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A publication of

LifePath
options for independence

Editor, Janis Merrell
GoodLife@LifePathMA.org
(413) 773-5555 x2255

THE GOOD LIFE

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LifePath Volunteers Enhance Safety and Function (At No Cost) in Your Home!

By Gary Yuhas, MBA,
Executive Director



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Last month, I wrote about the essential services provided by our Meals on Wheels drivers and how two recent “saves” helped individuals in crisis in their homes. The daily wellness check provided with meals resulted in individuals receiving urgently-needed medical care that they were unable to summon on their own. That article generated considerable interest, sparked conversations, and was followed by individuals reaching out to learn more about volunteering with LifePath.

This month, I would like to highlight and extend appreciation to another group of volunteers who are helping to provide independence to those aging in place in their homes. LifePath’s Home Safety Program is a team of individuals who provide assistance with minor home modifications that remove hazards, increase functional access, and improve the safety and satisfaction of aging at home.

The Home Safety Program is a prevention program, not a repair program. We strive to prevent falls, provide fire notification and protection equipment, and prevent other serious and avoidable incidents. Common modifications include installing toilet seat risers, shower grab bars, fire and carbon monoxide detectors, railings, and more-accessible door handles.

Each individual situation and home is unique, and before any modifications are considered, a Home Safety Assessment is conducted by a Certified Aging-In-Place Specialist, trained to look for home design elements that improve safety and increase functional access. The results of the assessment are reviewed collaboratively with the homeowner(s) and caregivers as appropriate, and together this group will decide upon a home modification Scope of Work. Depending on particulars, the assessment may involve a LifePath Occupational Therapist, and the modification scope may involve contractor

work, procured and managed by LifePath.

Surveys of those who utilize the service are overwhelmingly positive. Statistics tell us that Franklin County housing tends to need more repairs due to lack of maintenance and property age, compared to other areas of the state. Also, there is a shortage of tradespeople and handypersons to take on smaller jobs. These factors, coupled with less financial resources, result in our residents and communities being less able to get help with needed modifications.

This program is a way for residents to get home modifications without the need to find, call, screen, or vet contractors; or shop for materials. LifePath does the work! LifePath Home Safety Program recipients can be assured that our volunteer team members have been thoroughly screened, passed a criminal record check, and participated in a LifePath training. These home modifications are at no cost to the consumer, and are covered by grant funding. We partner with Community Action Pioneer Valley, who administer a large grant supporting this programming.

One of the most obvious results of this work is reducing fall risks. This year, September 18-23 is Falls Prevention Awareness Week. Fall

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prevention is a core tenet of our programming. During September, we work to increase awareness and support family members and caregivers around fall prevention, and reduce the incidence and severity of falls and fall-related injuries. Studies show that even low-impact falls in older adults have much higher hospitalization and mortality rates, underscoring the importance of our education and information efforts.

I have seen firsthand the benefits from the type of home modifications LifePath’s Home Safety Program provides. My grandfather was a very proud and independent person, and even after he had been retired for many years, he still had a morning routine of getting up, showering, shaving, and putting on “good” clothes. This became increasingly difficult as he aged, and he cut back on those

activities because it was “just too hard.” As his routine started to slip, so did his spirit. Installing a raised toilet and shower bars in his home significantly helped him with bathroom activities, and provided dignity and independence at a critical time.

Individuals who have received Home Safety services share similarly positive stories. The following are just a few examples of the feedback we’ve received:

“I have never met nicer competent people. Thank you, a wonderful experience for me,” wrote Dee, a program consumer from Belchertown.

“What a wonderful program. The two men who did the work were truly caring individuals. Very trustworthy. My husband and I love it! The improvements have made my husband and I feel more safe. Excellent work,” wrote Cheryl, a program consumer from Buckland.

“Couldn’t ask for anyone more professional and considerate of my needs,” wrote Jerry from Greenfield, a veteran and participant in the Helping Homebound Heroes grant.

Over the past year, 15 Home Safety volunteers have made repairs in 48 homes. We need 10 more Home Safety volunteers to help folks on our wait list. Come join us! Visit www.lifepathma.org/volunteer or call 413-773-5555 and ask for Volunteer Resources. You don’t need extensive experience or a complete collection of tools to become a Home Safety volunteer, either. Some familiarity with tools and home improvements is helpful. A can-do attitude, reliability, a sense of humor, and a desire to help your community are helpful attributes!

Maybe you aren’t interested in home improvement. Maybe you don’t think you have the skills. Maybe, like me, you have done so much work on your own house that you need a break! There are a number of other ways to serve your community, such as Rides for Health or Grocery Shopping.

On behalf of LifePath and those we serve, we extend a sincere THANK YOU to our current Home Safety volunteers, and the 250+ LifePath volunteers who are supporting their communities.



“You learn some great history and stories that you’d never have known without meeting these people. They’re all unique and special in their own way.”

- Alan Coutinho, Volunteer Meals on Wheels Driver

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