

Feb. 6, 2017

SOUTHEAST FLORIDA CELEBRATES 2017 HEALTHY WEIGHT COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS



Contact:

Communications Office

NewsMedia@flhealth.gov

850-245-4111

West Palm Beach, 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.

City of Boynton Beach

The city of Boynton Beach is committed to enhancing the overall health and wellness of its residents. The city is currently updating their comprehensive plan, Complete Streets plan and redevelopment plan to reinforce this commitment. In addition, the city offers community gardens, promotes mobile vending of fresh produce and has agreements with local schools for public use of sports fields.

City of Delray Beach

As a coastal city that attracts many guests for the beach and events, the city of Delray Beach strongly encourages multimodal transportation. The city has adopted a bicycle/pedestrian report to help identify locations where capital improvements are needed to improve the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians. In addition, the city is

currently working on a project, Uptown Atlantic, that will provide a grocery store as well as other commercial space and housing in a distressed area of Delray Beach. The project will redevelop several blocks that include blighted and underutilized land in this neighborhood.

City of Fellsmere

The city of Fellsmere is implementing a Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health (PACE EH), a method for engaging communities to identify their health concerns, take action on their environmental health problems and improve their health and quality of life. So far, residents have identified a need for more streetlights and sidewalks and the city has formulated specific action plans to ensure these needs are met.

City of Lake Worth

The city of Lake Worth promotes pedestrian and bicycle activity. The city has already completed four greenway projects and is starting a new project that will convert unimproved roadways into walkable, bicycle friendly paths connecting people to other parts of the city.

City of Port St. Lucie

The city of Port St. Lucie's community garden opened in October 2015 and is a half-acre site which was developed through the assistance of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. There are 44 garden plots where the public may grow organic fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers. Four additional plots are wheelchair accessible. Currently, almost all 48 plots have been registered for use by residents.

Okeechobee County

Okeechobee County has developed both a sidewalk master plan and a recreation master plan and has coordinated with the Department of Transportation to expand State Road 70E to include a biking trail. Various public walking trails are readily available to residents and visitors and are kept in proper condition. In addition, the county also allows for mobile fresh produce vending and working with the city of Okeechobee to open a farmer's market.

St. Lucie County

St. Lucie County is committed to good health and overall wellness for its citizens. St. Lucie County's Environmental Resources Department hosts weekly winter Nature Series with guided educational hikes, typically starting in October and continuing through May each year. These free programs give participants an opportunity to explore some of the 42 miles of hiking trails that are located throughout the county's nearly 11,000 acres of environmentally significant lands. In addition, the Healthy St. Lucie Coalition is moving forward with a Community Health Improvement Plan that focuses on eating healthy from birth, eating healthy for life and moving more and feeling better.

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](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

Follow us on Twitter at [@HealthyFla](#) and on [Facebook](#). For more information about the Florida Department of Health please visit www.FloridaHealth.gov.