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## THE CAPITAL REGION CELEBRATES 2016 HEALTHIEST WEIGHT COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS



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**Tallahassee, Fla.**— Today, Florida Department of Health announced the 80 communities recognized as 2016 Healthy Weight Community Champions, including nine communities in the Tallahassee area. The recognition program highlights local government efforts to increase physical activity and improve nutrition as part of Healthiest Weight Florida.

“By working toward creating healthy environments, these local governments have shown their commitment to improving the health of all Floridians,” said State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health Dr. John Armstrong. “We are proud to see the number of recognized communities growing steadily each year.”

Local governments can implement a variety of policies that help people become more physically active and encourage better nutrition. These “best practice” policies are reflected in the Healthy Weight Community Champion Recognition Program. Examples of criteria for the recognition include whether a jurisdiction maintains a system of parks, provides incentive programs to attract grocery stores to underserved neighborhoods and prioritizes personal safety in areas where people can increase physical activity.

Local Community Champions and their program highlights are as follows.

### **Gadsden County**

Several major bike/walking trails are being developed throughout the county. The ultimate goal of current projects is to connect all six cities in the county with these trails/paths, with trailheads (facilities, vending, informational kiosks, etc.).

“Gadsden County is excited to receive the Healthy Weight Community Champion Recognition for the first time,” said County Administrator Robert Presnell. “By making our streets and trails more pedestrian-friendly, we are giving our residents opportunities to be active and to better enjoy our communities.

### **Hamilton County**

The County participated in a Clean-Up Hamilton County Project on October 25 with participants including elected officials, citizens, school students and others. There were more than 300 bags

of garbage picked up all over the county with over 165 pounds of garbage.

“Hamilton County is happy to be named as a Healthy Weight Community Champion,” said Hamilton County Coordinator Louie Goodin. “We look forward to continue building on our recent successes to provide better communities for health. Hamilton County is devoted to do its part in helping Florida become the healthiest state in the nation.”

### **Jefferson County**

At the county extension office, 60 acres have been turned into a race track and a seven mile mountain bike loop is being developed.

### **City of Monticello**

The community features an irrigated community garden that is free of charge providing fresh fruits and vegetables to residents.

“To enhance quality of life and improve the health of its residents, the Monticello City Council has been focusing on providing more space for outdoor recreation and even providing tilled garden plots,” says City Clerk/Treasurer Emily Anderson. “The Health Department has been a great partner to us as we look at health challenges and opportunities, and we are proud for the recognition as a 2016 Health Weight Community Champion.”

### **Leon County**

Leon County's Office of Sustainability hosted a Sustainable Communities Summit in January 2015 entitled "Food For Us." The event was a huge success, bringing over 300 people from the community together to talk about the opportunities, barriers and hopes for the food system in Leon County and surrounding communities.

“Leon County Government is excited to be awarded the 2016 Healthy Weight Community Champion Recognition,” said Leon County Government Health and Well Being Coordinator Mary Barley. “We look forward to continuing these conversations about health to achieve our ultimate goal of creating more sustainable, successful environments for our community.”

### **City of Tallahassee**

In 2015, the city of Tallahassee began the implementation of a protected bike lane network in the downtown areas (Downtown-University Protected Bike Lane Network). When completed this will provide over 5 miles of new and enhanced bicycle facilities connecting downtown, Cascades Park, Florida State University, Florida A&M University, the Stadium Trail and other destinations and trails.

“The city of Tallahassee is thrilled to be recognized as a 2016 Healthy Weight Community Champion,” said Mayor Andrew Gillum. “Over the past year, we have seen great accomplishments for health in our community, and by further developing the connectivity and effectiveness of our health networks we can continue to advance healthy living and wellness for our city.”

## **Madison County**

### **City of Madison**

Lanier Field provides recreation for all ages (playground equipment, skateboard ramp, football/soccer field, and basketball court) and Lake Frances features an asphalt walking trail and exercise stations.

“Madison is proud to be recognized as 2016 Healthy Weight Community Champion,” said City Manager Tim Bennet. “Providing the proper resources for health in our communities is a top priority for our residents, and we hope to continue with the positive momentum of this award.”

### **Suwanee County**

This County is working on a Complete Streets approach to support walking and biking infrastructure or incorporated design specifications into rules and standards that make streets safe for all users of all abilities and ages.

## **Wakulla County**

### **City of St. Marks**

In the last two years St. Marks has installed central islands and speed bump strips when coming into down town.

“St. Marks is thrilled to be a recipient of the 2016 Healthy Weight Community Champion Recognition,” said City Manager Zoe Mansfield. “We look forward to continue improving our communities for health by making physical activity more achievable.”

## **About Healthiest Weight Florida**

Healthiest Weight Florida is a public-private collaboration bringing together state agencies, not-for-profit organizations, businesses and entire communities to help Florida's children and adults make consistent, informed choices about healthy eating and active living. To learn more about how to be active and make nutritious food choices, visit [www.healthiestweightflorida.com](http://www.healthiestweightflorida.com).

## **About the Florida Department of Health**

The department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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