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NEWS RELEASE

MARCH 30, 2016 – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Making Homes ‘Healthy Homes’

DUBUQUE, Iowa – The City of Dubuque’s Lead and Healthy Homes Program is designed to create healthy living environments and transform lives by addressing the physical conditions in homes as well as the health and quality of life of occupants.

The City’s Housing and Community Development Department and the Health Services Department partner to improve living conditions in homes by removing lead hazards and improving health and safety conditions. Those efforts began in 1997 when the City of Dubuque received a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and continued when grants were received again in 2003, 2008, and 2011.

In 1997, nearly 11 percent of Dubuque children ages 1-6 had elevated blood lead level. In 2014, that percentage had decreased to under 2 percent and was equal to the national average. While more than 1,150 Dubuque homes have been made lead-safe over the last 15 years, rental property inspections have shown that many Dubuque homes still lack property maintenance. Common issues detected include problems with water intrusion (mold), pest infestations, indoor air quality (sewer, radon, carbon monoxide), as well as safety hazards (smoke detectors and guard/hand rails) and energy inefficiencies (lack of weatherization).

The City’s Lead and Healthy Homes Program was awarded \$2.9 million in Lead Hazard Control HUD Grant funds in November 2015 to support efforts through November 2018. In addition, \$325,000 in HUD supplement funds were awarded to address health and safety deficiencies. Match funding has also been secured from the Iowa Department of Public Health and federal Community Development Block Grant funds. The program

will continue to be a participating site of the National Green and Healthy Homes Initiative which will align and coordinate multiple resources from agencies such as Operation: New View Community Action Agency, Visiting Nurses Association, Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque, etc. to provide additional benefits to the properties as well as the occupants. This household-centric approach complements the continuation of the lead hazard control activities in conjunction with a comprehensive, healthy homes focus.

The program provides financial assistance, in the form of a three-year forgivable loan, to single-family and rental residential property within the Dubuque city limits built before 1978. Home occupants must meet income guidelines (below 80 percent area median income) and have children under the age of six residing in the home or visiting. The funds may be used to address all lead hazards and limited additional environmental health and safety hazards which may include moisture/mold, allergens, contaminants, pests, carbon monoxide, and radon.

The goals of the Lead and Healthy Homes Program are to reduce the number of Dubuque children exposed to lead, provide professional lead training and certification, increase public awareness/knowledge of environmental health, and collaborate with partners through the Green and Healthy Homes Initiative.

The negative effects of lead poisoning are well-documented. High blood lead levels are associated with lower IQs and declines in reading and math scores. Lead can also cause learning disabilities, hearing loss, attention-deficit disorder, and behavioral problems. Studies have shown that children poisoned by lead are seven times more likely to drop out of school and six times more likely to enter the juvenile justice system.

To apply for assistance through this program, or for additional information, call 563-589-1724 or visit www.cityofdubuque.org/healthyhomes.

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