



**HOLD UNTIL
9/15/16**

City of Bellmead

City of Beverly Hills

City of Bruceville-Eddy

City of Crawford

City of Gholson

City of Golinda

City of Hallsburg

City of Hewitt

City of Lacy-Lakeview

City of Leroy

City of Lorena

City of Mart

City of McGregor

City of Moody

City of Riesel

City of Robinson

City of Ross

City of Waco

City of West

City of Woodway

McLennan County

WACO NAMED AS “HEALTHYCOMMUNITY50” MEMBER IN HEALTH CHALLENGE

Waco to compete for up to \$500,000 in prizes through Aetna Foundation, American Public Health Association and National Association of Counties partnership

Waco, Texas (September 15, 2016) —The City of Waco has been selected as one of 50 members of the “HealthyCommunity50” in the Healthiest Cities & Counties Challenge to receive a \$10,000 community seed award. By participating in the Challenge, Waco is in the running to receive a prize that will support their local program.

The Challenge, a partnership between the Aetna Foundation, the American Public Health Association and the National Association of Counties, launched in April during National Public Health Week. The Challenge will award \$1.5 million in prizes to small and mid-sized cities, counties and federally-recognized tribes. Potential winners must be able to show measurable change over the course of several years in working with cross-sector partnerships to implement health innovations and data-driven solutions. Hundreds of city governments, local municipalities, health departments, educational institutions and other public/private entities applied to be a part of the Challenge.

The HealthyCommunity50 were chosen based on plans to improve the health of their communities in at least one of five domains: Healthy behaviors, community safety, built environment, social/economic factors and environmental exposures.

Through the Challenge, the Waco-McLennan County Public Health District and its community partners will work to increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables in Waco with 5 initiatives:

1. Offering Monthly cooking demonstrations at our local farmer’s market and Healthy Soul food and Tex-Mex demonstrations at community centers and churches
2. Adding more locations for The Veggie Van
3. Working with local farmers to get more fresh produce to our food pantries
4. Working with Mission Waco to open a non-profit grocery store featuring low cost healthy foods and nutrition educators on staff
5. Starting a Community Health Worker Program to connect residents to healthy resources

The project comes at a critical time for Waco. Based on the 2013 Community Health Needs Assessment, 65.7% of adults in McLennan County were considered overweight or obese, and 51% were not eating the recommended servings of produce.

The nine local partners involved in Waco’s Healthiest Cities Challenge are: Baylor University, Caritas, Live Well Waco, Mission Waco, Waco Downtown Farmers Market, Waco Foundation, City of Waco, Waco-McLennan Public Health District and the World Hunger Relief Veggie Van.

“At the Aetna Foundation, we’re seeking to reward innovation for communities implementing new ways to improve health outcomes,” said Dr. Garth Graham, president of the Aetna Foundation. “We want the Healthiest Cities & Counties Challenge to serve as a catalyst for collaboration in local communities around the country working to move the needle in combating health disparities.”

All selected HealthyCommunity50 members will be visited by an expert judge panel to answer questions, understand the community’s approach to the project first-hand and speak with the members of the cross-sector team and key stakeholders. At the conclusion of the Challenge, the programs most able to show measurable change will be eligible for prize awards from \$25,000 - \$500,000. Participants will be judged on their own progress and will not be competing against each other. For more information, visit www.healthiestcities.org.

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