



Family and Consumer Sciences

BUILDING STRONG FAMILIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY



• THE CHALLENGE •

In a 2000 AARP survey, 80 percent of respondents over the age of 60 indicated a wish to remain in their homes as they age. Unfortunately, most homes are not designed for “aging in place.” Considering the growing numbers of older adults, it is critical that today’s homes be designed for easier and extended living. Examples of safe, convenient design include varied countertops for people of different heights, wider hallways and larger bathrooms for visitors with walkers or wheelchairs, and lever door handles to make access easier, whether you’re holding an infant or a bag of groceries.

These and other Universal Design concepts can help modify existing homes and improve new home designs that would delay or prevent older adults from having to move to an assisted living facility or a relative’s home. However, most people don’t have the knowledge, skills, or resources to apply Universal Design concepts to modify their homes, and most builders and contractors remain uninformed about these concepts. As a result, residential homes—and even senior housing units—are repeatedly built without Universal Design features, making them poorly accessible to much of the population.





For more information or to partner with us on OSU Extension's Healthy Relationships programming, please contact your county Extension Educator in Family and Consumer Sciences, or our state specialist in this area:

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• OSU EXTENSION'S RESPONSE •

In response to the growing need for information, OSU Extension developed a program designed to provide statewide community education about the principles of Universal Design and home modification. The program is directed to:

- Consumers, whether they are parents with young children, seniors preparing to age in place, or anywhere in between.
- Social service professionals and consumer retailers.
- Professionals in the building industry (including contractors, remodelers, and designers) who can help Ohioans to make their homes both convenient to live in and attractive.

• BENEFITS FOR OHIOANS •

Through our work, the Universal Design concept is spreading:

- More than 100 individuals have been trained to implement Universal Design programs at the county level.
- A total of 910 people have been reached through community workshops. Of them, 91 percent have a better understanding of Universal Design; 73 percent intend to include Universal Design features or products in a new or existing home environment; and 86 percent now can identify locations and resources where they can get help obtaining and installing Universal Design products.
- More than 17,000 people have been reached via county newsletters with information on Universal Design.

OSU Extension embraces human diversity and is committed to ensuring that all educational programs conducted by Ohio State University Extension are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, age, gender identity or expression, disability, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, or veteran status.

Keith L. Smith, Associate Vice President for Agricultural Administration and Director, OSU Extension

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