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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 12<sup>th</sup> 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.

In addition to the Healthy Towns, the designees for “2018 Healthy Town To Watch” are:

- Bridgewater

- Elizabeth
- Freehold Township
- Oradell
- Ridgewood
- Rutherford
- Scotch Plains

And, the designees for “2018 Healthy Town in the Making” are:

- Jefferson Township
- Vernon Township
- Wildwood Crest

### **For More Information**

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