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For immediate release

Contact: Julia Hurst (859) 283-1400

FALL BACK TO HEALTH

For most of us, the academic school year is begun, summer activities are winding down, and we are settling into our fall routines. September is **Healthy Aging** Month and, in honor of that, NLGA encourages all to Fall Back to Health. Lieutenant governors across the nation are working in several areas of wellness, each of which contributes to healthy aging.

Be Aware of Asthma

Through the National Lieutenant Governors Association (NLGA), lieutenant governors are 'Helping Americans Breathe Easier' through asthma awareness. Asthma is an inflammation of the airway which narrows the path for air from the nose and mouth to the lungs. A person with asthma may wheeze, have difficulty breathing, cough, or have tightness of the chest. Asthma has no known cause or cure, but it is manageable once identified and a management plan is developed with your physician. Asthma is problematic at any age. A May 2001 John Hopkins study found 2/3 of seniors over age 65 living at home had moderate or severe persistent asthma caused mainly by dust mites, mold, pets, and the fact that medication was not being used or used improperly.

Some asthma is treated by medication delivered through an inhaler. All states except Connecticut, South Dakota, Vermont and Louisiana, have an asthma inhaler access law requiring that self-administration of asthma drugs be permitted in school. Yet, an American Lung Association survey just last month found almost 75% of parents whose children have inhalers at school replied the school will not allow the student to carry the medication. Forty percent of parents had not heard of an asthma action plan, the recommended asthma management and communication tool for parents, physicians and schools. NLGA encourages parents to know the inhaler access policy at their children's school. In addition, the National Lung, Heart and Blood Institute says every asthmatic should file an asthma action plan with their work or school.

Get a Pap Screening

We live in a time when at least one cancer is now nearly preventable and largely curable. Cervical cancer is caused by human papillomavirus (HPV), a virus spread by skin to skin contact in the genital area. HPV causes no symptoms and usually goes away on its own. However, high-risk HPV which persists may cause cervical cancer. The HPV causes cells to change leading to cancer. Cervical cancer can be prevented or cured by removing the abnormal cells before

they become cancerous. A Pap test can detect the abnormal cells. There are often no early symptoms so women should have pap screenings regularly, says the National Women's Health Resource Center. Nearly every state offers free or reduced cost Pap smears to low-income, uninsured, and underserved women. Nationally, these programs reach only about 20% of women between the ages of 50 and 64 who are eligible, according to the Centers for Disease Control. A vaccine is now also approved for use in women up to age 26 and is effective against initial infection by 70% of the HPV which cause this cancer, according to the Food and Drug Administration. This issue, too, covers the span of healthy aging.

Practice Personal Preparedness

The position of lieutenant governor in state and territorial government is, at least in part, about being prepared. The office of lieutenant governor ensures a smooth transition of leadership in should a crisis occur. Lieutenant governors are engaged with federal and other state officials to promote all-hazards preparedness. Any person may face a hazard ranging from a tornado warning or dam break to wildfire or a homeland security occurrence. The Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) recommends individuals have a disaster supply kit ready with food, water, battery-operated radio and other items which enable self-survival for at least three days. You may want to visit www.fema.gov/areyouready/ for more information.

Engage in Fitness

It's never too early or too late to engage in fitness activities. The wellness obtained through being physically active may be one of the greatest contributors to healthy aging. Obesity is linked to heart disease, diabetes, some forms of cancer, and perhaps even asthma. The Centers for Disease Control recommend people aim for a healthy weight, lose weight gradually, be active, eat well, and select portion sizes following the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The America on the Move organization said to avoid weight gain, add 2,000 extra steps to your daily routine and choose wise ways to eat 100 fewer calories each day. Their web site provides a free tool to track your health and fitness.

Practice Firearm Safety

A 2002 Future of Children report recognized firearm safety efforts such as Project ChildSafe as a notable contributor to the health of children. Lieutenant governors, through NLGA and this project, have distributed more than 3-million gun locks and kits on safe firearm handling. NLGA encourages gun owners to practice firearm safety. More information is available at www.projectchildsafe.org. The continued availability of Project ChildSafe gun locks is in question. Congressional funding for the project has been steadily reduced. NLGA will support funding for this program and to bring more gun locks to the states.

More information on these projects and issues are available at www.cdc.gov and www.nlga.us. Or, contact NLGA Director Julia Hurst at (859) 283-1400.