

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 27, 2009

Twenty-six communities recognized for enhancing the health of residents

EDMONTON, AB – Twenty-six Alberta communities were honored by the Alberta Recreation & Parks Association (ARPA) for going the extra mile to promote healthy living to their residents during the *Communities ChooseWell* 2008-2009 initiative. The overall high achievers in *Communities ChooseWell* will be recognized at a celebration to be held April 30 in Okotoks and May 8 in Edmonton.

A record 162 Alberta communities participated in *Communities ChooseWell* during the 2008-2009 campaign. *Communities ChooseWell* asks Alberta communities to support and demonstrate how their residents are making the right choices about healthy eating, daily physical activity and encouraging an overall healthier community.

The Overall High Achievers will be recognized for their progress and achievement towards a healthy community.

- Northern Alberta - Municipality of Strathcona County
- Southern Alberta - Town of Penhold

Communities are also recognized for their efforts in *Building Community Resources through Partnerships*, *Reducing Barriers to Healthy Living for Tweens and Teens*, *Providing Wellness Education* and *Creating Healthy Opportunities*.

The category high achieving communities in Northern Alberta include:

- *Building Community Resources through Partnerships* – Village of Kitscoty
- *Reducing Barriers to Healthy Living for Tweens and Teens* – Village of Warburg
- *Providing Wellness Education* – Town of St. Paul
- *Creating Healthy Opportunities* – Town of Edson

The category high achieving communities in Southern Alberta include:

- *Building Community Resources through Partnerships* – Bridgeland Riverside Community Association, City of Calgary
- *Reducing Barriers to Healthy Living for Tweens and Teens* – Town of Irricana
- *Providing Wellness Education* – Red Deer Active Living Association
- *Creating Healthy Opportunities* – Town of Cochrane

“Communities ChooseWell continues to be a popular way for communities to involve their residents in a wide range of fun and healthy activities,” said Dr. Raj Sherman, Parliamentary Assistant for Health and Wellness. “For the second year in a row we are encouraged to see an increase in the number of communities that took up the challenge to eat healthy, be active and engage in positive social pursuits.”

Communities ChooseWell high achievers were selected by a judging panel of health and wellness volunteers, community organization representatives and health professionals. Each Overall High Achiever will receive \$1,000 towards a healthy living initiative.

“Our community vision encompasses both health and being active and this has been of influence through our participation in the *ChooseWell* initiative,” said Leanne Worr, Recreation and Events Coordinator, Town of Penhold.

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News Release

"I commend the ARPA and *ChooseWell* initiative. I have enjoyed immensely the *ChooseWell* premise and all it stands for."

In addition to the Overall High Achiever awards, recognition was given to North and South communities based on population. There were five population classes with a North and South high achiever being chosen for each. The population class high achievers are:

Population Class # 1 (100 – 999)

North: Village of Berwyn
South: Village of Longview

Population Class # 4 (10,000 – 49,999)

North: City of Leduc
South: Town of Okotoks

Population Class # 2 (1,000 – 4,999)

North: Town of Lac La Biche
South: Town of Bassano

Population Class # 5 (50,000 and over)

North: Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
South: City of Lethbridge

Population Class # 3 (5,000 – 9,999)

North: CFB Wainwright/Denwood
South: Town of Chestermere

This year, the judging panel also recognized an additional six communities for their outstanding submissions on their health-related activities:

North

Town of Tofield
Town of Beaumont
St. Luke Catholic School (South Cooking Lake)

South

Town of Bow Island
Town of Pincher Creek
Town of Lacombe

The background information on all the high achieving communities is provided. For complete information on *Communities ChooseWell*, visit www.arpaonline.ca or www.healthyalberta.com

ARPA is a provincial, not-for-profit, charitable organization made up of volunteers committed to building healthy citizens and communities in Alberta through recreation and parks. Serving Albertans since 1952, ARPA members include community and public recreation agencies, educators, corporate, elected members, volunteers, and student members.

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Communities ChooseWell High Achievers 2008/2009

Two communities are being recognized as overall high achievers for their *Progress and Achievement towards a Healthy Community* and their success in all of the four award categories in the program. In addition, recognition is awarded for the following individual categories: *Creating Healthy Opportunities; Providing Wellness Education; Building Community Resources through Partnerships; and Reducing Barriers to Healthy Living for Tweens and Teens.*

There are two high achievers for each of the five population classes, one in northern Alberta and one in southern Alberta. Six additional awards will be handed out to the top three communities earning exceptional feedback from the north and south.

