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SOUTH FLORIDA CELEBRATES 2017 HEALTHY WEIGHT COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS



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Miami, Fla.—Today, the Florida Department of Health recognized 98 communities as the 2017 Healthy Weight Community Champions. Florida's county and municipal governments play an important role in decreasing the prevalence of unhealthy weight in their jurisdictions. Local governments can implement a variety of policies that have been shown to increase physical activity and improve nutrition. These best practice policies are reflected in the Healthy Weight Community Champion submission criteria. Between August and December 2016, local governments were invited to submit best practice policies they have implemented in their jurisdictions.

The Community Champions program is part of the department's Healthiest Weight Florida initiative. Healthiest Weight Florida is a public-private collaboration bringing together state agencies, local governments, not-for-profit organizations, businesses, schools, faith-based organizations and entire communities to help Florida's children and adults make consistent, informed choices about healthy eating and active living.

Local Community Champions and their program highlights are below.

Broward County

Broward County has adopted new Complete Streets design standards that support national and local best practices to ensure that streets are planned, designed, operated and maintained to enable safe, convenient and comfortable travel and access for users of all ages and abilities, regardless of their mode of transportation. The county's Complete Streets standards allow for lane reductions, narrower lane widths, roundabouts and other design elements that result in lower operating speeds where appropriate so that all users are safer and feel more comfortable to be physically active.

City of Coconut Creek

The city of Coconut Creek has obtained the Playful City USA designation for four years in a row for its efforts to provide active recreational opportunities and a Gold Level, Fit-

Friendly Work-Site Designation for three years in a row from the American Heart Association for its Healthy, Wealthy, and Wise initiatives aimed at improving the health of its employee base. The city also annually hosts the 5k Butterfly Run/Walk – a USA Track & Field Sanctioned Event and Certified Course.

City of Cooper City

Cooper City currently has a reciprocal use agreement in effect with Broward County Public School for all the schools within the city. In addition to the shared use agreement, Cooper City also has a recreation lease agreement specifically for Pioneer Middle School and Cooper City Elementary School for the recreation open play areas where the city maintains and makes improvements. These areas allow for increased programming and use for residents.

City of Coral Gables

The city of Coral Gables encourages its citizens to engage in more active and healthy lifestyles. The Coral Gables Farmers Market, now in its 26th season, is designed as a small outdoor European-style green market, with historic Coral Gables City Hall as a backdrop. South Florida produce is available at the market, as well as healthy baked goods and gourmet specialty foods. The city also has a streetscape project and the goal of the project is to enhance the economic vitality of the downtown district by transforming the city's main street, Miracle Mile and Giralda Avenue to provide a cohesive pedestrian-friendly experience with garden areas, outdoor dining, improved lighting, wayfinding, public art and more.

City of Deerfield Beach

The city of Deerfield Beach has been recognized as a 2016 Playful City USA Community. The city recognizes the benefits of play and understands physical and cognitive development is realized by offering accessible play to all children under the guidance of the Parks and Recreation Department. The city recognizes it has a responsibility to provide safe recreational facilities and play environments that promotes balanced and active play for all its residents. In addition, the city was awarded the Smart Growth Excellence Award by the Smart Growth Partnership for the Deerfield Beach Complete Streets Guidelines.

City of Doral

The city of Doral actively promotes and implements ways to create a healthy lifestyle. For example, the city has implemented a personal training permit to allow personal trainers to train clients at the city parks and use park amenities, while benefiting from being outside. Because of this commitment to health, the city of Doral has also received the Fit-Friendly Award from the American Heart Association.

City of Fort Lauderdale

The city of Fort Lauderdale adopted a Complete Streets policy in 2013 and continues to work with partner agencies to increase bicycle facilities, add new bike lanes and support and maintain a network of walking routes. As a result, the city has received the Smart Growth Partnership Award for Walkable Communities. In addition, the city has adopted ordinances for allowing mobile fresh produce vending operations, urban farms, and community gardens.

City of Hallandale Beach

The city of Hallandale Beach received a Healthy Community Zone grant to promote a walkable community, increase access to healthy foods and support smoking cessation. The city offers a free mini-bus service for residents that provides transportation to grocery stores and parks and will soon include a stop at the city's new community garden.

City of Hollywood

The city of Hollywood is committed to providing a healthy environment for its residents as well as its employees. Senior physical activity programs, employee wellness programs, exercise equipment at parks and weight/workout rooms at community centers are just some of the available options. As part of the city's commitment to continually improve the lives of their residents, the city initiated the Get Walking program. This program provides free pedometers at several locations around the city as well as an online map of each location, complete with tips on safe and efficient walking.

