

A Community Approach to Preventing Falls

While aging is a gift, it comes with its fair share of challenges. As we age, we commonly experience health and functional performance changes. Factors such as medication side effects, vision problems, cognitive impairments, and the home environment make older adults particularly susceptible to falls. Falls – and falls prevention – is a critical issue not only for older adults but for the entire community.



Make falls prevention a priority by addressing risk factors to protect your loved ones.

According to the CDC, more than one in four older adults report a fall each year. Falls are the leading cause of injury and injury death among this population, and medical expenses related to falls in the United States are estimated to be \$80 billion (CDC, 2024). The incidence of falls will likely go up as the number of people over the age of 65 increases.

In the U.S., the percentage of the population aged 65 and over is expected to reach 22% by 2050. While falls pose a significant risk to older adults, many remain uninformed about falls prevention strategies. While primary care providers may offer falls prevention resources for older adults during annual checkups, it is up to all of us to support community-wide initiatives which increase awareness of fall risks and prevention options.

How Can the Community Help?

Falls were the leading cause of 911 calls in Howard County in 2023; the highest concentration originated from assisted living and skilled nursing facilities and age-restricted apartment buildings. To address this pressing health issue, Howard County’s Mobile Integrated Health Team (MIH) and Enterprise Residential joined forces with the Office on Aging & Independence (OAI) to bring falls prevention resources directly to more than 62 communities. This proactive community approach includes door-to-door canvases of residents by paramedics to complete fall risk screenings. Based on the results, residents may be referred to occupational therapists, social workers, nurses, and community health workers. Interventions include recommendations for durable medical equipment following a home safety assessment, cognitive screenings, information and referrals, and advanced planning.

So far, this one-of-a-kind approach has made a real difference. Participants say they feel 60% safer in their homes after the modifications, and there’s been an impressive 47% drop in 911 calls

From the desk of Calvin Ball, Howard County Executive



In today’s world, sometimes technology can be a growing divide between older and younger generations. Oftentimes, older adults are left behind as technology advances rapidly. Digital inclusion is important for older adults to connect to civic and cultural activities. It supports employment, lifelong learning and access to essential services. In a 2022 National Institutes of Health study, U.S. older adults reported the lowest device ownership rates when compared with other age groups. Our Office on Aging and Independence (OAI) is actively working to make today’s technology more accessible for older residents.

Through our Chromebook Project, OAI has distributed 530 devices to eligible older adults, offering personalized learning, hands-on practice and cultural competency support for new users. OAI’s Malarie Burgess and Alison Gerber recently highlighted the success of our program to a national audience at the USAging Conference—the country’s largest gathering of local leaders in aging well—held in Chicago this July.

Four hundred Chromebooks were distributed at senior living facilities in Howard County. OAI partnered with Enterprise Residential Properties to offer onsite Senior Planet: Chromebook Essentials courses for recipients to learn about their new device. More than 100 older adults participated at eight locations. Many were grateful for the classes being offered where they live. “I no longer feel left out,” said one resident, while another said the classes empowered her. “I was used to asking everyone else for help,” she said. “Now I can do it myself!”

For more information about OAI’s digital education programs, visit www.howardcountymd.gov/digital-inclusion.

from these communities. It’s clear that meeting people where they are—in their own homes and neighborhoods—is not just effective, but truly impactful. The initiative even earned a 2025 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties!

Call to Action

Preventing falls starts with taking action. Talk to your doctor about your risk, stay active, get regular vision and foot checkups, and consult with an occupational therapist about home modifications. With support from the community, OAI will continue to create opportunities to bridge the gap between essential services and emerging needs. Learn more at www.howardcountymd.gov/CLP.

September is National Senior Center Month!

Powering Possibilities: Flip the Script, the 2025 Senior Center Month theme, challenges outdated perceptions of aging and senior centers; more than 10,000 senior centers across the country offer inclusive, engaging spaces where older adults thrive. Visits to Howard County's six 50+ Centers increased 27% last year, with more than 55,000 participants in 12,000+ program sessions. Center directors say the friendships are what keeps their members coming back. Older adults find purpose and a sense of community at our centers and enjoy the health benefits of social connection, physical exercise and mental stimulation. Sign up for a topic of interest – history, art, music, fitness – and you will meet like-minded people in a low-pressure environment. Find a center near you at www.howardcountymd.gov/50pluscenters or explore programs and register on ActiveNet.

English Conversation Class

North Laurel 50+ Center | September 3, 4 p.m. | A50610.400

Open to all levels, this free class offers a relaxed space to practice speaking English and build confidence. Meet new people and improve your skills through casual, supportive conversation.

Gardening for Birds

Elkridge 50+ Center

September 11, 1 p.m. | A05609.400

Calling all bird lovers! Want to see more feathered friends in your yard? Join Master Gardener Paul Bears from the UMD Extension Program and learn how to create a bird-friendly garden that invites frequent visits from your favorite feathered friends!

Social Security: Your Questions Answered

East Columbia 50+ Center

September 15, 11 a.m. | A04914.401

Are you nearing retirement and have questions about Social Security? Explore how Social Security fits into your retirement income plan, when you should start taking benefits, tax issues and more.

Senior Planet presents: Saving Money with Tech

Ellicott City 50+ Center

September 16, 23 & 30, 1 p.m. | A20673.404

Learn about free tools available on your device which can help you manage and save money. Attend any or all sessions:

Week 1: Saving Money with Tech

Week 2: Digital Coupon Tools

Week 3: Understanding Internet Plans

Leave the Leaves

East Columbia 50+

September 16, 1 p.m. | A04625.400

Allowing fallen leaves to remain in place on lawns and gardens instead of raking, blowing, or bagging them can improve soil health, reduce pollution and support wildlife. Join Master Gardener Elizabeth Rhoades to get the details.

Energy Assistance Presentation

North Laurel 50+ Center

September 18, 10:30 a.m. | A06645.401 or call 410-313-0380

Brandi Nieland from the Maryland Office of People's Counsel will discuss available options like payment arrangements, energy assistance programs and weatherization services to help with high utility costs.

Almost Fall Tea Time

Ellicott City 50+ Center

September 19, 2 p.m. | A02744.401 or call 410-313-1400

Welcome fall with a cup of tea and sweet treats – it's the perfect time to gather, chat and savor the season together. Fancy hats are optional but encouraged! Sponsored by Visiting Angels.

A Grand Day Out: Wild About Grandparents!

Ellicott City 50+ Center

September 23, 10:30 a.m. | A02744.400

Celebrate Grandparents' Day with a walk on the wild side. A Carrie Murray Nature Center naturalist will introduce us to friendly animal ambassadors; learn what makes them unique. It's a school holiday, so bring your grandchildren aged 4-11! Cost: \$5/person.



KASA Thrift Sale

Bain 50+ Center | September 24, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Looking for bargains? The Korean American Senior Association of Howard County (KASA) will hold a thrift sale to benefit the Vivian Reid Fund. Shop for gently used clothing, jewelry, small household items, handcrafts and more. Food will be available for purchase.

History Alive: Juliette Gordon Low

Glenwood 50+ Center | September 24, 11 a.m. | A03466.400

Get to know the remarkable. Juliette Gordon Low, founder of the Girl Scouts of the USA, brought to life by award-winning actress and historian Mary Ann Jung. Discover how Daisy Low's vision and determination helped shape generations of young women into leaders.

**To register or find more events,
visit bit.ly/HoCoRegistration**



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