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# DHEC News Release: South Carolina Observes Healthy Aging Month and Falls Prevention Awareness Day

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 20, 2012

## South Carolina Observes Healthy Aging Month and Falls Prevention Awareness Day

COLUMBIA, S.C. - Gov. Nikki Haley has proclaimed September as "Healthy Aging Month" and the first day of fall, September 22, as "Falls Prevention Awareness Day" to recognize these public health issues, the Department of Health and Environmental Control announced today.

"Professionals, older adults, family members, and caregivers are encouraged to play a role in preventing falls and to learn about the benefits of evidence-based prevention programs that can help older adults stay active and independent," said Cora Plass, DHEC's director of healthy aging.

Plass said the state's population of persons 65 and older has increased by 30 percent since 2000, while the general population has increased by only 15 percent. One in seven South Carolinians is 65 or older, and falls are the leading cause of injuries and injury deaths among this age group.

"We are pleased that many of the senior centers in the Area Agency on Aging statewide network offer one or more programs, and we have very positive feedback from participants," said Denise Rivers, deputy director for aging services of the Lt. Governor's Office on Aging.

According to Plass, the Arthritis Foundation's "Walk With Ease" program is being featured through September at senior center locations, YMCAs across the state and Sun City Hilton Head, to help older adults become more physically active. Many people with arthritis and other chronic health conditions are at risk of falling due to a lack of regular exercise and activity. South Carolina's Healthy Aging Month observation coincides with national Senior Center Month, which highlights the valuable programs and services provided by senior centers to older adults.

"Community evidence-based self-management and exercise programs are an effective way to increase the healthy years of life, help prevent falls, and keep older adults engaged in their communities," Plass said.

For more information or to find out about walks scheduled this fall, log on to [www.scdhec.gov/arthritis](http://www.scdhec.gov/arthritis) or call 1-866-899-3663.

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For media inquiries:

Jim Beasley - (803) 898-7769

Email - [beaslejc@dhec.sc.gov](mailto:beaslejc@dhec.sc.gov)

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