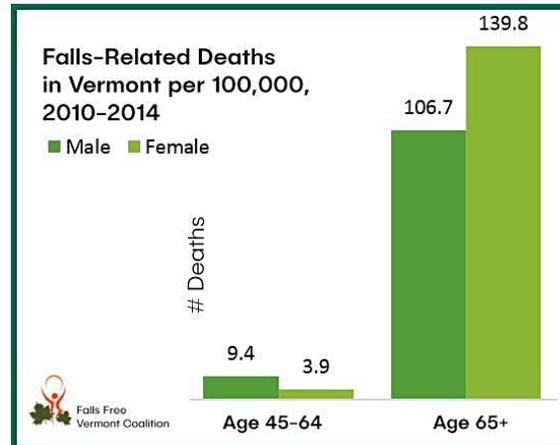


Evidence-based programs to prevent falls and Vermont’s impressive efforts to prevent this leading cause of death and injury among older adults attracted a lot of attention in September in the weeks surrounding [National Falls Prevention Awareness Day 2018](#).



Falls prevention takes center stage

In recognition of Falls Prevention Awareness Month, Vermont Public Radio devoted its Sept. 6 “Vermont Edition” discussion and call-in program to falls prevention and the special dangers of falls among older adults. It led to a [great on-air conversation](#) about this leading cause of fatal injuries among older adults and promoted the “Stay Steady” screenings and classes taking place throughout Vermont that month.



It was all hands on deck in September for members of the [Falls Free Vermont Coalition](#), which includes SASH. Classes were held at 23+ locations (many of them SASH sites) and, led by Maggie Holt PT, CEEAA of the [Vermont Physical Therapy Association](#) and her team of graduate PT students, more than 200 older Vermonters were screened for the risk of falling.

Of course, falls prevention isn’t a focus just in September – it’s an ongoing priority for people who work with older adults. In fact, [falls prevention is the first objective under the #1 goal in the Vermont State Plan on Aging](#), which was recently approved by the federal [Administration on Community Living](#). It’s also the topic of two related workshops at V4A’s upcoming [“Aging in Vermont: Healthy Living”](#) conference Oct. 26.



By the Numbers: SASH falls-prevention programs in September

As noted at right, SASH sites offered a host of programs in September to help older adults build strength and improve their balance -- but not simply because it was Falls Prevention Awareness Month. This abundant slate of exercise programming is fairly typical of the offerings at all SASH sites each month. Add to this the social programs, wellness-nurse visits, bingo games, guest lectures, cooking classes and other activities, and the calendars of SASH participants can

Activity	# Events	# Participants
Bone Builders	24	420
Falls Presentations	5	66
Matter of Balance	10	98
“STEADI”	12	145
Tai Chi	11	84
Walking Group	14	51
Yoga/Seated Yoga	8	84
TOTAL	84	948



Exercise commitment -- and results! -- in the Northeast Kingdom

“I’m sure the classes we teach help prevent falls, but even more than that they provide social interaction, improve resilience and speed recovery.”



That’s how Casey Doerner, SASH wellness nurse for [RuralEdge](#) in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, describes what she’s witnessed with her participants. Every week, she and SASH coordinator Kim Russell teach two exercise classes based on the “Eat Smart Stay Strong” curriculum and one Tai Chi class for their SASH participants. Here’s how Casey (shown second from right leading a Tai Chi class) describes their success:

“The biggest result I see every week is a group of older Vermonters exercising and enjoying themselves! They are proud to tell their doctor and family that they go to exercise class, and many make the classes a priority.”

“In one of our sites we started the class after running the six-week “Eat Smart” program, and everyone wanted to keep doing the exercises. That was 2½ years ago, and everyone still comes! During that time two women fell and broke their hips; they each had surgical repair, rehab, and physical therapy. Both were surprised to learn that they already knew the PT exercises they were instructed to do, which sped up their recovery.”

“At another site we worked for six months to convince the residents to join SASH. When we mentioned we could provide an exercise class in the community room, three new people immediately joined. That group has been dedicated for a year and a half. It includes one person who is 101 and two who are 99. In the past year three of them have been hospitalized (one for back surgery, one for a heart attack and one for GI issues), but they all bounced back and are still exercising with us.”

“Our SASH Tai Chi group is 9 months old, and participants report increased balance and strength. One 99-year-old participant attended every class and practiced daily at home until she was hospitalized for 10 days. After her release, she was back in class within two weeks!”

“I am sure the classes we teach help prevent falls, but more than that they provide social interaction and improve resilience and speed recovery. It’s wonderful to make a difference in improving people's lives this way.”



Partners represented on SASH teams throughout Vermont include members and affiliates of these organizations:



A comprehensive list of all the valued partners in SASH can be found in the [SASH Partnership](#).



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