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By Ashley McCleery

On Sept. 22, Gardendale residents can be screened at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church to reduce their risk of the “silent killers”- strokes, aneurysms and peripheral arterial disease.

Beginning at 9 a.m., employees of Life Line Screening will run stroke and osteoporosis screenings on residents using non-invasive and painless ultrasound technology. These screenings test for blocked carotid arteries, abdominal aortic aneurysms and hardened arteries in the legs.

“Screening is important because the diseases we’re screening for are often silent. Most victims don’t even know what’s happening,” Joelle Reizes of Life Line Screening said.

These screenings are designed to help combat the silent nature of these diseases by identifying signs and symptoms before they further develop, especially a stroke. Ranked as the third leading killer in the world, a stroke results from inadequate blood flow to the brain usually caused by fatty plaque build up in the carotid arteries.

Reizes said only about 15 percent of people who have had a major stroke experienced a mini-stroke. Meaning, 85 percent of the people who have had a stroke had no warning signs.

“The first symptom could be the stroke, and we believe we can do better than that. That’s why we screen,” Reizes said.

During the screening, a gel is placed on the neck and an instrument is guided over the surface. Then, the ultrasound monitor displays the inside of the carotid artery and its blood flow, allowing the Life Line Screening employees to see any potential problems.

Similar procedures are performed in order to find weak artery walls, which can cause an aneurysm. Aneurysms that rupture can lead to death. The screening also checks for hardened arteries, or Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD), causing chronic pain and increased risk for heart attack and stroke.

Reverend Michael Deering of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church said the Gardendale community took note of the severity of these diseases the past two years that Life Line Screening has come to the church.

“The first year it was booked from step to stern. There was a great outpouring from the community,” Deering said. “I think it’s great. I even participated the first year.”

However, Reizes said these screenings should not replace visiting a doctor. Instead, these tests should end with a doctor's visit.

“It's important to communicate findings with your doctor. You can work with your doctor to recognize signs and symptoms,” she said.

For those interested in the screenings, pre-register at www.lifelinescreening.com or call 1-877-237-1287.