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Quality Institute Releases Mayors Wellness Campaign New Jersey “Healthy Town” Designations for 2019

PRINCETON, New Jersey — Mobile fresh food markets. Community walks. Weight-loss challenges. Healthy corner stores. Outdoor yoga. Bike trails. Health fairs.

These and other innovative programs helped New Jersey communities win recognition through the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute’s annual Mayors Wellness Campaign “New Jersey Healthy Town” designation.

Seven communities participating in the Mayors Wellness Campaign (MWC), a program of the Quality Institute, in partnership with the New Jersey State League of Municipalities, were named *2019 Healthy Towns*. Another 12 towns were designated as *2019 Healthy Towns to Watch*, and five were designated as *2019 Healthy Town Up and Coming*.

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 healthier places to live, work, and play.

Here’s a listing of the winners and the programs that helped them receive recognition from the MWC.

Bergenfield, 2019 Healthy Town

Bergenfield is receiving this designation for the second year in a row. Bergenfield identified diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular health, and stress as top concerns among residents. The town created the following programs to address these concerns:

- Aromatherapy, meditation, and yoga classes were all offered to help increase knowledge about stress management.
- Walk with the Mayor — Former Mayor Norman Schmelz led weekly walks to increase physical activity and encourage a sense of community.
- Free 30-day gym memberships — MWC participants 18 and older were offered a coupon for free gym memberships to increase access to physical activity.

"Promoting public health by engaging the community, providing access to quality parks, and sustainable and healthy lifestyles is a top priority for my administration, and achieving this distinction is a great honor," said Mayor Arvin Amatorio. "There are many people working in Borough Hall and numerous volunteers who are responsible for making Bergenfield a healthy community. We have many groups and residents that join our efforts in promoting a healthy lifestyle and helping our residents get access to medical professionals and lifestyle experts. I am committed to expanding our outreach programs and health fairs and promoting healthy living with partners in and around Bergenfield. I'd like to thank the Mayors Wellness Campaign team for the work they do, supporting and recognizing municipalities like Bergenfield that are focused on the health and well being of its residents."

Bridgewater, 2019 Healthy Town

Bridgewater has continued excellent programming after being designated a 2018 Healthy Town. Top concerns in Bridgewater are mental health, obesity, chronic disease, and access to care. Bridgewater has also focused on environmental health and sustainability in their community. Programming includes:

- Conversations of Your Life (COYL) Panel — Community education focused on end-of-life care decisions.
- Bridgewater Farmers Market — Developed in partnership with Quality Institute member RWJBH Somerset and local nonprofits to increase fruit and vegetable consumption in the community.
- Mind, Body Senior Health Fair— Health fair aimed at the senior population that focused both on physical and mental health.

Elizabeth, 2019 Healthy Town

Elizabeth has moved up from Healthy Town to Watch in 2018 to achieve the Healthy Town designation this year. Top concerns in Elizabeth include obesity, lack of physical activity, and access to health foods. To address this, Elizabeth provided the following activities:

- Women's Wellness Brunch — This event encourages women of all ages to live a healthy lifestyle by offering nutrition workshops, aerobics, and yoga.

- 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 8,000 residents attended community health education.

“On behalf of the City of Elizabeth, I would like to say how honored we are to be designated a 2019 Healthy Town by the Mayors Wellness Campaign,” said Mayor J. Christian Bollwage. “Our Department of Health and Human Services works hard to stay committed in making healthy living in our city a priority. From community walks to health fairs and awareness events, we work together to ensure residents of all ages are living an active lifestyle.”

Freehold Township, 2019 Healthy Town

After being awarded a 2018 Healthy Town to Watch, Freehold strengthened its programming with the following activities to become a 2019 Healthy Town:

- Park Map — A two-year project aimed at increasing awareness of township parks. This two-year project resulted in over 26,000 collective views of the park map and increased use of township parks. It also raised awareness of “My Playground” at Michael J. Tighe Park, which is a playground for children of all abilities and a source of pride for the township.
- Walk with the Doc — In collaboration with Prime Surgicare and Quality Institute member CentraState, Walk with the Doc aims to bring residents together to engage in physical activity and engage with health care professionals.

