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Quality Institute Releases Mayors Wellness Campaign New Jersey “Healthy Town” Designations for 2018

PRINCETON, New Jersey — The New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute has issued its annual New Jersey “Healthy Town” designation to eight communities participating in the Mayors Wellness Campaign (MWC), a program of the Quality Institute, in partnership with the New Jersey State League of Municipalities.

Another seven towns were designated as *2018 Healthy Towns to Watch* and three were designated as *2018 Healthy Town in the Making*.

Each year communities participating in the MWC complete a comprehensive application outlining the research they’ve done to identify their community health needs, explain how they have organized their local MWC committee, and highlight the actions they’ve taken to make their communities a healthier place to live, work, and play.

The MWC is now in its 12th year. The Quality Institute provides participating communities with a toolkit on how to get started, guidance on how to identify local health needs, and examples of specific actions that other communities are taking to improve health and wellness in their community. The resources and toolkit are available here <http://www.njhcqi.org/MWCtoolkit>.

“The commitment to improving health and wellness, by these Mayors and volunteers, is impressive” said Linda Schwimmer, President and CEO of the Quality Institute. “It was inspiring to read their applications this year and we are excited to share some examples of their great work.”

The following programs were implemented by the *2018 Healthy Towns*:

Bergenfield, 2018 Healthy Town

Bergenfield identified obesity and cardiovascular health as top concerns among residents and this year placed a focus on address it through programming including:

- Weightlifting with the Mayor and local gym instructors at the Bergenfield High School.
- Walk with the Mayor — Mayor Norman Schmelz led weekly walks alongside a public health nurse to provide health information to participants.
- Community Weight loss Challenge - a series of physical activity programs led by Mayor Schmelz that provided exercise classes to residents with regular weigh-ins.

"Since I have been Mayor, we have worked hard at the Mayors Wellness Campaign and encourage our residents to get involved," said Mayor Schmelz. "Each year, we have added something new to the program and the residents look forward to the events every year ... healthy eating seminars, growing our own food in the community garden and more. We have partnered with our library, schools, businesses and our restaurants that offer specials on healthy menu items. Winning the award this year is extra special as Bergenfield Public Health Nurse Patricia August, MSN, has won the Public Health Nurse of the Year Award for 2018. I'm so proud of Patricia, our volunteers, our business partners and mostly our residents for embracing change with diet and exercise."

Chatham, 2018 Healthy Town

Chatham Borough and Chatham Township jointly led the MWC to coordinate efforts toward improving the health of residents. During an initial assessment, the MWC committee identified mental health stigma as a top concern for the community. To address this, Chatham offered the following programs:

- STAY – An adult education program on suicide prevention provided through the library that provides parents and caregivers with information on how to help loved ones cope with crisis situations.
- Project Community Pride – The initiative offers one-on-one free counseling for adolescents and their families in emotional crisis due to family dysfunction, behavior issues at school or in the community.

Aside from raising awareness and support around mental health, the Chatham MWC led a Mobility in Nature program that provided a community walkability study of a 3.3 mile loop through downtown shopping areas.

"Achieving the Healthy Town designation is a tremendous achievement for Chatham Borough," said Mayor Bruce Harris. "It reflects our commitment to being a sustainable community and our recognition that healthy lifestyles on the part of the residents are a key component of a community. Congratulations to our Mayors' Wellness team, led by Chairman Brian George MS, MBA, FACHE, and Council Member Victoria Fife supported by Janice Piccolo Director of Community Services, which has done so much to promote healthy living and worked very hard to complete our application."

Montclair, 2018 Healthy Town

Montclair's MWC has focused its programs on "making the healthy choice the easy choice." In working toward this goal, Montclair has included the following in its programming:

- Lifelong Montclair – An aging-in-place initiative focused on transforming Montclair into an age-friendly environment.
- Employee Wellness Program – Montclair has incorporated several challenges to incentivize municipal employees in leading healthier lifestyles, such as the Maintain Don't Gain Challenge, Workout 2 Win Challenge, and Friends and Family CPR Challenge with about 120 employees participate.

