

Making the Peoria area age-friendly

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By Steve Tarter

David Baxter will talk about new realities when he presents the keynote address at a program at Illinois Central College in East Peoria this Friday called “Building an Age-Friendly Community.”

“American communities are just beginning to ready themselves for the growing numbers of older adults,” said Baxter, who works for the San Francisco-based Age Wave organization, started by new-age guru Ken Dychtwald.

“Communities we live in today were designed and built in almost every way for the needs and lifestyles of younger people. However, communities in the 21st century are facing a new reality,” he said.

With the boomer generation already in their 60s, communities need to consider the needs of older citizens, said Baxter, who points to things like crosswalks and street signage as items communities need to take a look at to make boomers feel at home.

It’s not about charity but real economic opportunity for the community that’s age-friendly, he said. “No community has yet developed the perfect aging-ready model. But in the last few years, we’ve seen exciting innovations in housing design, transportation systems and health services that provide greater accessibility,” said Baxter.

“(On Friday) we will brainstorm how we can capitalize on Peoria’s first-rate healthcare, lifelong learning and civic resources to help it become one of the top aging-friendly communities in the nation,” he said.

The program runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at ICC's Performing Arts Center. For more information, call 690-6900.