Good afternoon and thanks for joining us I am Judy Simpson. Many physical changes occur as we age including our eye site and our reaction time. If you driving a car vision in reaction time are critical. Of course aging doesn't automatically mean we need to stop driving but it does mean we need to pay attention to any warning signs that are driving skills might be compromised. So this afternoon we're going to learn about a driver safety program offered by AARP. We begin with the video produced by AARP that touches on some of the key issues related to aging and driving.

Judy.: Joining me now are two members of AARP Vermont. Dave Peters is the state coordinator of the driver safety program and Baird Morgan is one of the program instructors. Thank you so much for being with us. Dave let me ask you to start off by talking about the mission or goals of the AARP driver safety program.

Dave.: Basically our program is designed to help senior drivers to continue driving safely on the road. It's a refresher course that is a lot of fun. It is entirely classroom. We do not take people on the road. We're not qualified to do that but it's a 4 hour class that is essentially as I said a refresher class.

Judy.: So Baird which is the course cover and how is the material presented?

Baird.: Essentially we're talking about change how we have changed as individuals as the aged eyesight hearing reaction time. We're talking about changes in the highway and how the roads have changed and cars how they've changed. Essentially we're focusing on how we add that to those changes so that we remain safe on the road for a longer period of time.
Judy.: Can you give me some examples of what some of the people you ask about or you tell them about?

Baird.: We talk about state law for example. There are a lot of people who haven't looked at the driver's Manual since they were 16 or when they first got their driver's license. Typically people say I haven't had an accident I've been driving for 70 years and yet they don't know what a red arrow means. There are a lot of things in this class that when people walk out they say it Oh I didn't know that. There's a Eureka. So even people who are dragging their feet to come to a class like this walkout hopefully with the realization that there's a lot they didn't know and there's a lot more they do know now that they've taken the class.

Judy.: Are their tests?

Baird.: There are no tests and actually we put that in our news release when we announce the class because a lot of people are reticent to take a class if there is a test and some people are under the notion that if they fail the test that were going to remove their driver's license and that is not the case and all.

Dave.: Let me tell you about a phone call I had yesterday afternoon after I taught class in Morrisville. I got a call from one of my we call them participants and he called because he couldn't remember. I told them in the class there are two things I want to be sure that you remember one is Fido he remembered that which stands for forget it drive on don't get in a road rage situation and the other one you can remember. So we called me at home. It was keeping your wheels straight when you're stopped at an intersection. In case you get rear ended you're not knocked into the oncoming lane. I thought it was interesting that he and his wife are so troubled by that he ended up calling me at home.

Judy.: Where are the classes offered and how can somebody find out more about them?

Dave.: During the course of the current year will offer about 95 classes throughout the entire state. We will have over 1000 people participating with 20 instructors and the easiest way to find out where they are is to go on the website at AARP.org/drive and there all listed there.

Judy.: And there's also a toll free number to 888-227-7669. How many Vermonters do survey every year?
Dave.: We serve somewhat over 1000 we'd like to serve more. We have about 20 instructors throughout the state.

Judy.: You mentioned some people are reticent about taking the course would he do to ease their anxiety? Other than to say we're not going to report you to anybody.

Baird.: Well there are two things. I will elaborate on what Dave said we also put out press releases the tick away most in your local papers news media publicize as the class we have some people will call us where the contact people the instructors. So it gives us an opportunity to chat with each individual and tell 'em what the class is all about so that their 30 seconds news clips if you will we hope to capture them that way and make them feel at ease that this is not a typical classroom situation with us with the teacher walking around with a whip. This is informal we like to have fun tell a few jokes.

Dave.: We're all senior citizens ourselves.

Baird.: Teaching to senior citizens is a little bit different than teaching to a high school math class.

Judy.: Right. I understand you're making a special offer to veterans?

Dave.: Yes it's a nationwide program during the month of November any vet and vet's a spouse or partner or best friend that's a stretch any way they can take the classes are free. Normally they are $14.00 with a $2.00 discount for AARP members. But during November any that or related to a vet can take the class at no charge.

Judy.: And you have volunteers who are part of the driver safety program?

