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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lt. Governor Kinder Launches Plan to Help Seniors Prevent Falls

WEST PLAINS - Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder is launching a statewide action plan October 31 and November 3 to prevent older adults from physically falling down. He rolled out the Show Me Falls Free Missouri plan at a number of stops across the state today.

“Falls and fall-related injuries can be deadly for seniors,” said **Lt. Governor Kinder**, who also serves as the Official Senior Advocate for Missouri. “Falls present a serious public health crisis in the United States and Missouri and are a significant burden on individuals, families, and the health care system. It’s imperative we prevent seniors from falling in the first place.”

Falls, in fact, are the leading cause of death from injury among people 65 and older, and the leading cause of traumatic brain injury. And the cost of all fall injuries for people 65 and older is staggering: around \$19 billion nationally in 2000.

The statewide action plan is the collaborative effort of more than 20 organizations committed to decreasing falls and related healthcare costs for community-based seniors. Among them are the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS), AARP-Missouri, the Missouri Association of Area Agencies on Aging, the Missouri Pharmacy Association, the Missouri Physical Therapy Association and OASIS.

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“More than one-third of adults 65 and older who live in the community fall each year,” said **Jane Drummond**, director of DHSS. “What’s more, the death rate from these falls jumped more than 60 percent in Missouri between 1999 and 2006. We must stop this dramatic rise and the terrible toll it has on families.”

Drummond notes that many seniors never fully recover from falls; therefore, they live with chronic pain and reduced functional abilities, resulting in reduced independence and premature nursing home admissions. One study found that falls are the major reason for 40 percent of nursing home admissions.

Show Me Falls Free Missouri is aligned with the national blueprint to decrease falls in older adults and includes strategies recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For instance, older adults can:

- Exercise regularly.
- Ask their doctor or pharmacist to review their medicines—both prescription and over-the-counter—to reduce side effects and interactions.
- Have their eyes checked by an eye doctor at least once a year.
- Improve the lighting in their home.

Reduce the hazards in their home that can lead to falls, such as loose carpets, lack of bathroom safety equipment, poor stair design, and slippery or uneven surfaces.

Show Me Falls Free Missouri is available via the Internet at, www.dhss.mo.gov/showmefallsfreemissouri.

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