

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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OLDER DRIVER SAFETY AWARENESS WEEK HIGHLIGHTS OPTIONS FOR SAFE MOBILITY

American Occupational Therapy Association Educates the Public About Solutions, Discourages Narrow Focus on the Problem

Bethesda, MD — The U.S. Census Bureau reports there will be 9.6 million people 85 and older by 2030, up 73 percent from today. With increasing age comes changes in physical, mental and sensory abilities that can challenge a person's continued ability to drive safely. But, there are a variety of options for safe mobility for people of all ages. The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) seeks to raise awareness and increase education across the country through Older Driver Safety Awareness Week (December 6-12, 2009).

"The real need is a broader awareness of the solutions, rather than a narrow focus on the problem," said Elin Schold-Davis, AOTA's Older Driver Initiative coordinator.

The goal of Older Driver Safety Awareness Week is to increase safety by informing the public that the aging driver has options. Education, evaluation, modifications and training are available from many sources, including occupational therapy. Empowered with information, facts and strategies, people across America can facilitate the safety of our aging neighbors. Older Driver Safety Awareness Week aims to promote understanding of the importance of mobility and transportation to ensuring older adults remain active in the community—shopping, working or volunteering—with the confidence that transportation will not be the barrier to strand them at home.

AOTA believes that occupational therapy practitioners have the skills to evaluate a person's overall ability to operate a vehicle safely and provide rehabilitation, if necessary. Many are specially trained in the full scope of driving rehabilitation. Occupational therapy practitioners work with older adults, their families and caregivers, offering individualized assessment, identifying individuals' unique challenges and finding strategies that will help them live life to its fullest by keeping them active, healthy and safe in their communities.

Throughout the week, AOTA will bring attention to a different aspect of older driver safety:

- Monday, December 7: Family Conversations
- Tuesday, December 8: Screening/Evaluations
- Wednesday, December 9: Driving Equipment/Adaptations
- Thursday, December 10: Taking Changes in Stride
- Friday, December 11: Life After Driving

AAA, AARP, American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators, American Public Transportation Association, Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists, Easter Seals Project ACTION, ITNAmerica, National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, National Center on Senior Transportation, and The Hartford Financial Services Group, Inc. have endorsed Older Driver Safety Awareness Week. For more information, please visit www.aota.org/OlderDriverWeek.

Founded in 1917, the **American Occupational Therapy Association** (AOTA) represents the professional interests and concerns of more than 140,000 occupational therapists, assistants and students nationwide. The Association educates the public and advances the profession of occupational therapy by providing resources, setting standards including accreditations and serving as an advocate to improve health care. Based in Bethesda, Md., AOTA's major programs and activities are directed toward promoting the professional development of its members and assuring consumer access to quality services so patients can maximize their individual potential. For more information, go to www.aota.org.