More information regarding specific initiatives and contacts for each community is provided below.

Northern Region

Progress and Achievement towards a Healthy Community

Municipality of Strathcona County

Contact: Jeff McKenzie
Phone: 780-416-7229

- Strathcona County initiated the “Everybody Gets to Play” program aimed at on improving access to recreation to residents and, specifically, youth, through the reduction of barriers such as cost, transportation, equipment and more.
- Strathcona County focused on engaging Corporate Wellness. Two 13-week programs are run throughout the year with each participant having their initial and post fitness levels tested, nutrition consultation, an individualized exercise program designed with updates and motivational goal setting meetings. The mantra for the program is “If an individual is happy at work and feels like their employer cares for their health and well being, they will be much happier in their everyday lives.”

Creating Healthy Opportunities:

Town of Edson

Contact: Andrea Laboucane
Phone: 780-723-4403

- The biggest project over the past year was the Step It Up Edson Challenge. Businesses, organizations and individuals were challenged to take 10,000 steps a day for six weeks. When the final steps were calculated, the top stepper in town took over 840,000 steps in six weeks with the top team averaging 70,000 per week. The challenge was a huge success with great participation in the community.
- The Town of Edson was successful in organizing and hosting a number of events throughout the year, including: After School Chef’s Program, Girls InMotion Summer Camp, Whitewater Rafting in Jasper, “Active for Life” Women’s Conference, Strollercize, Kick It Up Combo and Weekend Warrior among others. Many opportunities leaned towards the active living side with healthy food being served at each event.

Backgrounder

Providing Wellness Education:

Town of St. Paul

Contact: Judy Bogdan
Phone: 780-645-3396, ext. 260

- On-going information was shared at schools, youth groups and agencies regarding nutrition and increased physical activity.
- The St. Paul Community Garden hosted an annual potato roast where all gardeners, volunteers and residents were invited to visit the community garden site, help harvest the garden vegetables and enjoy a roasted potato with all the toppings.

Building Community Resources through Partnerships:

Village of Kitscoty

Contact: Harold Trew
Phone: 780-846-2221

- A working relationship has been established with the Buffalo Trail School System (Elementary School and Jr./Sr. High School), Safe & Caring Committee, Kitscoty First Scout Group and the Seniors Association have provided an opportunity to spread the word and organize healthy eating and exercise programs/projects in Kitscoty.
- The community has developed a working committee to assess and develop a central group to co-ordinate community activities such as walking paths, senior activities, walking in the gymnasium and just increasing participation in the community.

Reducing Barriers to Healthy Living for Tweens and Teens:

Village of Warburg

Contact: Colleen Foster
Phone: 780-848-2828

- Warburg is offering numerous activities and events for their citizens. A bike and pedestrian safety course, a food safety program, and information setup at the community awareness night are some of the ways Warburg has initiated excitement in the community.
- Upcoming events are a sports swap for equipment as well as three new nutritional programs: family and seniors, Grades 2 and 3 students and older students.

Southern Region

Progress and Achievement towards a Healthy Community

Town of Penhold

Contact: Leanne Worr
Phone: 403-886-5464

- Penhold has continued to set a high bar when it comes to the *ChooseWell* beliefs and practices. The ChooseWell philosophy has been embraced by most town departments, as well as by other partners and organizations. The town goals have been reached through hosting events, breakfasts, meetings and programs that incorporate the ChooseWell message.

- more -

Backgrounder

- Successful Penhold programs and activities include: Penhold Days, Grassroots Summer Sports Programs, national Family Week picnic, Oktoberfest Healthy Eating and Active Living, Healthy Halloween, Jingle Bell Hay Ride/Family Skate/Bonfire and a Winter Walk Day with elementary and junior high school students.

Creating Healthy Opportunities:

Town of Cochrane

Contact: Jody DiCatri
Phone: 403-851-2500

- The goal of Cochrane is to highlight what the citizens of Cochrane are doing to stay active, for all age groups. Healthy eating was encouraged, but active living has been the focus.
- Cochrane has seen an increase in high school students working in elementary schools, camps and pre-school programs for volunteer hours in exchange for school credit. Beginning in October, Cochrane established a youth committee committed to exploring new activities and programs.

Providing Wellness Education:

City of Red Deer Active Living Association

Contact: Joey Leslie
Phone: 403-309-5430

- The Red Deer Active Living Association held the annual 21 Days to Form a Habit, with more than 600 participants. Participants were entered as teams and required to perform a minimum of 17.5 hours of weekly exercise and activity. Winning teams received prize bags and fruit platters. Overall, 121 teams participated.

