Baker College, Mercy Health Muskegon

team up for driver safety CarFit event May 23

Occupational therapy students volunteer
to help mature drivers improve fit, safety

MUSKEGON, Mich. – Baker College of Muskegon and Mercy Health Muskegon are sponsoring the annual CarFit driver safety event Tuesday, May 23, to provide tips to improve safety and mobility for older drivers.

Drivers will progress through three vehicle stops during the 20-minute CarFit checkup at which students in Baker College’s associate degree occupational therapy assistant (OTA) program will provide information about and perform CarFit’s 12-point checklist.

The free event is 9 a.m. to noon at the Norton Shores Fire Department, Station Three, 1100 E. Pontaluna Road, Norton Shores, MI 49444. Appointments are required by calling 231.672.4910.

The event is a hands-on learning opportunity for the students, according to Katy Potter, MS, OTRL, OTA program director at Baker College of Muskegon.

“CarFit is a win-win for our occupational therapy assistant students and for the elderly drivers who take advantage of it,” Potter said. “The nationally recognized 12-point program helps students appreciate and assess the needs of senior drivers, and the drivers learn ways to improve fit, comfort and safety when they are behind the wheel.”
For those who need additional assistance, an occupational therapist will provide information about local resources and mobility equipment, such as a swivel seat cushion, pedal extenders and mobility bars that aid in vehicle entry/exit.

CarFit is a national program developed by AAA, AARP and the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA). It is designed to provide a quick, comprehensive check of how well older drivers “fit” their vehicles.

Among the items reviewed during the CarFit checkup are:
- Driver’s seat position to ensure the pedals and other controls are easily reached.
- Line of sight above the steering wheel.
- Space needed between the front air bag/steering wheel and the driver’s breastbone.
- Mirror adjustment to remove blind spots.
- Proper seatbelt use and fit.
- Adaptive devices available to remedy problems and help compensate for physical limitations.

An OTA is a skilled health care practitioner who works under the supervision of a licensed occupational therapist in the planning and treatment of individuals affected by physical, emotional and developmental disabilities.

In 2015, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated the average annual salary for an OTA was $58,340, with the lowest 10 percent earning an average of $38,440 and the highest 10 percent earning an average of $78,080. Employment in this field is projected to grow 40 percent from 2014 to 2024, much faster than the average for all occupations.

The Baker College OTA program is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE). Graduates are eligible to take the OTA national certification examination administered by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy.

CarFit sponsors hope the event will increase mobility among the elderly in the community. Despite often being the safest drivers, more likely to wear their seatbelts
and less likely to speed or drink and drive, older drivers are more likely to be killed or seriously injured in a crash due to the greater fragility of their aging bodies.

Older drivers can also check with their local AAA club or AARP office for a driver safety refresher course or find an occupational therapy driving evaluation program for individualized assessments and recommendations. CarFit is an extension of those classroom programs.

For information about the Baker College of Muskegon OTA associate program, contact admissions at 231.777.5200 or debbie.smith@baker.edu, or visit www.baker.edu.

The largest private college in Michigan, Baker College is a not-for-profit higher education institution accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. Founded in 1911, Baker College grants doctoral, master’s, bachelor’s and associate degrees, as well as certificates in diverse academic fields including applied technology, business, education, engineering, health science, information technology and social science. Baker College has on-ground campuses throughout Michigan and offers online programs that can be completed 100 percent online without ever visiting a campus. In 2016, the Online Learning Consortium recognized Baker College Online with the OLC Quality Scorecard Exemplary Endorsement, the highest ranking for online higher education programs. For information, visit www.baker.edu or follow Baker College on Twitter, @bakercollege, or on Facebook, www.facebook.com/bakercollege.

# # #