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SOUTHEAST FLORIDA CELEBRATES 2016 HEALTHIEST WEIGHT COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS



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West Palm Beach, Fla.— Today, Florida Department of Health announced the 80 communities recognized as 2016 Healthy Weight Community Champions, including four communities in the West Palm Beach 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.

Indian River County

City of Vero Beach

The city supports and maintains a network of walking trails/routes and bicycling routes that are connected and lead to destinations such as markets, commercial uses and residences.

"Healthiest Weight Community Champion is a designation that all citizens in Vero Beach can be proud of," said City Clerk Tammy Vock. "We will strive to continue finding new ways to live a healthy lifestyle."

Martin County

City of Stuart

The city has a long standing history of supporting public transportation by developing a microtransit system, the Downtown Tram service, which connects to the County's transit system for improved accessibility. The city has been selected to receive grant monies from the Florida Department of Transportation due to the uniqueness of the programs ability to provide mobility to over 40,000 people a year.

"The city of Stuart takes great pride in being named a Healthiest Weight Community Champion," said City Manager Paul Nicoletti. "This was a community wide endeavor and the recognition lets us know that we are on the right track toward improving the health of all of our citizens."

Palm Beach County

City of Delray Beach

Delray Beach promoted "Bike to Work Day," urging people to switch from the gas pedal to the bicycle pedal. As part of National Bike Month, Delray Beach encouraged drivers to leave their cars at home and take advantage of the ideal venue that the city offers for bike riding not only on this day, but all year long.

"The City of Delray Beach is honored to have been selected as a Healthiest Weight Community Champion," said Suzanne Fisher, Parks and Recreation Director. "We recognize the importance of health and fitness within our community and will continue to promote events, programs and activities that focus on healthy and active lifestyles for all ages."

St. Lucie County

City of Port St. Lucie

The Port St. Lucie Community Garden opened in October 2015, and is a half-acre site which was developed through the assistance of grant funding. There are 44 garden plots where the public may grow organic fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers. Four additional plots are wheelchair accessible and are situated on concrete slabs.

"We are excited to be included as one of the healthiest weight community champions for this year," said Human Resources Director Jerome Post. "Going forward we hope to continue and expand our efforts to promote healthy living in Port St. Lucie."

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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