: SEDGWICK COUNTY COMMUNICATIONS 316-660-9370 FAX: 316-383-7509

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 16, 2008

Contact:

Amanda Matthews
Kristi Zukovich
316-660-9370

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

(Sedgwick County, Kansas) – Sedgwick County Department on Aging and Central Plains Area Agency on Aging (SCDOA/CPAAA) in coordination with the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging encourage families while home for the holidays to assess the safety of their older loved ones homes. Thousands of older adults in Kansas live on fixed incomes and have seen a large percentage of their retirement funds disappear over the last year, leaving them short on funds to pay for day-to-day necessities like food, heat, and prescription drugs. Meanwhile, the homes of many older adults are in disrepair or neglected, leaving seniors in unsafe environments, which can lead to life-threatening situations, such as falls in their homes. According to the Home Safety Council, falls are the leading cause of home injury death among older adults, accounting for 52.5% of all home injury deaths for adults between the ages of 65 and 74. And yet, falls are often preventable with the proper information and simple, inexpensive home modifications.

“The current economic crisis has left many older adults on fixed incomes in a difficult position just keeping up with paying bills,” said Annette Graham, Executive Director of SCDOA/CPAAA, “so the thought of installing a hand rail in the shower or repairing an uneven walkway is often last on the priority list, yet it can save older adults from serious, sometimes debilitating injuries. This holiday season, we encourage families to have a frank discussion with older relatives and loved ones about the safety of their home environments.

- more -

There are simple and inexpensive solutions that can prevent fall injuries -- the time to act is now.” Concerned family members also may consider reviewing their own housing needs. A poll by AARP found that 84 percent of adults age 50 and older would like to remain in their homes, although only 16 percent have made any modifications to their homes to address safety or comfort. Housing accessibility, safety, community amenities and housing options are all issues that should be considered as the Baby Boomer population moves closer to retirement.

Sedgwick County Department on Aging/Central Plains Area Agency on Aging, can provide guidance and options for those looking at their current or future housing needs. The Minor Home Repair Program can offer assistance with home repairs and modifications for those older individuals who are eligible. A Minor Home Repair Program manager also is available to provide a free home assessment, including a thorough walk through of the home, to review the safety issues and make suggestions on modifications or repairs to meet the older person’s needs. A self assessment also is available on the agency Web site at www.cpaaa.org. The following tips can help make a home safer:

- Remove things you can trip over (papers, books, clothes, and shoes) from stairs and places where you walk.
- Remove small throw rugs or use double-sided tape to keep the rugs from slipping.
- Keep items you use often in cabinets you can reach easily without using a step stool.
- Have grab bars put in next to your toilet and in the tub or shower.
- Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors.
- Improve the lighting in your home (as you age, brighter lights are necessary to see well). Have handrails and lights put in on all staircases.
- Wear shoes both inside and outside the house. Avoid going barefoot or wearing slippers.
- Visit your eye doctor at least once a year, poor vision increases your chances of falling

Sedgwick County Department on Aging and Central Plains Area Agency on Aging is here to support older adults, caregivers, and those pre-planning for retirement. For answers and options contact 660-5120 or (800)367-7298 or visit us online at www.sedgwickcounty.org or www.cpaaa.org

- end -