Aside from employee wellness programs, Montclair has registered over 800 adults and nearly 2,000 youth for recreational activities as part of the Mayors Wellness Campaign.

"I am thrilled that Montclair has been designated as a MWC Healthy Town for 2018," said Mayor Robert Jackson. "Our township departments and community partners are dedicated to providing a broad array of opportunities for promotion of healthy behaviors. Whether it is physical spaces like parks and parklets, sports or exercise options, access to healthy foods and nutrition information, and plenty of events, celebrations and opportunities for socialization and community engagement, Montclair has an abundance of resources designed to improve the health and wellness of its residents. I would like to sincerely thank the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute for recognizing our great Town."

Morristown, 2018 Healthy Town

Top concerns for Morristown include increased physical activity for all ages, especially seniors. To address these issues, Morristown offered the following activities:

- Senior Chair Yoga – Modified yoga that can be done while seated allows for participants who would otherwise be unable to partake in yoga classes to benefit.
- Senior Holiday Party – Addresses loneliness within the senior community during the holiday season and provides an opportunity for isolated seniors to socialize and participate in community events.
- Mayor's Walk and Talk – Mayor Timothy Dougherty leads walks with residents to promote physical activity.

In addition, Community Family Day celebrates physical activity and encourages social mindfulness. More than 500 residents participated in Morristown's MWC

"On behalf of the town and the Morristown Mayor's Wellness Campaign, I am honored to receive the Mayors Wellness Campaign Healthy Town for 2018 designation," said Mayor Dougherty. "The mission of the Mayor's Wellness Campaign is to develop, implement and encourage active and healthy living within our community and this designation reflects our commitment to making health and wellness a top priority in Morristown."

Plainfield, 2018 Healthy Town

Top concerns in Plainfield include health literacy, nutrition, and physical activity. To address these issues, free health education classes were provided to residents. Other activities include:

- Lime Bike Initiative – Plainfield worked with a bike share company called Lime Bikes to provide residents with access to bicycles across the city.
- Walk Off Challenge – All residents are eligible to participate in the free program. Participants register their steps each week online with the health educator and the winner is awarded the “Walk Off Champion” award.

In addition to the Walk Off Challenges, Plainfield also provides nutrition counseling to municipal employees. Plainfield also works to improve access to healthy and affordable foods through the Healthy Corner Store Initiative.

“Thank you to the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute for this award, it's an honor for Plainfield to be chosen as a winner of the Mayors Wellness Campaign Healthy for 2018. My administration recognizes that growth and progress in our city must be holistic, and the health of our residents must be a priority. As Mayor, it has been a focus to encourage and promote healthier lifestyles, and change outcomes before there is need for medical intervention. At the end of the day it's about ensuring a decent, healthy, quality of life for every resident.” - Mayor Adrian O. Mapp, Plainfield, NJ.

Princeton, 2018 Healthy Town

Top concerns in Princeton include sedentary lifestyles and age-related social inclusion. To address these issues, Princeton implemented the following programs:

- MWC’s Conversation of Your Life (COYL) — A speaker helps participants navigate the sensitive subject of end-of-life decisions by highlighting the importance of these discussions as they help families to fulfill the wishes of their loved ones. At the events, some play out scenarios to empower participants.
- Mayor’s Bike Ride – Mayor Liz Lempert leads residents through Princeton’s Bike Network to promote cycling as an exercise and bicycle safety in the community.
- Community Without Walls – A virtual retirement community offering peer support and social interaction to members. Seniors volunteer as mentors with children and adolescents.

Additionally, Princeton was designated as the first age-friendly community by the World Health Organization for its commitment to developing an inclusive community for all ages.

“We’re thrilled to see Princeton recognized as a Healthy Town,” said Mayor Lempert of Princeton. “We’ve learned that for health and wellness initiatives to be successful we need a broad-based community effort, and this award is a recognition of our collective teamwork and invaluable partnerships with community volunteers, local non-profits, our schools, and the business community.”