“As the Mayor of Freehold Township, I am proud to see the progress we’ve made in improving the health of our community and look forward to continuing our work in making us the healthiest family town that we can,” said Mayor Lestor Preston.

Montclair, 2019 Healthy Town

Montclair is receiving the Healthy Town designation for the second year in a row. The mission of Montclair’s MWC is to provide a wide variety of places, recreation, social and educational opportunities for residents to participate in that will have a positive impact on their physical and mental wellbeing. To achieve this mission, Montclair supported the following programming:

- Conversations of Your Life (COYL)— A community education program of the Quality Institute aimed at bringing end-of-life conversations to residents.

- Health programs at the Montclair Public Library — In response to a decline in participation in clinic screening attendance, programs were held in the library to engage more residents.

“Many thanks to the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute for once again recognizing Montclair as a Mayor’s Wellness Campaign Healthy Town,” said Mayor Robert Jackson. “Our township departments and community partners continue providing a truly great variety of events and activities which promote healthy behaviors through sports and exercise options for all ages, access to healthful foods and nutrition information, newly-renovated parks and open spaces for outdoor recreation, organized events and celebrations, and numerous opportunities for community engagement — all designed to help improve the well-being of our residents.”

Plainfield, 2019 Healthy Town

Plainfield is receiving the Healthy Town designation for the second year in a row. Top concerns in Plainfield are health literacy, nutrition, and physical activity. To address these issues, free health education classes were provided to residents. Other activities include:

- Weight Loss Challenge — A 12-week curriculum provided by the local YMCA provides residents with education, tools, and activities to increase physical activity and healthy eating.
- Healthy Corner Store Initiative — Plainfield leveraged grant funding to support this effort, which helped increase access to fresh produce for residents who may not live in proximity to a grocery store.

In addition, Plainfield has provided extensive programming to its municipal employees through employee wellness initiatives and incentives.

“It's very gratifying to be awarded the designation of Healthy Town. Over the past several years, my administration, in partnership with the United Way of Union County, has worked hard to influence social outcomes in Plainfield. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Grotta Foundation have supported our efforts with grant funding, and this acknowledgment is proof that our efforts have borne fruit. I am committed to improving the quality of life for every single resident regardless of age, gender, race or economic circumstances,” said Mayor Adrian O. Mapp.

Scotch Plains, 2019 Healthy Town

Scotch Plains received a Healthy Town to Watch designation in 2018 and has worked hard to become a 2019 Healthy Town. Again in 2019, cardiovascular disease was the primary goal for

Scotch Plains' 2019 Mayors Wellness Campaign. The town also focused on mental health concerns in the community. Some activities provided this year included:

- Summer Solstice Yoga — Outdoor yoga was offered at no charge for residents, giving them the opportunity to increase their physical and mental wellbeing as well as connect with fellow residents.
- Foodstock — A summer food collection to help food pantries generate donations during a time of year when food scarcity is high. This addressed the issue of access to healthy foods as well.

Scotch Plains makes an effort to partner with local organizations for their programming and approximately 3,000 residents participated in MWC events in 2019.

“Achieving the Healthy Town designation is a tremendous achievement for Scotch Plains,” said Mayor Al Smith. “It reflects our commitment to being a sustainable community and our recognition that healthy lifestyles on the part of our residents are a key component of our community. Thank you to the MWC partners who, day-to-day, provide great wellness programs — healthy eating, exercise, mental wellness and clean environment — for our residents. Our working together as a team to maximize the wellness opportunities for our residents is amazing. Let me finally thank Margaret Heisey, my MWC Director, who tirelessly, enthusiastically and with great love uses her expertise to make this program a success. You just never know where Margaret and I will show-up to help promote and participate in a wellness program.”

