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NORTHWEST FLORIDA CELEBRATES 2016 HEALTHIEST WEIGHT COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS



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Panama City, Fla.— Today, Florida Department of Health announced the 80 communities recognized as 2016 Healthy Weight Community Champions, including five communities in the Panama City 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.

Bay County

City of Panama City

The city features 40 parks in Panama City with ballfields, disc golf, walking trails, etc. Additionally, the city offers healthy vending machines in their facilities to make healthy options more accessible.

Franklin County

City of Apalachicola

The city of Apalachicola has partnered with a local vendors to establish the Apalachicola Farmers Market. The farmers market is available at Apalachicola’s Mill Pond Pavilion every

second and fourth Saturday of the month from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and is a good compliment to Apalachicola's existing Community Garden.

Gulf County

The county is adding new sidewalks and multi-use paths throughout the community and has made substantial improvements to their main roadways to promote slow traffic designs. This helps make the roads safe and accessible for physical activity.

"Gulf County is delighted to be recognized as a 2016 Healthy Weight Community Champion," said Don Butler, County Administrator. "We continue to improve our sidewalks, paths and roadways allowing for physical activity to be more easily incorporated into our daily routines."

City of Port St. Joe

The city of Port St Joe is a strong partner on the Gulf County Community Health Improvement Partners and will be working to identify community strategies built around healthy weight opportunities. Additionally, the city plans to help host community fitness challenges, which have been very successful in the past two program periods.

Jackson County

City of Marianna

The city received National Recreation Trail of the National Trails System for the Chipola Greenway Butler Trail and the Hinson Conservation and Recreation Area Trail, May, 2013.

"The city of Marianna is proud to achieve the 2016 Healthy Weight Community Champion Recognition," said Mayor Travis Ephriam. "We look forward to maintaining this momentum to better serve the health of Jackson County."

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.

About the Florida Department of Health

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