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HOME S.A.F.E.

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Program Aims to Make North Carolina Homes Safer for Older Residents

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Among older North Carolinians, falls are the leading cause of fatal injuries and the second leading cause of nonfatal injury hospitalizations. Each year, one in three people over age 65 suffer a tumble that results in serious physical injury and toll on quality of life.

At a news conference today in Raleigh, the N.C. Association of Community Development Corporations (NCACDC) and its affiliates, in partnership with USDA Rural Development, AARP and the Falls Prevention Coalition, announced a statewide initiative to help older people identify hazards in their homes and make affordable safety modifications.

Beginning with a free in-home safety assessment, the program is designed to help people who want to age safely in their home, according to NCACDC's Home S.A.F.E. program director, Brigitte Rasberry.

"Just as our parents and grandparents once protected us, as they age, it becomes our responsibility to promote the dignity of our elders by ensuring their safety and security in their homes," Rasberry says. "Often, just a few modifications – such as adding grab bars or even reducing clutter – can greatly reduce the risk of falls."

This fall, the coalition will work with local agencies and allies to raise awareness of fall prevention strategies and identify older residents interested in the home assessment. Housing specialists will go over the identified hazards and suggest ways to modify the home to reduce the risk of falls. They also will review cost estimates, reputable contractors and assist in locating funding sources available.

The program will focus on the following counties in the first phase: New Hanover, Brunswick, Pender, Columbus, Bladen, Hoke, Montgomery, Scotland, Richmond, Robeson, Western Cumberland, Moore, Wilson, and Greene. Select other counties/areas served via partnership with NCIEDI (large Native American populations); as well as Tyrrell County CDC serving Tyrrell County. Plans are to expand to other areas of the state early next year.

About the North Carolina Association of Community Development Corporations:

The NCACDC is a statewide nonprofit whose mission is to strengthen the North Carolina economy and build a better tomorrow for all North Carolinians by advancing innovative, community-based economic development strategies that create opportunity rich communities where North Carolina residents live and work.