Building Community Resources through Partnerships:

Bridgeland Riverside Community Association – City of Calgary

Contact: Lori Losowy
Phone: 403-263-5755

- Bridgeland Riverside initiated a new event, Harvest Fest, which helped focus the community on healthy lifestyle choices. *ChooseWell* information as well as information from local food producers were handed out to the community members to enable them to make sustainable and healthier choices.
- The Community Association has been working with aldermen, City Police, City Bylaw, City Transit Police, community businesses and residents to tackle the issue of increased social disorder in the community. Strategies are being implemented and are slowly showing a positive result.

Reducing Barriers to Healthy Living for Tweens and Teens:

Town of Irricana

Contact: Cathy O'Donoghue
Phone: 403-935-4672

Backgrounder

- The Town of Irricana developed new partnerships this past year while strengthening current partnerships. Town council supported the youth center, the Crib, by purchasing equipment to stay fit and have fun. The Crib is a hub of activity and the youth enjoy healthy food alternatives and fun activities. Council granted funding for the purchase of “active” equipment based on the ChooseWell initiative.
- The Irricana Scouts assisted by hosting outdoor games at the Winter Festival. The Town partnership with different organizations helped with the annual Pitch-In day’s success. A new partnership was developed with Community Links to provide programming for the “Staying Home Alone Program” to the youth.

Population Class # 1 (100 - 999)

Village of Berwyn

Contact: Theresa Johnson
Phone: 780-338-3801

- Berwyn has offered a number of opportunities including shinny hockey for all ages, bi-weekly free skating, weekly walks, free family skate and walk and a volleyball program.
- Programs were advertised in the monthly community newsletter and posters were displayed throughout the community.

Village of Longview

Contact: Michele Geistlinger
Phone: 403-558-2158

- Longview is proud to show a great turnout for weekly programs aimed at tweens and teens. The Wednesday floor hockey and Friday sports night have benefited children with regular exercise every week.
- A very committed group of people who are dedicated to the well being of youth in and around the community include the local Pastor George Teichroeb, MD resident Larry Dayment and their wives. Mr. and Mrs. Dayment open up their basement for one afternoon a month for youth groups while Pastor Teichroeb runs activity nights and helped organize a ski trip.

Population Class # 2 (1,000 – 4,999)

Town of Lac La Biche

Contact: Amanda Murphy
Phone: 780-623-5542

- The community of Lac La Biche continues to increase the number of opportunities for members to eat healthy and get active.
- A new proposed multiplex will be a huge asset to the community and will assist in overcoming some of the barriers that Lac La Biche has been experiencing, such as space to offer activities and events.

Backgrounder

Town of Bassano

Contact: Kelly Christman
Phone: 403-641-3788

- Bassano Family and Community Support Services hosts monthly movie day event targeting teens which has turned into a popular event for families as well. The affordable social event also offers healthy concession choices. The partnership with the Bassano School Students Union permits volunteerism by the students.
- Partnership with Bassano School, Chamber of Commerce, Palliser Health and Newell Further Education help to offer numerous events, including rural safety, volunteer appreciation and adult education opportunities. Co-operation has been the key to success in Bassano.

Population Class # 3 (5,000 – 9,999)

CFB Wainwright/Denwood

Contact: Graeme Hill
Phone: 780-842-1363, ext. 1760

- CFB Wainwright/Denwood continues to offer a range of programs and campaigns in four key areas: Social Wellness, Physical Activity and Injury Prevention, Nutritional Wellness and Addiction Awareness and Prevention.
- A main goal this past year has been to increase the amount of information circulated within the military community on healthy behaviours and how to incorporate these behaviours into everyday life. Nutrition and physical activity have been the main focus, as well as other factors affecting wellness, such as addiction and smoke free living.

Town of Chestermere

Contact: Jeanette Bailey
Phone: 403-207-7060

- The Youth Encouraging Lasting Leadership (YELL) Council assumed the role of planning, developing and building a bike park. Peer communication has been the critical part in gathering youth of all ages to the park. YELL has been successful in communicating within numerous forms of media, including the Anchor newspaper, town council meeting presentations and the community recreation board.
- The Mountain Bike Skills Park was created to offer youth of all ages a positive outlet in the community for fun, physical activity and healthy choices. The park encourages mentorship, problem solving and a sense of community belonging.