City of Key West

The city of Key West was recently awarded a grant to develop an extensive Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan in 2017 and plans to achieve both the walk-friendly and bike-friendly designations. The city also regularly provides vegetable seedlings for residents and partners with the local extension service to teach people how to establish gardens in their own backyards.

City of Marathon

The city of Marathon maintains a number of community parks offering a variety of activities, including playgrounds, basketball courts with lights, volleyball courts, exercise stations and walking paths. The city is also working on plans for a community garden initiative.

City of Miami

The city of Miami is actively working on several Complete Streets projects in various neighborhoods around the city. The city has installed speed bumps, traffic circles and medians in neighborhoods to slow down traffic and encourage active transportation. In addition, the city is working to create new and expand existing bike paths throughout the city.

City of Miramar

The city of Miramar provides numerous physical activity options to residents of all ages and physical capabilities to enjoy. The park system includes 4 recreational facilities that offer fitness-related classes and programs; 2 large swimming facilities with water park playgrounds; and a state-of-the-art sports complex which is one of only four “Class 2” internationally certified tracks in the United States. The city also features an exercise route within Miramar Regional Park to provide specifically designed as an option to residents and visitors with disabilities. In addition, Miramar currently works with various organizations to provide free and affordable health screenings, health fairs and offer other opportunities to residents experiencing health inequities. The success of the Miramar Community Garden, the first “micro-farming” system in Broward County, demonstrates the importance of a local food system and healthy living education in low-income neighborhoods.

City of Oakland Park

The city of Oakland Park encourages physical activity and healthy nutrition for children, adults and senior citizens. The city’s urban farm offers Americans with Disabilities (ADA) accessible garden beds and educational classes to community members. The urban farm has been operating since 2014 and offers a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm share, produce for sale on Saturdays and fresh hydroponically grown greens. There are classes on organic pest management, seed starting, planting techniques and related topics. Cooking demos and community events are held at the farm as well.

City of Plantation

The city of Plantation has twice been named one of America’s Alliance “100 Best Communities for Young People,” which considers opportunities for physical activity and nutrition as part of its award criteria. The city has built and maintains nearly 15 miles of recreational trails throughout Plantation that connect shopping centers, post office and restaurants to residential neighborhoods. The trails are for non-motorized traffic and are to be used for bicycling, jogging, walking and in-line skating. In addition, the city operates a farmer’s market in a prime location allowing convenient access to the market for thousands of residents and visitors.

City of Weston

The city of Weston has built and maintains over 46 miles of marked bike lanes to assist and protect cyclists. The extensive system of bike lanes connects cyclists to commercial and private neighborhoods, schools and city parks. In 2015, the city initiated the installation of three fix-it bike repair stations along the most heavily traveled bike routes, and in 2016 added an addition two fix-it bike repair stations in city parks along the routes to assist cyclists with simple repairs. Weston also promotes various markets throughout the community and encourages healthy eating through a weekly community newsletter series.

City of Wilton Manors

The city of Wilton Manors acknowledges the importance of a healthy diet. The city operates a green market within a designated low-income neighborhood and provides a bi-weekly farmers market. The city's Leisure Services Department operates a program for children involving nutrition education and hopes to expand and enhance their current senior wellness program.

Islamorada, Village of Islands

Islamorada has a culture of health and is a popular destination for cycle racing and distance running. The village recently installed new outdoor gym equipment at a local park and has made improvements to park playgrounds. There is a limit on fast food density in Islamorada and pop-up farmer's markets are operated at different times and locations throughout the village.

Town of Miami Lakes

Connectivity is key in the town of Miami Lakes. A new mobile app available for the town's residents includes a pedestrian perspective feature. This app allows residents to submit their concerns regarding unsafe bike paths, incomplete sidewalks and missing bus stops. The town also engages the community through surveys, forums and workshops when planning community development projects or future programming opportunities. In addition, the town offers ongoing fitness and nutrition programs for youth, adults and seniors in the community all at no cost.

Town of Cutler Bay

The town of Cutler Bay implements a Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. Cutler Bay actively improves its existing sidewalk network connectivity by implementing ADA Ramps on all resurfacing projects and sidewalk improvement projects and implements bicycle lanes on full Roadway reconstruction and improvement projects on the Towns arterial and collector roads as part of a Complete Street design. Cutler Bay also has a community garden located in one of the parks and will be opening a senior center in 2017 which will include a gym and offer fitness classes.

About Healthiest Weight Florida

To learn more about Healthiest Weight Florida, please visit www.HealthiestWeightFL.com. A list of the 2017 Champion Communities and best practices can be found online at: www.HealthiestWeightFL.com/Recognition.html.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](http://www.nacac.org), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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