The following communities were designated as *2019 Healthy Towns To Watch*:

City of Asbury Park, 2019 Healthy Town to Watch

Asbury Park's local needs assessment showed that residents suffer from higher rates of obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure than the rest of Monmouth County. Asbury Park provided the following programs aiming to improve the health of residents:

- Citywide Asbury Alive! — An event that closed city streets to motorized traffic, replacing vehicles with art, music, biking and walking to promote healthy living for the entire community.
- Fall Tailgate for Health — A community party providing a healthy lunch, health information and education, health screenings, and fun activities related to nutrition and health prevention.

“This designation of the City of Asbury Park as a Healthy Town to Watch is an outstanding achievement that reflects the tremendous efforts that our community has put forward over the

past several years, and shows that our commitment to being a sustainable, healthy, livable community is a key component of our growth,” said Mayor John Moor. “I would like to congratulate all of the members of our Mayors Wellness Committee, including the chair, Michael Manzella, and Wendi Glassman, who helped extensively with the application and volunteers for numerous events and initiatives. The entire Committee is very supportive of the program, including Vic Sood from Home Drug Store, Pam Montemurno from Coral Harbor Rehabilitation Center, Lisa Lee from EZ Ride, Doug Eagles from the Boys & Girls Club, Allison Cerco from Hackensack Meridian, as well as the Alliance for a Healthier Asbury Park, led by Nina Summerlin. We could not have achieved this designation without the support of our numerous partners in this endeavor.”

Denville, 2019 Healthy Town to Watch

Denville has focused on physical activity this year and aimed to increase access to programming that encouraged an active lifestyle, including:

- Senior Yoga and Exercise Classes — The Recreation Department runs low cost exercise and yoga classes for the senior residents. Not only does this encourage physical activity, but it can also reduce social isolation.
- Adult Softball Leagues — There is a league for both men and women over 30 to participate in throughout the summer months, four days a week.

Additionally, Denville is proud of the community garden that gives residents the opportunity to grow their own healthy foods. The gardens are a popular activity and traditionally there is waitlist for the plots each year.

“I am very happy to learn that Denville is being recognized and receiving the Healthy Town to Watch designation. I’d like to congratulate and thank our Recreation Director, Nick Panetta and all our volunteers for their efforts that enabled our community to receive this notable recognition,” said Mayor Thomas Andes.

Garwood, 2019 Healthy Town to Watch

The Garwood MWC has significant support not only from its current Mayor, but the former Mayor continues to be the driving force for the program as well. In addition to the programs Garwood provides for residents, such as supermarket tours and monthly Walks With the Mayor, Garwood has taken the lead on providing a space for Union County MWCs to come together to collaborate on programming and share best practices.

“Wellness and sustainability are growing concepts at workplaces and schools, so I am extremely proud of Garwood adding our community as a whole to the list of Healthy Towns to Watch. This outstanding accomplishment could not have been possible without the engagement from our

residents and from the volunteers on the Mayors Wellness Campaign, led by former Mayor Charles Lombardo,” Mayor Sara Todisco.

Morristown, 2019 Healthy Town to Watch

In 2019, Morristown offered programs to help improve the health and wellness of its residents and was able to partner with local organizations to provide transportation for some of these events. Programs include:

- 2019 Food Drive — A partnership with local businesses to raise awareness about food insecurity and collect donations for the local food bank.
- Mayors Wellness Initiative Community Meeting — An opportunity to engage more residents and collaborative partners to expand MWC capacity.
- 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.

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 Morristown Mayors Wellness Campaign, I am honored that Morristown has been designated as one of the 2019 New Jersey Healthy Towns to Watch by the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute,” said Mayor Timothy Dougherty. “The mission of the Mayors Wellness Campaign is to develop, implement and encourage active and healthy living within our community and this designation reflects our commitment to health and wellness in Morristown.”