Stone Harbor, 2018 Healthy Town

After being named a Healthy Town in 2016, Stone Harbor again received the top award in 2018 for a variety of activities, including:

- Elementary school yoga – The program is led by Mayor Judy Davies-Dunhour on Thursday mornings at the local elementary school to promote physical activity among students.
- Healthy Art For Your Sweetheart – Children participate in an after-school activity where they create healthy snacks from fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Introductory Fitness Classes – As part of the Mayors Wellness Campaign, five participating local gyms and fitness studios offered free introductory fitness classes to nearly 70 participating residents.

Additionally, the Mayor has led weekly Walks with the Mayor and a School Kick-Off event led by MWC spokeswoman Joetta Clark Diggs.

Westwood, 2018 Healthy Town

After being named a Healthy Town in 2017, Westwood again received the top honor in 2018 for a variety of activities including:

- Running and Walking Groups – Westwood’s MWC has organized running and walking groups to promote physical activity in a social environment.
- Forever Young Program – Addresses multiple dimensions of wellness through classes such as Senior Yoga, Pickle Ball, MELT Method, comedy workshop, and nutrition seminars.
- SNAP (Special Needs Activity Program) – Offers a variety of sports and arts and crafts programs for school-aged children and young adults with special needs. This program is open to all residents to promote inclusivity within the community.

Additionally, Adult Coloring Workshops were provided to Westwood residents to address mental health and social wellbeing.

“I am delighted that the New Jersey Health Care Quality institute has once again recognized Westwood as a Healthy Town. This designation is testament to the dedicated volunteers who work so hard to bring beneficial programming into our community. This shows that our efforts have become sustainable and appreciated by our residents who now lead healthier lifestyles. We look forward to continuing to add and improve programs and services into the future,” said Mayor John Birkner.

The following programs were implemented by the *2018 Healthy Towns To Watch*:

Bridgewater, 2018 Healthy Town to Watch

Top concerns in Bridgewater are nutrition, physical activity, and mental health. To address these issues, Bridgewater has offered health fairs to the community to provide access to pertinent health information. Other activities include:

- Eco-Blast – a collaboration of nearly 60 local community organizations to provide a fun-filled day for families while promoting physical activity and conservation. Over 800 residents attended.
- Mayor Goes To Camp – Mayor Dan Hayes visits Bridgewater’s day camps to read a book and talk about keeping the community clean. As part of the education, the mayor enrolls students in the Bridgewater Litter Patrol.
- Benefits of Walking Lunch and Learn – Provided to the community and employees on the health benefits of walking followed by a walk around the municipal complex to demonstrate how easy 1,000 steps can be.

In addition, the township offered two Mental Health First Aid trainings and certified over 50 employees on how to identify and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders.

"It is an honor that Bridgewater has been selected as a Mayors Wellness Campaign Healthy Town to Watch by New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute." Mayor Hayes said. "This is a very selective process and I’m proud of the creative programs and information our team offers to promote health and wellness in the community. I look forward to sharing the exciting Mayors Wellness Campaign initiatives we have in store for Bridgewater residents in 2019."

Elizabeth, 2018 Healthy Town to Watch

Top concerns in Elizabeth include obesity, physical activity, and access to health foods. To address this, Elizabeth provided the following activities:

- Play Streets – An educational and fitness event for youth and adults designed to encourage and support overall health. Play Streets provides greater access to open space and opportunities for residents to be active together.
- A Better You – A series of health and wellness events targeted toward families. Health literature, cookbooks, portion control plates, and meal prep containers are offered to participants.
- Mobile Food Market – Addresses food insecurity by providing monthly distribution of fresh produce, food demonstrations, and samplings for residents.

Approximately 6,000 residents participated in Mayors Wellness Campaign events in 2018.

"Overall wellness is one of Elizabeth’s biggest initiatives and providing options helps residents achieve their fitness goals as well as creates more opportunities within our community," said

Mayor J. Christian Bollwage. "It is an honor to receive this designation as a healthy town and we look forward to seeing what else we can do to promote an active lifestyle for our residents," said Mayor Christian Bollwage.

