

Area Agency on Aging Serving Napa and Solano

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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QUEEN OF THE VALLEY FUNDS SUPPORT NAPA SENIOR FALLS PREVENTION PROGRAM

“Our aim is to assist older adults to stay vital and independent as long as possible, and preventing injuries from falls is a critical step,” said Piera Dermody, chair of the StopFalls Napa Valley coalition. The vision of the Coalition to reduce the number of injuries to older adults resulting from falls received a huge boost with funding from Queen of the Valley Medical Center Community Grants. The new falls prevention program also received funding from Napa County through the Master Settlement Agreement Funds. Last week the Area Agency on Aging was also awarded Fall Prevention Coalition expansion funding from the Archstone Foundation.

“With this funding, the Coalition will provide awareness and education programs to older adults and family members about how to prevent debilitating falls,” said Leanne Martinsen, executive director of the Area Agency on Aging, the sponsoring organization for the Coalition. Established in 1980, the Area Agency on Aging is a private, non-profit organization committed to providing services that support seniors in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.

Terri Restelli-Deits, the StopFalls Napa Valley Program Manager and a Planner for the Area Agency on Aging, said the funding will enable new fall prevention staff to work with doctors, hospitals and emergency medical services to assist older adults who have fallen or who are at high risk for falling to take some steps to reduce their chance of injury and improve their strength and mobility, home safety and other supports to remain healthy and independent. In Napa Valley, nearly 500 older adults are hospitalized due to falls each year. Many more fall and are taken to the ER. According to national statistics, as many as 50% of those who are hospitalized

are unlikely to regain their pre-fall health and a large number will find they are no longer able to live on their own. Falls are key factor in nursing home placement. The average hospital costs in Napa associated with falling for those persons over 64 years of age are close to \$40,000 per patient.

“The good news is there are medical guidelines and proven ways to help people reduce their risk of injury from falls and improve their overall safety and mobility,” said Dr. Donald Hitchcock of Queen of the Valley Community Outreach. “The newly funded Fall Prevention Coordinator will be a tremendous resource for healthcare providers and their patients,” he added.

A group of Napa Valley organizations serving older adults, the local hospitals and representatives from senior groups formed the Napa Valley Fall Prevention Coalition in 2006 to support Napa Valley’s older adults to live safely and independently. With a planning grant from the Archstone Foundation in April 2006, the Coalition embarked on a coalition-building and strategic planning process with support from consultant Kathleen Tabor. The coalition identified significant gaps in services and worked to develop a coordinated continuum of fall prevention strategies linking healthcare institutions, seniors and community providers to resources and services. This spring the Coalition launched community public service announcements and held awareness events at local farmers’ markets throughout the Valley with screening, Tai Chi and yoga demonstrations, home modification information and presentations about simple steps for fall prevention.

Queen of the Valley Medical Center Community grants promote the health and well-being of low-income persons, improve the long-term health and quality of life of local communities, and create systemic change.

Established in 1986, Archstone Foundation is a private, non-profit foundation whose mission is to prepare society for the growing needs of an aging society. Under the leadership of president and CEO Joseph F. Prevratil, J.D., Archstone grants up to \$5 million annually, primarily in Southern California. The Archstone Foundation’s funding priorities include: fall prevention, elder abuse and neglect, end-of-life issues, and emerging needs among the elderly.

For more information, please call Terri Restelli-Deits Area Agency on Aging Serving Napa and Solano 707-644-6612.

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