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WC Home

Have You HEARD of CAPS?

A Certified Aging in Place Specialist

By Christine Fortenberry

The Baby Boom generation numbers 77 million and accounts for 28 percent of the US population and owns 48 percent of all homes. They have the highest median income of any age category and have earned more money than any other group before it. This huge segment of our population will redefine retirement and will significantly influence society's priorities.

That being said, this shift in population demographics creates new challenges and accentuates sleeper issues of the past. Based on the 2000 Census data the ICDI reports that 19 percent of the population age 16 to 64 and 42 percent of those over 65 have some physical disability that limits daily activities. The disabilities include a huge range of problems ranging from sensory issues, orthopedic issues, respiratory issues, range of motion issues, mobility issues, and more. Some issues are temporary and some are degenerating and many are permanent but all of the issues fall within three major groupings.

The first group is persons who have needs or disabilities but those issues are non-urgent but cannot be ignored.

The second group is persons who have needs or disabilities which are chronic or progressive in nature. These persons are aware of their challenges but addressing them may or may not be urgent for the moment but that urgency may change as time passes.

The last group is persons who have needs or disabilities which must be addressed in an urgent manner. These requirements may be a result of an abrupt or traumatic change in their lives from accidents, diseases, or other special turn of events.

As medical science extends life expectancy and the Baby Boomers age, the numbers of persons and the resulting health challenges will continue to grow. This dramatic growth has created an urgent need. The challenge is how to modify our environment and our homes so as to maintain the quality of life for which we are accustomed given the medical and physical challenges which have arisen. How does one translate and address individual needs as outlined by our physicians, physical therapists, or occupational therapists into the reality of the places where we work, live, and play? The persons who can help us with this challenge are persons who have been trained as an "Aging in Place Specialist" noted by the abbreviation CAPS. This special training was originated by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) and is now endorsed and promoted by AARP.

Next month's article will discuss the CAPS training and the impact that a person with this training can have on your quality of life.

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