

Why Call a Certified Aging in Place Specialist?

By Christine Fortenberry

Each week we witness persons who are dealing with issues such as walking with a limp, relying on a walker or cane, using oxygen tanks, or visual disabilities.

There is no doubt that these persons are handicapped. Yet do we consider the person who has arthritis, the person who recently had surgery, the person who has hearing disabilities, the person who has mobility restrictions due to an old football injury or a car wreck, the person who is undergoing treatment for an illness or the person who has degenerative challenges such as MS, polio, brittle bones, or respiratory conditions to be handicapped as well? If you discard the traditional definition of "handicapped", you will quickly observe that many persons have a special need and are handicapped to some degree in some function. Thought provoking and worth considering isn't it? As medical science continues to elongate the life expectancy of the general population, the number of persons with special needs will continue to increase significantly!

A wheelchair bound person does not feel handicapped if there is a means to enter a structure while in the wheelchair. A person who has a loss of eyesight from a degenerative eye disease does not feel handicapped if a sound emits and can be heard when someone enters the room such as a chime tone. A person dealing with arthritis does not feel handicapped if the doors have levered handles rather than round knobs so that a grasping not a gripping motion is necessary to open a door. Get the idea? Handicaps do not have to be an obstacle but rather are problem solving opportunities that require improvising. The person who is sensitive to and can understand a special need and then can address that need as it relates to homes, buildings and landscapes is a "Certified Aging in Place Specialist". "Aging" in this designation

name does not necessarily denote age as defined by years of life nor aging as used in conversations to denote "getting older" but rather refers to the ability to live or work in an environment without relocating as time passes.

The physician, physical therapist, and occupational therapist are professionals who can describe the medical needs and restrictions of an individual. A Certified Aging in Place Specialist (CAPS) has been trained to interpret the comments and directives of the medical personnel and then suggest alternatives and associated costs of solutions as they relate to the environments in which we live, work, and play. These professionals are familiar with design requirements as they relate to structures, homes, cabinetry, baths and plumbing fixtures, steps, HVAC, electrical devices, etc. of a home or building and ramps, grades and lighting as they relate to both landscapes and structures and can design or assemble solution alternatives to meet the medical needs of the individual who is handicapped by a special need



or needs. This CAPS trained professional can develop a hierarchy of choices for the individuals involved to choose from depending on whether the challenge is a temporary, permanent, or progressive situation. Additionally, solutions can be more obscure such as an entry way into a home that has no steps because the exterior grade was changed. Both alternatives provide a stepless entryway but one method is more obvious than the other. A CAPS individual is trained to make both suggestions and distinctions to meet the requirements of the individual.

Next month's article will begin to address specific alternatives to mobility issues in and out of structures and between floors.

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