

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Iowa's Largest Tai Chi Class designed to promote falls prevention awareness

Des Moines, Iowa (Sept. 18, 2015) – To celebrate National Falls Prevention Awareness Day on Wednesday, Sept. 23, the Iowa Department on Aging, Iowa Department of Public Health, YMCA of Greater Des Moines, Des Moines University and the Iowa Falls Prevention Coalition are partnering to host Iowa's Largest Tai Chi Class on the West Capitol Terrace in Des Moines and in communities across Iowa.

Tai chi is an ancient Chinese exercise system consisting of slow, relaxed movements that has been proven to improve balance, functional mobility and flexibility; increase strength; reduce risk of falling; reduce pain and stress; and increase psychological well-being. This event will introduce Iowans to tai chi as an effective, evidence-based falls prevention program while increasing public awareness about the prevalence of falls among older Iowans and Iowans with disabilities.

The event at the Capitol will open at 11:30 a.m. with an official proclamation of Sept. 23 as Iowa Falls Prevention Awareness Day. After that, participants will enjoy a tai chi class followed by falls prevention activities and demonstrations geared toward at-risk individuals, health care providers and the general public. Parking will be available in the ramp located at the intersection of Grand Avenue and Pennsylvania Avenue.

For those who cannot make it to the Capitol event, a complete list of sites in other Iowa communities that are participating in Iowa's Largest Tai Chi Class is posted at <https://www.iowaaging.gov/healthy-lifestyles/falls-prevention>.

According to the Iowa Department of Public Health, unintentional falls are the leading cause of injury-related emergency room visits, hospitalizations and deaths for Iowans aged 65 or older, with those over age 85 being seven times more likely than those ages 65-84 to die from a fall. With Iowa's aging population, the number of unintentional falls continues to increase each year, resulting in more than 430 reported fall-related deaths in 2012 and adding up to more than \$135 million each year in hospital costs.

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The Iowa Department on Aging (IDA) is an executive branch agency dedicated to making Iowa the premier state in which to live and retire. To meet that goal, the IDA works closely with the Iowa Commission on Aging and Iowa's six Agencies on Aging to develop a comprehensive, coordinated and cost-effective system of long-term living and community support services that helps individuals maintain health and independence in their homes and communities. More information is available at www.iowaaging.gov.