

Road to safety

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By Nancy McKenzie, For Carroll Seniors |

Safe driving can be a touchy topic for seniors, who often balance worries about the loss of driving skills with giving up a driver's license and the loss of mobility and freedom that follows.

One way to keep driving safely longer is to make sure the vehicle fits the driver properly.

To help seniors find that fit, the CarFit program was developed by the American Society on Aging, AAA, AARP and the American Occupational Therapy Association.

On April 21, the first CarFit event in Carroll County took place at on the McDaniel College campus. This program offered one-on-one sessions with trained evaluators and occupational therapists to evaluate how well the personal vehicle fits its senior driver, and possible modifications to enhance their safety.

First, the drivers worked with the evaluator to check on how easily they could perform certain skills, such as getting in and out of the vehicle and moving their foot between the brake and the accelerator.

After making some adjustments, the drivers then discussed the results with an occupational therapist, who made suggestions about devices and/or adaptive equipment to help them maintain their safe driving skills.

Lavinia Kelley, of Mount Airy, came to a CarFit appointment with her husband, Truman Kelley Sr., riding along. Lavinia Kelley said she found the session "very informative."

"I learned about my blind spot," she said. "I learned that my seat goes up as well as forward and backward. My seat is up."

The Kelleys worked with occupational therapist Carol Wheatley, of Westminster, during their session. Wheatley described her background, "I've been doing occupational therapy and driver rehab for several years. CarFit is a natural continuation of driver rehab."

Mikki Lemon, of Mount Airy, explained her interest in attending CarFit. "I have a fanatic daughter. When I go to the senior center, they have all these talks about security and all. I'm a big one for security. My daughter called this morning. I told her I was coming here, and she said it made her day."

Myra Wieman, of AAA, explained that the CarFit program was developed about five years ago. She was onsite as the supervisor training new technicians.

This CarFit event, in addition to helping seniors, gave newly trained technicians from Carroll and Frederick counties the chance to fine-tune their evaluation skills. Other, experienced, technicians from Baltimore County also worked the event.

Susan Solo, the state's Mid-Western Region Community Traffic Safety Program coordinator, described her plans for future events. "This is the very first time we've done this in Carroll County. I'm hoping to have more events here and in Frederick County, as well."

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