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## SOUTHEAST FLORIDA CELEBRATES 2016 HEALTHIEST WEIGHT COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS



### Contact:

Communications Office

[NewsMedia@flhealth.gov](mailto:NewsMedia@flhealth.gov)

850-245-4111

**Miami, Fla.**— Today, Florida Department of Health announced the 80 communities recognized as 2016 Healthy Weight Community Champions, including 13 communities in the Miami 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.

### **Broward County**

Broward County implemented a county-wide Bike-sharing system that allows users who purchase day passes or annual memberships to check out and return bikes at any station. There are 25 station locations, up from 22 in 2014 and monthly ridership during 2015 averaged to 4,100, a 17% increase from 2014. Bikes are equipped with computers to track mileage and calories burned.

### **City of Coconut Creek**

The city of Coconut Creek, in partnership with the Broward County MPO, hosted a Let’s Go Biking event in March 2015. The 10K bike route began and ended at the city’s signature park, Sabal Pines Park, and included a stop at Broward County’s Tradewinds Park, to highlight the city’s biking facilities and encourage residents to be active.

"Being named a Healthiest Weight Community Champion validates the countless number of hours expended by of city departments," said Sheila Rose, Director of Sustainable Development. "We hope to continue finding new ways to improve the health of citizens of Coconut Creek."

### **City of Deerfield Beach**

Deerfield Beach, through its Parks and Recreation Department, is adopting Let's Move! Initiative standards into our After School Program curriculum by increasing physical activity by having Fun Fit Time, Running Club and 45 minutes of sports daily. The city has also implemented its Park Explosions Program in which the city staff will go out into our neighborhood parks and "bring the activity" to the participant teaching basic skills to such sports like soccer, baseball, basketball, and volleyball to encourage play and physical movement.

"The city of Deerfield Beach is thrilled to once again be named a Healthiest Weight Community Champion," said Parks and Recreation Director Kara Petty. "This is a recognition of the continued efforts of this community to adopt a healthy lifestyle"

### **City of Fort Lauderdale**

The city developed a Connecting the Blocks Program that identified the creation of a network of bicycle networks to major destinations. The plan was created through working with residents to determine where bike facilities were needed.

"We are honored to be recognized for improving the health and wellness of our community," said Fort Lauderdale Mayor John P. "Jack" Seiler. "Being named a Healthiest Weight Community Champion reflects the tremendous progress our City has made advancing programs that focus on nutrition, fitness, diet and exercise, along with providing expanded sports and recreational offerings that promote active, healthy lifestyles. I would like to congratulate our Parks and Recreation staff, our neighbors, and all of our community builders on this outstanding accomplishment."

### **City of Hallandale Beach**

Hallandale Beach is a Let's Move Community as well as a Playful City USA. The city offers healthy families programming through our Parks department and have received a Healthy Communities Zone grant to promote walkable communities, address food deserts, and support smoking cessation.

### **City of Hollywood**

Hollywood maintains over 6.5 miles of walking trails and recently initiated the Get Walking program. The program provides free pedometers at several locations throughout the city, an online map of each location, as well as distance information and safety tips.

"We are honored that the Get Walking program helped the city of Hollywood be named a Healthiest Weight Community Champion," said Dr. Wazir Ishmael, City Manager. "We hope to continue improving the lives of our citizens with future projects"

### **City of Tamarac**

The city of Tamarac budgeted over \$5 million in city funding and is the recipient of over \$3 million in grants to build a citywide bikeway network. Ultimately, this network will connect Tamarac and the Everglades with the Atlantic Ocean, about 12 miles to the east.

“As the “City For Your Life,” it’s only natural that Tamarac champion healthy weight in our community,” said Parks and Recreation Assistant Director Linda Probert. “This recognition will help highlight our continued efforts to educate our residents about the long-term benefits of healthy living.”

### **City of Weston**

Weston sponsors the “Mayor’s Get Fit Challenge Cup” for all elementary students to encourage physical activity from a young age. Additionally, the Weston Regional Park has a large universally accessible playground that meets the standards for accessibility for individuals with disabilities that allow participants in wheelchairs to utilize ramps to access higher elements within the play equipment. The newly renovated Peace Mound Park has specially designed swings to hold fully support children with developmental/physical challenges – providing opportunities for all to enjoy a playground experience.

"The city of Weston has worked hard to improve the quality of life for those in our community through a variety of initiatives," said City of Weston Communications Director Denise Barrett. "We are excited that our efforts have led to Weston being named a Healthiest Weight Community Champion."

### **City of Wilton Manors**

Wilton Manors’ Leisure Services Department operates a child care program and a nutrition program supporting healthy eating. The program includes healthy snacks, breakfast and dinner programs and team members coordinate youth games that promote healthy eating habits during after school and summer camp.

"The city of Wilton Manors is honored to be named a healthiest weight community champion," said Gary Resnick, Mayor of Wilton Manors. "Our programs directed at our youngest citizens will hopefully lead to them growing up to become healthier adults"

### **Miami-Dade County**

#### **Town of Miami Lakes**

Miami Lakes created a program called Just Run in January 2015 for elementary and middle school students to promote fitness, healthy eating, and good citizenship. The town also offers 34 free programs and 3 pay-for-play programs, 23 which offer physical activity opportunities.

“I am proud that the town of Miami Lakes has been recognized for its commitment to improving the health of all residents by promoting healthy eating and exercise," said Mayor Michael Pizzi. "Congratulations go to all of our community partners who are helping us stay healthy one day at a time.”

#### **Town of Cutler Bay**

Cutler Bay has a Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. The town actively improves its existing

sidewalk network connectivity by implementing ADA Ramps on all resurfacing and sidewalk improvement projects, and bicycle lanes on full Roadway reconstruction and improvement projects.

"The Town of Cutler Bay has made it a mission to ensure that people of all abilities have the opportunity to improve their overall health." said Mayor Peggy Bell. "We are honored to be recognized as one of the 2016 Healthy Weight Community Champions."

### **City of Doral**

The city has implemented a personal training permit to allow personal training at city parks in an effort to allow residents to use our parks to be physically active and be trained by a professional. The personal training permit was created to allow personal trainers to train clients at the city parks and use park amenities, while benefitting from being outside.

### **Monroe County**

#### **City of Key West**

Key West actively gives away vegetable seedlings and partners with the Extension Service to teach community members how to garden in their own backyards making fresh food more accessible to local residents.

"This year city of Key West made tremendous strides toward helping citizens improve the quality of life by providing healthy choices," said Sustainability Coordinator Alison Higgins. "We are excited that those efforts have not gone unnoticed and we have been named a Healthiest Weight Community Champion."

### **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**

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