Freehold Township, 2018 Healthy Town to Watch

Top concerns in Freehold Township include chronic illnesses and sedentary lifestyles. To address this, the township deployed a mobile farmers market for residents. Other activities include:

- The Lifestyle Change – A free yearlong program available to all employees to improve fitness assessments and biometric assessments for participants. After one year, the group lost a total of 160 pounds.
- Healthy Cooking Videos – A series of videos and recipes with seasonal ingredients from a local organic farm were published online with hard copies available at multiple community events.

In addition, walking audits were conducted throughout the township to assess its walkability and pedestrian safety. Overall, over 1,000 residents and employees participated.

"Once again, through the efforts of the members of the Mayor's Wellness Campaign Committee, Freehold Township is proud to have received the 'Healthy Town to Watch' designation," said Mayor Barbara McMorrow. "The efforts of our staff and our volunteers whose vision is to make our family town a healthier place to live, work and play have stayed focused on that mission. From a shared box program that brings organic produce to our residents' tables to after-hours employee yoga at Town Hall to programs that challenge our youths and our young-at-hearts to be more physically fit, we continue to offer strategies for a healthier lifestyle."

Oradell Borough, 2018 Healthy Town to Watch

After two years of joining the MWC, Oradell Borough received the honor in 2018 for a variety of activities including:

- Supermarket Tours – Local supermarkets offer tours and nutrition education to residents.
- Walk with the Mayor – Mayor Dianne Didio led walks around the Oradell Reservoir.
- Health Screenings – Free blood pressure screenings were offered to residents by the Volunteer Ambulance Corps.

For 2019, Oradell will work to expand the Employee Wellness Program and offer alternative workouts for residents.

“We are very excited to have received ‘Healthy Town To Watch’ for last year’s Mayors Wellness Get Fit Challenge and look forward to improving our program so that we can move up to the next level of recognition,” said Mayor Didio.

Ridgewood, 2018 Healthy Town to Watch

Ridgewood’s goals for 2018 were to promote a stigma-free environment for all ages, provide health education, and encourage physical activity. To address this, Ridgewood offered the following activities:

- Weight Loss Challenge – A 12-week program available to all residents that consists of various events, including exercise classes, walking groups, weekly support meetings, and health education seminars. The first 75 participants received free pre and post blood tests for cholesterol and blood sugar levels. One-on-one nutrition counseling with a local nutritionist and blood pressure screenings were provided to all participants.
- Annual Wellness Festival – A collaboration of local businesses and community organizations to promote health and social inclusion.

In addition, Ridgewood offered Mental Health First Aid trainings to teach residents how to identify and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders as part of its Stigma-Free initiative.

Rutherford, 2018 Healthy Town to Watch

Top concerns in Rutherford include sedentary lifestyle and chronic illnesses. To address this, Rutherford’s MWC offered the following activities:

- Exceptional Individuals – A program where participants with disabilities partake in community wellness sessions, followed by a healthy dinner at a local restaurant.
- Walk to School with the Mayor – During the months of May and October, Mayor Joseph De Salvo walks to school with students from each school. The students learn about pedestrian safety and receive “HEALTHY!” stickers.
- Mayor’s Bike Rides – Mayor De Salvo leads monthly bike rides with residents through the different parks in Rutherford between March and November.

Approximately 2,500 residents participated in activities for 2018.

Scotch Plains, 2018 Healthy Town to Watch

Cardiovascular disease was the primary goal for Scotch Plains’ 2018 Mayors Wellness Campaign. Some activities to address this include:

- Mayor's Medal Program – An incentive program to encourage residents to participate in the many 5Ks available throughout the year. Residents who participate in at least three races are invited to the final council meeting of the year where they are presented with a medal.
- Start with Hello – An anti-bullying initiative that teaches children and adolescents how to be more socially inclusive and connected to one another. After the Parkland shooting, residents raised concerns about bullying in schools. As a result, Mayor Al Smith became a Sandy Hook Promise Leader with the goal of anti-bullying initiatives into the school curriculum.