Paterson, 2019 Healthy Town to Watch

Paterson is the newest MWC town and has started its program with support and enthusiasm from Mayor Andre Sayegh. Paterson is focused on issues of chronic disease, obesity, and nutrition.

- Mayor’s Walk to the Falls – Paterson kicked off a program with a community walk to the Great Falls beginning at City Hall to encourage residents to engage in physical activity
- The city has partnered with local grocery stores to offer a “MWC Discount” offering a sale on fresh fruits and vegetables sponsored by the MWC.

“The Healthy Town Designation is a significant accomplishment for the City of Paterson,” said Mayor Sayegh. “My Administration and the City of Paterson are dedicated to becoming more health conscious and leading a healthier lifestyle. Through a robust Mayors Wellness Campaign, led by the Paterson Division of Health, we are committed to improving the health and wellness of our residents. Paterson is on the move!”

Princeton, 2019 Healthy Town to Watch

Top concerns in Princeton were related to disaster preparedness and a focus on the senior population. Programs included:

- 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 fulfill the wishes of their loved ones. At the events, some play out scenarios to empower participants.
- Princeton Prepares – A voluntary community initiative that allows emergency responders to better serve residents who find it difficult to help themselves in the event of a disaster.

“We’re enthusiastic to see Princeton recognized again by the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute. This time, as a Healthy Town to Watch in 2019,” said Mayor Lempert of Princeton. “We’ve noticed that community health is only as strong as the relationships built with our community stakeholders and partners. I want to thank the Quality Institute for their work in showcasing the great work local towns are doing to improve the public's health.”

Ridgewood, 2019 Healthy Town to Watch

Ridgewood’s needs assessment showed the need for improvement of access to health care and behavioral health services, and access to chronic disease programs. Some activities provided include:

- 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.
- Stigma Free Initiative – Initiative aimed to engage residents in multiple activities throughout the year that raise awareness about mental health and reduce the stigma of having a mental health disorder.

“The Ridgewood Village Council cares deeply for the health and wellbeing of our residents. We support initiatives that promote emotional, mental and physical health. We have a very active and vibrant community that strives to constantly improve health and recreational programs as well as aging-in-place initiatives,” Mayor Ramon Hache.

Vernon Township, 2019 Healthy Town to Watch

The Vernon MWC has traditional health goals for Vernon such as encouraging healthy activities in all seasons, unplugging and getting outdoors, providing educational resources for healthy eating habits as well as ways to fit fitness into your life. The town also focused on creating a more sustainable community, bringing more arts to the community and implementing appealing family friendly activities. Additional goals extend beyond the scope of a specific wellness and look at the overall health of the community and its future. Former Mayor Harry Shortway initiated and was successful in many battles to protect Vernon's overall health. Mayor Howard Burrell is ready to continue with correcting a failing sewer system, recovering large unpaid debts due to the township, insuring that there is not the return of unsafe living conditions for renters in the Legends hotel, securing abandoned properties and continuing to collaborate with local citizens groups, plus county, state and federal elected officials in a way that has led to the resolution of an illegal dirt dumping in a residential zone of the town.

"It is indeed a significant achievement for Vernon Township to, again, be recognized as a Healthy Town. This award, and the rigorous standards of performance that are necessary for its achievement, are validation of the success of our on-going efforts to make Vernon Township an even better town in which to live and raise a family, as well as a town where businesses want to locate and prosper. I want to thank Ms. Mishelle Downtain, our town's Director of Recreation and Community Affairs, for the key role that she played in leading our Mayors Wellness Team in the planning, organizing, directing, and coordinating functions required in researching and gathering the information and data required for the application to be considered for this prestigious award," said Mayor Howard Burrell.

