

## Clinton County Older Adults Home Modification Program

### Army veteran enjoys continued independence thanks to Clinton County home modification program

As a former member of the U.S. Army and an Army spouse, Emeline has lived all over the country, and in Japan. But she now calls Sabina home. She moved there in 2020 from Kalamazoo, MI to be close to several of her four children, one of whom lives in Clarksville.

Emeline became a widow in 2013 when her husband, Tom, passed away, so she lives in her home alone. Despite its one-story floor plan, there were plenty of places that were hazardous to a person with a high risk of falling. A former marathon runner, Emeline has had both of her knees and hips replaced. In 2022, she fell and broke her femur. She now uses a walker full-time to help her get around safely.

Emeline was already receiving services through the Clinton County Elderly Services Program (ESP), which Council on Aging (COA) administers. Home-delivered meals, assistance from a home health aide and durable medical equipment had helped her remain independent since she became a client in 2020.

But, according to her ESP care manager Haley, “As Emeline ages and her complex medical conditions progress or exacerbate, certain aspects of her home were making it more difficult to stay safe and independent. Her front steps were becoming more challenging, and she didn’t have sufficient lighting in the home.”

While ESP provides minor home repairs and modifications to eligible clients, funding was limited. Recognizing there was more need in the county than ESP could address, COA applied for and received a \$1.25 million grant through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Older Adults Home Modification Program.

Through the grant, COA provides no-cost home modifications to county residents who are 62 and



*Emeline (r) on a recent Honor Flight trip to Washington, D.C.*

older, own their home and its land and meet income guidelines. It provides a dedicated stream of funding, saving money for the county and its taxpayers, and ultimately helping more Clinton County older adults to remain in their homes as long as possible, where most would prefer to be.

Recognizing how the right home modifications could make her home a safer place to live, Haley encouraged Emeline to apply for the program. Emeline qualified to receive grab bars in several areas of her house, a raised toilet seat with handrails, a light replacement and a ramp to her front door. “I tell you what, the ramp’s made my life easier. Before, I had a step out there and I’d miss the step and fall into the yard,” she said. “With the ramp I haven’t fallen at all.”

Maintaining her independence is important to Emeline. Even when she was younger, she was an advocate of helping older adults to remain in their homes as long as possible. “Putting all these things in, it actually makes you feel emotionally better. I have more independence,” she said.

Emeline believes more older adults in Clinton County should apply for the program. “I would say, if they offer to do it, go for it. It makes your life a whole lot safer and a whole lot easier.”

*Council on Aging is currently accepting applications for the Clinton County Older Adults Home Modification Program. For more information, visit [www.help4seniors.org/cchomemods](http://www.help4seniors.org/cchomemods) or call (937) 584-7200, menu option 2.*