



THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

GEORGIA TRAFFIC INJURY PREVENTION INSTITUTE

www.ridesafegeorgia.com

OFFICIAL PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Frankie Jones, Director

Georgia Traffic Injury Prevention Institute (GTIPI) 1-800-342-9819

Writer: Andrew Turnage, GTIPI Public Information Manager 678-413-4283

GTIPI Launches 'CarFit' for Senior Drivers

CONYERS, Georgia—April 26, 2007—The University of Georgia's Traffic Injury Prevention Institute (GTIPI), funded by a grant from the Governor's Office of Highway Safety, is pleased to announce Georgia's first CarFit event for Senior Drivers.

CarFit is a national program developed by the American Society on Aging in collaboration with AAA, AARP and the American Occupational Therapy Association. Using CarFit, GTIPI will help Georgia seniors find out how the effects of aging change the way they fit in their vehicle and how that can affect their driving. CarFit is designed to give seniors a quick, comprehensive check on how well their vehicle suits their abilities.

The facts are clear - Georgia is growing older. Since 1980, Georgia's senior population has increased by 26.8 percent compared to an increase of 17.7 percent for those younger than age 65. Population projections indicate that these disproportionate increases will continue as Georgia "baby boomers" reach age 65. By 2030, one in five drivers will be age 65 or older, which means there will be more than 30 million older drivers on U.S. roads.

Georgia joins twenty-four other states in the country with CarFit programs. As a result of GTIPI's involvement with the program, Georgia will be included in the national CarFit roll out in May. "GTIPI believes that seniors should be able keep driving as long as they want to - if they can do so safely. CarFit will be an important part of keeping seniors safe in Georgia," said Frankie Jones, Director of GTIPI.

*** CONTINUED NEXT PAGE ***

Jones notes that age affects vision, flexibility, strength, range of motion and even size and height. "Unless seniors make adjustments, those changes may make older drivers less comfortable and reduce control behind the wheel. CarFit gives older adults the tools to help them stay on the road safely," she said.

As part of the CarFit program, trained technicians take drivers through a 12-point checklist, including: Is the driver positioned correctly in the seat? Can the driver reach the pedals easily? Does the driver know how to adjust mirrors properly or have the flexibility to use mirrors?

The next step is for seniors to meet with occupational therapists who give advice on ways a driver can maintain and strengthen their driving health, including community resources on where seniors can go for further evaluation regarding exercise, nutrition and adaptive devices.

"It's critically important that mature drivers make safety a personal priority," said Jones. "Driving today is more difficult than ever because of more traffic, larger vehicles and faster speeds."

Dannielle Sherrets, Manager of Traffic Safety Research & Analysis for AAA in Washington, D.C., will facilitate Georgia's first Event Coordinator Training at GTIPI at the state headquarters in Conyers on April 26 & 27.

Seniors in the Rockdale County area can come to 1400 Parker Road at the "Old Maxell Plant" building in Conyers on Friday, April 27 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. for a free, quick and comprehensive check on how well their vehicle suits their abilities.

For more information on CarFit, please visit GTIPI's website at www.ridesafegeorgia.org (Click on CarFit for Mature Drivers) or call GTIPI at 678-413-4281, or toll free at 1-800-342-9819.

***** END OF RELEASE *****