Dave.: We are all volunteers. Except for a very small staff at headquarters in Washington, DC is around 8000 of us Nationwide who are all volunteers.

Judy.: Are you looking for more?

Dave.: Yes. We are very definitely looking for more I'm very much concerned about my friend Baird getting burned out he teaches well over 20 classes. We definitely need additional volunteer instructors in the Chittenden county and this general area.
Judy.: October was a state proclamation for senior driver safety week. Did that help raise awareness?

Dave.: We certainly hope so. The governor was kind enough to clear for the first time senior driver safety week and we hope that people became aware of it and through that became more aware of our program.

Judy.: It may be more difficult to talk about but experts say that family members are and the best position to help judge driving skills through observation. Here is a video clip from AARP’s we need to talk program.

Driving can access to the world a person should not have to limit driving on necessarily or prematurely. Family members are actually in a good position to know about driving skills of loved ones.

I've been in the car with Gramm a few times which is has some close calls mom tells me to sit in the back because a safer.

Since I stopped driving a few years ago my wife has done all the driving. She doesn't see as well as she used to. She's missed a few stop signs. Really afraid to drive with are now but what choice so I have.

As far as I can tell dad seems to get around OK. Then again I don't drive with an area home. I have noticed some scrapes on his car he didn't say anything to me about it so I did not either. I don't think it's a big deal at least not yet.

I'm fine I've been driving without an accident for over 40 years. Just because it had a couple of fender benders recently everyone gets excited and not one of them was my fault not one. People drive crazy these days. I would know if I needed to do anything about my driving and I don't.

Either age or health problems alone are reasons to curtail driving. However health conditions can affect driving ability. How do you know if an older person with or without health problems is safe to drive. Observe their older relative driver. When riding as a passenger make a mental note of any driving behaviors that are a problem. It might be useful during future conversations if you actually jot down the date and what you observed. Look for a change in driving skills from the past or a pattern of more frequent mistakes. Less serious or more infrequent warning signs might suggest the need to limit routing. Such as avoiding night time or rush hour driving. More serious or frequent science might mean the need to stop driving immediately. Your
observations over time will help your family act according to the situation not overreact or under react. Your factual notes may be useful when talking to other family members or medical professionals. Conversations that use actual observations rather than general opinions can be less emotion and more constructive.

After mom's accident I was really worried that then I rode with her and several occasions and I can tell her driving was just fine really.

When I put my observations down on paper it forced me to realize that the problem could be serious we just couldn't put off doing something about it any longer.

Judy.: This is not an easy conversation to have with your parents or loved ones what's the best way to approach it and start the ball rolling?

Baird.: Probably as the video suggests it's easier for a close person spouse to make that observation because they're riding with a person on a regular basis. As the video suggested the appropriate thing to do is make notes have a checklist and make notes over a period of time so you can see if there's a change over a period of time. As opposed to just saying gee Judy I don't think you should be driving anymore you back into the middle box backing out of the driveway. We all have situations on occasion so we don't want to jump at eight particular situations and say that that person is not able to drive. It's over a period of time and having those conversations over a long period of time as opposed to just a quick conversation announcing the end of your driving career.

Judy.: Because it's actually important not to stop driving prematurely.

Baird.: And as a society what we depend upon the automobile as opposed to the Europeans. The specially here in Vermont where we live in a rural area where you haven't got public transportation. I was at a meeting last night and people were saying down and high OK we of public transportation in terms of a bus but if we need a taxi to take is from one appointment to another to go shopping that's no longer available so we have to rely on to the goodness of other family members and friends or people around. The importance of driving is paramount for those of us live in rural areas.

Judy.: But a good place to start is the driver safety program and learning some techniques and skills.
Dave.: Write like to begin with the driver safety program. The we need to talk program that is really designed for family members and caregivers not for senior citizens.

Judy.: You can go online to the website on your screen its AARP.org/drive to learn more about these programs you can also call toll free at number is 1-(888)-227-7669. And if you'd like to volunteer to help the AARP driving program you can use the website or call that toll free number I know that Dave and Baird would appreciate that.

Dave.: We would love that.

Judy.: Thanks so much for being with us today. That's our program for today I'm Judy Simpson will see you again next time on across the fence.

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