Stepping On Reduces Risk of Falls among Older Adults

The Situation
Falls are the leading cause of injury and death for older Americans. Nationally, one out of every three people 65 and older fall each year. In fact, an estimated 50 percent of older adults 80 and older will fall each year. The consequences of falls are substantial, including serious injury, loss of independent living and limits on physical activity. By 2020, the total cost of fall injuries is expected to reach $55 billion. A total of 559 North Dakota residents died due to falls from 2009 through 2014, an average of 93 deaths per year. Seventy-one percent of these deaths were 80 and older.

Extension Response
The NDSU Extension Service is partnering with the North Dakota Department of Health to conduct seven-week Stepping On workshops, along with a three-month follow-up session. Stepping On is a national evidence-based program designed to help older adults take control of their fall risks, explore coping behaviors and use safety strategies in everyday life. Twenty-three trained Extension agents are working with local community leaders to offer Stepping On workshops across the state. Two Extension agents are master trainers.

Impacts
Participants who completed the Stepping On workshop in 2016 reported:

- 51 percent had used ways to learn about side effects of medications
- 82 percent decreased falling incidents

Participant Feedback
- “I love it! It was the most informative thing I have ever learned.”
- “I think it is the best program ever. Thank you so much and keep up the good work.”

Public Value Statement
Reducing the risk of falls can increase older adults’ quality of life and save thousands of dollars in health-care and long-term care costs for North Dakotans.

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Non-Extension Collaborators
North Dakota Department of Health - Division of Injury Prevention and Control
Local community leaders