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NEWS RELEASE

May 26, 2016 – For Immediate Release

June is ‘National Healthy Homes Month’

DUBUQUE, Iowa – The City of Dubuque Housing and Community Development Department is promoting the first ever National Healthy Homes Month (NHHM) in June.

The outreach campaign, created by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes, seeks to help people connect the dots between their health and their home. This year’s theme, "Everyone Deserves a Safe and Healthy Home," was chosen to create awareness of what it means to have a healthy home by educating families of potential health hazards in a home, and to empower people to make change in order to create the healthiest home possible for their family.

Dubuque’s Lead and Healthy Homes Program, which began in 1997, helps 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. Dubuque has 19,889 residential properties built prior to 1978, which have a high propensity to contain lead hazards. While Dubuque has created over 1,150 lead-safe residences over the last 15 years, rental property inspections have shown that many homes still lack proper maintenance. This causes problems with water infiltration (mold), pest infestation (rodents, cockroaches), and indoor air quality (sewer, radon, carbon monoxide) as well as safety hazards (lack of guard rails, hand rails, smoke detectors) and energy inefficiency (lack of weatherization).

Currently, millions of U.S. homes have moderate to severe physical housing problems that are associated with a wide range of health issues, including unintentional injuries, respiratory

illnesses like asthma and radon-induced lung cancer, and lead poisoning. The health and economic burdens from preventable hazards associated within home are considerable, and cost billions of dollars.

Tips to having a healthy home include keeping it dry, clean, safe, ventilated, maintained, and free of pests and contaminants. HUD recommends preventing the entry of water, keeping a home clean and free of clutter, storing poisons out of the reach of children, securing loose rugs, and keeping children's play areas free from hard or sharp surfaces. Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors should be installed and fire extinguishers kept on hand. Bathrooms and kitchens should be ventilated to reduce the concentration of contaminants in a home. To avoid pests, cracks and openings throughout a home should be sealed and food stored in pest-resistant containers. To help keep a home contaminant-free, fix deteriorating paint and test the home for radon. Routine inspections, cleaning, and repairs will help prevent minor issues from becoming large problems.

National Healthy Homes Month also aims at boosting awareness and understanding of what federal and local resources are available. Dubuque's Lead and Healthy Homes 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 prior to 1978. Program eligibility requires families to 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 will 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.

To apply for assistance through this program, or for additional information, call 563-589-1724 or visit www.cityofdubuque.org/healthyhomes. For more information on National Healthy Homes Month 2016, visit www.hud.gov/healthyhomes.

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