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**North Carolina Resident to Make 3,000 Mile Journey to California
to Raise Awareness and Funds for Vulnerable Elderly and their Caregivers**

Carrboro resident Teri Swezey will make a 3,039-mile trek across the United States to raise awareness and funds for vulnerable elderly and the family and friends who care for them. Swezey is making this journey in honor of her late mother who had late stage dementia and who she cared for during the last few years of her life. Swezey will walk coast to coast, beginning at the Atlantic Ocean in Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina, on April 1, 2012. Walking about 15 miles a day, she will conclude her trip six to seven months later at the Pacific Ocean in Cambria, California, which was her parents' long-term adopted hometown.

Swezey's walk, SOAR Feat 2012, will be going through 12 states. She will be stopping along the way to engage and talk to seniors and their caregivers about their experiences with aging and caregiving. She will also be raising money for the nonprofit organization she is in the process of creating, Seniors Obtaining Assistance and Resources, Inc. (SOAR). The inspiration for the name and the organization's logo, which can be seen on the SOAR Feat 2012 Web site, <http://walkusa4soar.org/>, came from a picture of Swezey's late mother performing an awesome soaring swan dive.

"Sharing the last few years of her life as her caregiver inspired me to walk across the United States in 2012 to raise donations and awareness on behalf of vulnerable elderly and their caregivers," said Swezey. "I believe that by raising awareness, many others, who share the same struggles mom and I went through, will find relief and support along their own journeys with aging."

SOAR's mission is to help meet the needs of vulnerable elderly and their caregivers, focusing on three specific areas:

- 1) Relief services for caregivers of the elderly (known as respite).
- 2) Prescription co-pay assistance for seniors.
- 3) Low-income meal assistance for seniors.

"These are three common areas of need that I came across as I began to talk with others who have cared for seniors," said the 57-year-old Swezey, who by profession is a public health researcher.

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AARP North Carolina is supporting Swezey on her walk and she will be spreading the word about AARP's "Decide.Create.Share." national campaign that is aimed at increasing boomer women's awareness about and planning for their own long-term care. Swezey's walk will be featured in an article on caregiving in the April 2012 issue of the *AARP Bulletin*. Carrboro Family Vision is also supporting the SOAR Feat 2012 walk by matching local donations up to a total of \$1,000.

On her journey, Swezey will have a friend following a few miles behind her in a truck and trailer, which will be their home base. Swezey will also use a SPOT locator device to let interested followers track her progress along the SOAR Feat 2012 route.

For more information about Swezey's endeavor and to follow her as she makes her journey, please visit the SOAR Feat 2012 Web site at <http://walkusa4soar.org>. The site includes her blog and a section where she will post photos and videos throughout the duration of her six- to seven-month journey. You can also follow her at Twitter at <http://twitter.com/#!/SOARFeat2012> or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/SOAR-Feat-2012/202807459751260>.

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