



*In alliance with
The University of Vermont*



Press Release

For Immediate Release

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AARP Vermont and Fletcher Allen Health Care Launch Campaign to Keep Vermonters on their Feet

BURLINGTON, VT, November 18, 2008 – One out of every three adults over age 65 will fall and be injured this year, and this is one of many reasons why AARP Vermont and Fletcher Allen are teaming up to help Vermonters avoid falling. The public education campaign aims to raise awareness of the risks of falling to older Vermonters and what people can do to avoid serious injury, disability or even death from a fall.

The facts make the problem very clear:

- One in five hip fracture patients over age 65 die within a year after surgery, and one in four have to spend a year or more recuperating in a nursing home.
- Falls are the single leading cause of catastrophic injury in older adults.
- Among older adults, falls are the leading cause of injury deaths.
- At Fletcher Allen, 85% of trauma admissions for those over 65 are due to falls.

- Over 95% of hip fractures among those over 65 are caused by falling.
- Vermont has one of the highest rates of death from falls nationwide.

Fortunately, falls need not be considered a normal part of aging and can be prevented through a number of proven strategies: making safety enhancements to the home environment; medication management; fitness programs to improve balance; and basic education about how to prevent falls.

Fletcher Allen has a number of programs and resources already in place to educate the public about fall prevention and to help individuals make the needed changes in their home environment. By partnering with Fletcher Allen, AARP is helping extend the reach of this effort by communicating directly to AARP members in Chittenden County, bringing new volunteers to existing programs, and raising awareness about fall prevention to the general public.

The Chittenden County campaign includes advertising, direct mail, media attention and newspaper inserts all citing the risks to older citizens and outlining steps to reduce that risk. A recruiting drive for volunteers to build home entry ramps and make home modifications will start early next year.

“This project is an outgrowth of the Burlington Livable Community Project, in which a key finding was that 90% of Burlington residents would like to stay in their homes and neighborhoods as long as possible,” explained Jennifer Wallace-Brodeur of AARP Vermont. “It aligns with AARP Vermont priorities to help older Vermonters live out their older years in the setting of their choice. In addition this effort will reduce health care costs through prevention and engage AARP members in making a contribution to their community.”

"Fletcher Allen is pleased to be partnering with AARP Vermont on this fall prevention education initiative," added Pam Farnham, Manager of Adult Outreach and Education at Fletcher Allen's Community Health Improvement Program. "Fletcher Allen has a long history of helping individuals minimize their risk of falling through a number of programs: Falls Assessment Clinic, the Falls and Fires Home Safety and Modification Program, and A Matter of Balance exercise/education program. This partnership is another step towards helping people age safely in place and we are very excited to be part of this work."

To help prevent falls and bone fractures, AARP and Fletcher Allen recommend that older Vermonters:

- Have an annual physical and eye examination. Make sure any cardiac and blood pressure problems are fully evaluated.
- Consume a diet with adequate dietary calcium and vitamin D for good bone health. Do not smoke, and avoid excessive use of alcohol.
- Participate in an exercise program to maintain agility, strength, balance, and coordination.

- Maintain a clutter-free home with clear walking paths through rooms. Eliminate tripping hazards and install grab bars, handrails and other safety devices in appropriate areas, such as bathrooms and bedrooms.
- Wear properly fitting shoes with nonskid soles. Never walk about with only socks or stockings on your feet.
- Have adequate lighting in the home. Use nightlights between bedrooms and bathrooms. Make sure light switches are easily accessible by doorways.

Residents who would like to learn more about the ways to reduce or eliminate the risk of falling should call or e-mail AARP for a free booklet *Taking Steps to Prevent Falling Head Over Heels* at 802-951-1305 or vt@aarp.org. To learn more about personal and home assessments, contact the Fletcher Allen Fall Prevention Clinic at 802-847-1902. To sign up for A Matter of Balance, a free, comprehensive class on fall prevention, residents can call 802-847-2278.

About AARP

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization with 128,000 members in Vermont and 39 million members nationally. Through a wide array of special benefits, services, and information resources, we help our members make important choices, reach their goals and dreams, and make the most of life after 50.

About Fletcher Allen

Fletcher Allen Health Care, together with our partners at the University of Vermont College of Medicine and the College of Nursing and Health Sciences, is Vermont's academic medical center. Our mission is to improve the health of the people in the communities we serve by integrating patient care, education and research in a caring environment.

Fletcher Allen serves as a regional referral center -- providing advanced care to approximately one million people in Vermont and northern New York -- and as a community hospital for approximately 150,000 residents in Chittenden and Grand Isle counties. With more than 30 patient care sites and 100 outreach clinics, programs and services throughout the region, Fletcher Allen is committed to being a national model for the delivery of high-quality academic health care for a rural region. For more information about Fletcher Allen, visit our Web site at www.fletcherallen.org.

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