South Plainfield, 2019 Healthy Town to Watch

Top health concerns in South Plainfield include obesity, diabetes, and behavioral health issues. Programs to combat these issues include:

- Caught on a Walk — An initiative aimed at promoting community wellness and active lifestyles in which MWC committee members "caught" residents out for a walk, photographed and interviewed them for the local paper.
- Mayors Wellness Walk and Bike to School Day — Encouraged students to walk or bike to school to promote physical activity and community engagement.

Achieving the Healthy Town designation means a great deal to South Plainfield," said Mayor Matthew Anesh. "It reflects our teams commitment over the last several years to promote the importance of healthy lifestyles through fun, entertaining and educational community-wide events. Congratulations to our entire Mayors Wellness team for their efforts to plan and execute events that promote healthy living throughout the borough. A special thanks to Debbie Boyle and Scott Carey who worked tirelessly to complete our application."

Westwood, 2019 Healthy Town to Watch

This will be Westwood's third year receiving a Healthy Town designation. Programs for 2019 included:

- Conversations of Your Life (COYL) — A Quality Institute program aimed to improve end-of-life care planning from a cultural and community perspective.
- Forever Young Program — Addresses multiple dimensions of wellness through classes such as Senior Yoga, Pickle Ball, MELT Method, comedy workshop, and nutrition seminars.
- Take Control of Your Health — Self-care management strategies for living with a chronic disease presented to residents for free in a six-week workshop series.

Additionally, Westwood focused on increasing community engagement in recreational programs and park and outdoor space use. Over 600 residents participated in programming in 2019.

"In bringing the Mayors Wellness Campaign to Westwood, the goal was to promote a multi-dimensional approach to both personal and community wellness. We initiated a diverse array of programming designed to engage the involvement of a full spectrum of our citizenry. While a great many people and organizations have joined with us to make these programs successful, I would be remiss if I did not specifically point out our Recreation Director Gary Buchheister, Councilwoman Jodi Murphy, and Mayors ~~rs~~'s Wellness Program Coordinator Lisa Bontemps for their boundless enthusiasm to make ours one of the most successful programs in the state. I look forward to it's continued success and growth well into the future," said Mayor John Birkner Jr., Emeritus.

Wildwood Crest, 2019 Healthy Town to Watch

Top concerns in Wildwood Crest are nutrition and physical activity. Some activities designed as a result of feedback form residents include:

- 2nd Annual Mayors Wellness Walk — Elected officials, municipal employees, MWC committee members and residents joined together for a walk to kick off the 2019 programming and highlight the importance of physical activity and community engagement.
- Free Fitness Room — Free access to a township recreation fitness room significantly increased utilization.

Wildwood Crest's Mayors Wellness Campaign also achieved its goal from 2018 of installing walkway markers to designate distances to help walkers, runners, and bikers know how far they have gone.

"Wildwood Crest is proud to receive this recognition from the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute," Wildwood Crest Mayor Don Cabrera said. "The Crest has incorporated numerous

health and wellness initiatives over the past few years and plans to add even more in the near future. You can't find a more perfect community setting for wellness with our excellent beach, parks, events, pool, and bike path — not to mention our dedicated residents and vacationers. We're proud of our many wellness programs and activities and, as always, we're looking to add even more to serve our many residents and visitors."

Woodbridge Township, 2019 Healthy Town to Watch

Woodbridge's top health concerns include nutrition, wellness and lifestyle activity, and oral health availability. The town offers a variety of programming and events including:

- Tour de Woodbridge – A 30-mile bike tour encouraging physical activity. The ride is always held in September and 2019 was the 12th annual tour.
- Mayor's Smoothie Challenge – A healthy cooking challenge in partnership with Wegmans that encourages high school students to create healthy recipes.

Over 700 residents participated in programming in 2019.

"Woodbridge Township is proud to receive the prestigious Healthy Town designation from the New Jersey League of Municipalities' Mayors Wellness Campaign," said Woodbridge Mayor John E. McCormac. "Councilman Gregg Ficarra, Chairman of the Mayors Wellness Campaign, is dedicated to implementing wellness programs accessible to all residents of the Township - whether our residents are children, young adults, adults or seniors, living an active lifestyle is a vital part of life and Woodbridge's Wellness Campaign aims to encourage residents to participate in wellness."