Approximately 3,000 residents participated in all MWC events in 2018.

"It is an honor for Scotch Plains to be designated as a Healthy Town to Watch for 2018. The residents of Scotch Plains continue to be supportive and involved in our Mayors Wellness Campaign. With the distinction of this honor, it is my hope that even more residents will participate in our events. This has been a very rewarding experience for both myself and Margaret Heisey, our program director. Not only do we have fun as we offer opportunities to our residents to become healthier by eating well, exercising, and managing stress but we have seen our own health improve as well. I can only encourage my fellow mayors to actively engage in the Mayor's Wellness Campaign, it may be one of the most rewarding accomplishments of their time in office," said Mayor Alexander Smith.

The following programs were implemented by the *2018 Healthy Towns in the Making*:

Jefferson Township, 2018 Healthy Town in the Making

After a robust Community Needs Assessment conducted by the health department, hypertension and obesity were identified as top concerns in the community. Some activities to address this include:

- Hike for Hope – A suicide prevention and fundraiser. This walk raises awareness about mental health and connecting people to resources, and ultimately reducing the stigma around mental illness.
- Bike and Trike – An event with the township police and rescue squad educating residents on bike and pedestrian safety.

Approximately 400 residents attended Mayors Wellness Campaign events in 2018.

"We are thrilled to be designated a Mayors Wellness Healthy Town in the Making for 2019. Jefferson Townships motto for many years has been The Recreation Capital of New Jersey with

all of open space and lake communities within our borders,” Mayor Eric Wilsusen said. “We are looking forward to making Jefferson Township a healthier community!”

Vernon Township, 2018 Healthy Town in the Making

Top concerns in Vernon Township include sedentary lifestyle and chronic disease. Some activities to address this include:

- Couch to 5k – Mayor Harry Shortway leads residents in an effort to encourage physical activity.
- Trails of Vernon Challenge – In celebration of National Trail Day, Vernon Township offers a self-guided challenge to complete 50 miles on any trails available throughout the township.

In addition, the Vernon Greenway Project will build a ADA compliant pathway for pedestrian and bicycle traffic connecting municipal facilities to the town center.

"I am blessed to travel this path surrounded by devoted staff and volunteers, who are committed to our community. Together, we are making Vernon a better place to live, work and play," Mayor Shortway said.

Wildwood Crest, 2018 Healthy Town in the Making

Top concerns in Wildwood Crest include nutrition and physical activity. Some activities to address this include:

- Community Bike Ride – Mayor Don Cabrera led residents on a bike ride while discussing bike safety.
- Wellness Weekend – includes an employee basketball game and a Wellness Walk led by Mayor Cabrera where the first 100 participants received Mayors Wellness Campaign shirts.

Future goals for Wildwood Crest’s Mayors Wellness Campaign include installing walkway markers to designate distances to help walkers, runners, and bikers know how far they have gone.

“Wildwood Crest has just started to scratch the surface in its wellness initiatives,” Mayor Don Cabrera said. “You can’t find a more perfect community setting for wellness with our excellent beach, parks, events, pool, bike path — not to mention our dedicated residents and vacationers. There’s more to come.”

For More Information

To learn more about the MWC, visit: <http://www.njhcqi.org/MWC> or contact Adrian Diogo at adiogo@njhcqi.org.

About the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute

The New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute is the only independent, nonpartisan, multi-stakeholder advocate for health care quality in New Jersey. The Quality Institute's mission is to undertake projects and promote system changes that ensure that quality, safety, accountability, and cost-containment are closely linked to the delivery of health care services in New Jersey.

About the Mayors Wellness Campaign

The Mayors Wellness Campaign is a program of the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute in partnership with the New Jersey State League of Municipalities. The program empowers mayors across New Jersey with evidence-based tools, strategies, and support to champion health and wellness in their communities.