Dear State President:

AOTA is a member of The Falls Free™ Coalition organized by the National Council on Aging’s (NCOA’s) Center for Healthy Aging. I am reaching out to you as state president to encourage your association and individual members to become involved in Falls Prevention initiatives like NCOA’s Falls Prevention Awareness Day coming up next month.

National Falls Prevention Awareness Day is observed September 23, 2011, the first day of fall, to promote and increase public awareness about how to prevent and reduce falls among older adults. Falls among older adults are a significant public health concern and one that we can help address. The statistics are compelling.

- Each year 30%–35% of older adults fall.
- 45% of unintentional injury deaths among those age 65 and older are caused by falls (almost 17,000!).
- In 2008, the estimated cost of falls among older adults was about $26.3 billion.

Opportunities in your state and local communities to showcase occupational therapy’s expertise in helping to prevent falls range from fairly simple to very involved.

For example, occupational therapy practitioners in hospitals, home health, nursing homes, assisted living, community aging programs and other settings can raise awareness among their staff and clients on that day by sharing the AOTA fact sheet Occupational Therapy and Prevention of Falls.

In addition, NCOA has created an online Resource Center to help you plan and execute a successful Falls Prevention Awareness Day event in your community, including a media kit, handouts, logos, sample press releases and promotional materials, as well as examples of past events. Create your own activities or offer to assist with existing efforts.

State or local level Fall Prevention Coalitions are another excellent way to demonstrate leadership in collaboration with other community leaders around a common goal. NCOA’s recently updated compendium of State Coalitions on Fall Prevention Workgroup, which includes contact information, is a great starting place for information. This also includes references to local coalitions within states.

Find out more about what AOTA has been doing related to Falls Prevention policy in our report AOTA/CDC Falls Prevention Project—Improve Public Policy Response and Medicare Coverage for Fall Prevention and Intervention.

Plan for Falls Prevention Awareness Day on the first day of fall each year. Please share information with your members by posting information on your Web site or in your newsletter and encourage them to share their plans and successes with others on OT Connections.

Florence Clark, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA
President
American Occupational Therapy Association