The following towns were designated as *2019 Healthy Towns Up-and-Coming*

Evesham Township, 2019 Healthy Up-and-Coming

Evesham Township focused on increasing social cohesion and promoting healthy living through the following activities:

- Evesham Farmer's Market — Provides access to fresh, locally produced fruits and vegetables, meats, baked goods, and other locally produced products. It also engages local business and community group and provides a gathering place to reinforce a sense of community.
- Recreation Department Programs — Classes and programs for residents of all ages to participate in activities such as Tai Chi, tennis, watercolor painting, and golf programs.

Evesham partnered with community groups to provide over 10,000 residents with opportunities to participate in wellness activities in 2019.

Hillsborough Township, 2019 Healthy Up-and-Coming

Hillsborough utilized the Somerset County Community Health Improvement Plan to assess community needs and plan for programs including:

- Community Health Screenings — Health screenings made available to residents through the Hillsborough Health Department included blood sugar and blood pressure screenings, chiropractic assessments, and referrals for more comprehensive health screenings.
- The Benefit of Walking — Collaboration with community partners to bring health education about the benefits of walking and physical activity to residents.

In 2020, Hillsborough will focus on gaining more community engagement and resident participation to build upon the over 4,000 residents reached in 2019.

"Staying active and living a healthy lifestyle is important to all of us in Hillsborough Township. We are honored to have this recognition." Doug Tomson, Hillsborough Township Mayor.

Jefferson Township, 2019 Healthy Up-and-Coming

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:

- Free Community Yoga — Residents had access to free yoga classes at a local fitness center
- 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.

"We are thrilled to be designated a Mayors Wellness Healthy Town Up-and-Coming for 2019. Jefferson Townships motto for many years has been The Recreation Capital of New Jersey with all of the open space and lake communities within our borders," Mayor Eric Wilsusen said. "We are looking forward to making Jefferson Township a healthier community!"

Oradell Borough, 2019 Healthy Town Up-and-Coming

After receiving a designation last year, Oradell Borough continues to provide comprehensive programming such as senior exercise classes, yoga, self-defense workshops, Walk With the Mayor events, and supermarket tours. For 2020, Oradell will focus on becoming a Stigma Free Community to raise awareness about mental health issues.

"We are thrilled that Oradell has been designated an up and coming healthy town by the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute," said Mayor Dianne Camelo Didio. "Our Mayors Wellness Challenge has focused on physical and mental health, teaching our residents about healthier food options, mindfulness, and the importance of physical activity. It has also alerted residents

to serious health issues that might have gone undetected had the program not existed. We are energized for the kickoff of our 4th year of the wellness challenge in the borough."

Rutherford, 2019 Healthy Town Up-and-Coming

Rutherford received this designation after providing a wealth of opportunities for residents to participate in health and wellness activities such as free blood pressure screenings, child passenger safety screenings, senior health workshops, exercise classes, a variety of children's sports programs, and Walk With the Mayor events.

"Achieving the Healthy Town designation is a tremendous achievement for the Borough of Rutherford. 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 Recreation Director Jessica Lezcano and resident JiHee Bagnuolo supported myself and the Council. We will continue to work hard to promote a healthy lifestyle through our campaign," said Mayor Frank Nunziato.

For More Information

To learn more about the MWC, visit: <http://www.njhcqi.org/MWC> or contact Julie DeSimone at jdesimone@njhcqi.org.

About the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute

The New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute's (Quality Institute) mission is to improve the safety, quality, and affordability of health care for everyone. Our membership comes from all stakeholders in health care. Together with our 100 plus members, we are working towards a world where all people receive safe, equitable, and affordable health care and live their healthiest lives.

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.