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Aetna Foundation, American Public Health Association and the National Association of Counties Unveil Winners of National Health Challenge

From Faith-Based Organizations Empowering Healthy Habits to Pop-Up Markets Rebuilding Community Trust: \$1.5 Million Awarded to Local Solutions Addressing Social Determinants of Health

Hartford, Conn., February 12, 2019 – As part of an ongoing commitment to supporting community health and wellness, the Aetna Foundation today announced the two grand prize winners of the Healthiest Cities & Counties Challenge (the Challenge). The Mecklenburg County, N.C., Village HeartBEAT program won the \$500,000 grand prize from the mid-sized city or county category (population 250,001 – 600,000) and the Coalition United to Reach Equity (CURE) in Bridgeport, Conn., was awarded the grand prize of \$250,000 in the small-sized city or county category (population 65,000 – 200,000).

The Challenge was launched in partnership with the American Public Health Association (APHA) and the National Association of Counties (NACo), empowering 50 small-to-mid-sized cities and counties nationwide to make measurable, scalable improvements to public health issues in their local communities. Since its inception, the Challenge awarded a total of \$1.5 million in grants and prizes to the 50 participating programs to support their efforts to tackle the most pressing health issues facing their communities. In addition to the two grand prize winners, eight programs were designated as runners up in recognition of their achievements, each receiving prizes ranging from \$25,000 - \$50,000 to help continue their work.

The awarding of the Challenge prizes, funded by the Aetna Foundation, is part of a \$100 million commitment by CVS Health and its affiliates to making community health and wellness central to the company's charge for a better world. The new [Building Healthier Communities](#) initiative, which will be funded over five years by CVS Health and the CVS Health and Aetna Foundations, builds upon the outstanding tradition of community investment by CVS Health and Aetna and helps to advance CVS Health's purpose of helping people on their path to better health.

"In order to solve our most pressing public health issues, we have to start at the local level – acknowledging that the solutions to our problems are as diverse as the communities facing them," said Karen S. Lynch, Executive Vice President, CVS Health and President, Aetna. "These communities are able to get to the heart of their unique challenges and create impactful programs that we hope can be replicated in other communities nationwide."

Over the course of the Challenge, both winners improved local health outcomes with strong, scalable results:

- **In Mecklenburg County, NC**, the African-American population is disproportionately impacted by cardiovascular disease by nearly 20 percent compared to their white counterparts. To combat this, Village HeartBEAT (VHB) activated more than 60 local faith-based organizations to help over 20,000 local residents access health resources to reduce cardiovascular risk. As a result, VHB reduced smoking in the community from 17.4 percent to 13.9 percent and obesity rates from 70 percent to 64.7 percent.
- **Bridgeport (CT) CURE/ East End Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ)** addressed decades of food insecurity and public mistrust through development of a pop-up market in a documented food desert, improving availability of healthy foods, living wage jobs and sparking greater community cohesiveness. Over the past three years, Bridgeport CURE secured more than 53,000 volunteer hours and leveraged strong cross-sector partnerships to overcome major policy obstacles.

“While every community faces unique health issues, we know a lot can be accomplished when cities and counties join forces,” said APHA executive director Georges C. Benjamin. “It is our hope that these two programs, along with the rest of the Challenge participants, will inspire others and serve as models of success and progress for communities around the country who face similar health issues.”

The first cohort of Challenge participants were chosen out of hundreds of city governments, local municipalities, health departments, educational institutions and other entities that applied to enter the competition. Improvements were measured around at least one of five domains: healthy behaviors, community safety, built environment, social/economic factors and environmental exposures. The Challenge winners and runners up were selected with assistance from an Advisory Council of public health leaders including elected officials, professors and physicians. RAND Corporation was tapped to evaluate the improvements in social determinants of health achieved and identify the most promising practices with potential for replication.

“Our winners and runners up have demonstrated the ability of counties to transform the communities they support,” said NACo president Greg Cox. “Organizations and leaders at the county level are in a unique position to champion the needs of local residents and join community partners in the effort to improve health outcomes for all residents to make a positive health impact.”

Winners

Lead Entity	Program	Program Goal	State Served
Greater Bridgeport Opportunities Industrialization Center Inc.	Bridgeport Coalition United to Reach Equity	Increase health equity	Connecticut
Mecklenburg County Health Department	Village HeartBEAT	Decrease rates of heart disease	North Carolina

Runners Up

Lead Entity	Program	Program Goal	State Served
Hillsborough County	Garden Steps	Increase access to healthy foods through enhanced	Florida

		walkability	
City of Miami	Live Healthy Little Havana	Increase health care access	Florida
United Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City	The 20/20/20 Movement	Increase walkability	Kansas
Louisville/Jefferson County Metro Government	West Louisville Outdoor Recreation Initiative	Increase mental wellness and healthy behaviors	Kentucky
Coopers Ferry Partnership	The SMART Initiative	Increase water quality	New Jersey
Chatham County Public Health Department	Chatham Health Alliance	Decrease obesity	North Carolina
Waco-McLennan County Public Health District	The Heart of Texas Urban Gardening Coalition	Increase access to, and consumption of, fresh foods	Texas
Danville Pittsylvania County United Fund	Health Collaborative	Increase healthy living	Virginia

For more information on the winners, visit www.healthiestcities.org and join the conversation at #HealthiestCitiesChallenge.

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About the Aetna Foundation

The Aetna Foundation is an independent charitable and philanthropic affiliate of CVS Health (NYSE:CVS). As a national health foundation, we promote wellness, health, and access to high-quality health care for everyone. This work is enhanced by the time and commitment of Aetna employees, who volunteered 670,000 hours in 2018 alone. For more information, visit www.aetnafoundation.org.

About the American Public Health Association

APHA champions the health of all people and all communities. We strengthen the public health profession. We speak out for public health issues and policies backed by science. We are the only organization that combines a nearly 150-year perspective, a broad-based member community and the ability to influence federal policy to improve the public's health. Visit us at www.apha.org.

About the National Association of Counties

The [National Association of Counties](http://www.naco.org) (NACo) unites American's 3,069 county governments. Founded in 1935, NACo brings county officials together to advocate with a collective voice on national policy, exchange ideas and build new leadership skills, pursue transformational county solutions, enrich the public's understanding of county governments and exercise exemplary leadership in public service.