Population Class # 4 (10,000 – 49,999)

City of Leduc

Contact: Jim Jones
Phone: 780-980-7199, ext. 6012

- A popular healthy living initiative in Leduc is the 30/30 Challenge. The challenge requires participants to pursue 30 minutes of activity for 30 days with the outcome being creating a habit out of physical fitness. The more students, adults, seniors and community members supporting the healthy active lifestyle mentality will only benefit the overall health of the community.

Backgrounder

- A strong partnership was developed this year with the Leduc Jr. High School and principal Paul Wozny, who are very involved in the Healthy Hearts Initiative, a natural fit for Healthy U, *Communities ChooseWell* and the overall support for healthy active living.

Town of Okotoks

Contact: Janelle Eisler
Phone: 403-983-8953

- Okotoks Community Programs continue to offer more programs that focus on healthy living for tweens and teens. Summer camp programs have been revised to add more sports and fitness classes. There has been an increase in offering classes for 8-12 years old as well as adding eight different options for 13-15 years old.
- The Town of Okotoks, Community Programs, the Foothills School Division and the Christ the Redeemer Catholic School Division have been strong partners in reducing barriers for healthy programs for tweens and teens. When a partnership with the schools and Community Programs is established the youth can be integrated as leaders towards reducing these barriers.

Population Class # 5 (50,000 +)

Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

Contact: Melanie Vance
Phone: 780-788-1719

- This year's initiative focused on the community and school through two separate activity calendars. The community was encouraged to participate in teams of five or as individuals while schools were encouraged to participate by class. Two calendars were created, one in November and one in January/February. The calendars consisted of 15 different activities ranging from eating five servings of fruits and vegetables daily to drinking eight glasses of water to participating in Winter Walk Day.
- Strong partnership ties were used in pursuit of a healthier and more active community. Community partners included: Northern Lights Health Region, Keyano College's Be Fit for Life Centre, Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, public and catholic school boards and the Father Mercredi High School Wellness Coordinator.

City of Lethbridge Be Fit for Life Center

Contact: Alison Pilsner
Phone: 403-382-6919

- Lethbridge has developed running programs to get kids active and healthy. Some examples of programs currently being offered include: Girls in Motion, Boys in Motion, Families in Motion, Physical Activity Calendar Challenge and Walking School Bus.
- A strong relationship with surrounding partners in the community, including the YWCA, YMCA, University of Lethbridge and the Healthy Weights Coordinators with Chinook Health offer resources to help run and maintain kids programs.

Backgrounder

North Recipients

Town of Tofield

Contact: Linda Townsend
Phone: 780-662-7067

- Beginning with small events, Tofield has managed to create a great buzz for all new events being planned.
- A popular event is the Monsters Stroll and Munch, consisting of a long walk with a stop point at the park where the kids could run around and be active with water and health snacks being provided.

Town of Beaumont

Contact: Ilona Molnar
Phone: 780-929-1362

- Beaumont offers a large volume of programs available for various age groups in the community. Some of these programs include: dance classes for older adults who want to stay active in a fun way, boot camps for young and old to stay in top shape, classes for new moms to get back in shape and programs for children to get involved in healthy activities at an early age.
- Most of the programs were opportunities for healthy living, offering active lifestyle opportunities. Healthy eating was encouraged by offering healthy choices for refreshments or lunches at public events like the sports conference and community runs.

St. Luke Catholic School – Sherwood Park

Contact: Kristi Jones
Phone: 780-922-5920

- The community has formed partnerships with various community groups within the school and surrounding community. A newly formed health committee has been established to assess the school community, develop a three-year plan and revisit this plan on an annual basis.
- Access to healthy food choices through improved selection in vending machines, starting up food programs, education for parents, staff and students and taste-testing of new food ideas has led to the school community becoming more conscious regarding a healthier lifestyle.

South Recipients

Town of Bow Island

Contact: Darla Stensrud
Phone: 403-545-2522

- New staff and new town management helped the ChooseWell initiative become a popular program to rejuvenate the town. A few new ideas include extra skating at the arena, extra swimming activities in the summer and trying to organize a sports camp in the summer months.
- The Bow Island Youth Connection Centre offers many different events throughout the year. A skateboard/bike park is in the planning stages.

Backgrounder

Town of Pincher Creek

Contact: Diane Burt Stuckey
Phone: 403-627-4322

- 2008 was a growth year where Pincher Creek identified what is currently going on in the community, areas where collaborative projects could take place, what the needs of the youth and community really are, what the barriers and who would like to be involved in the community.
- New events offered in 2008 included: Family "Ice-ter Egg" Skate and Swim, Kid Sport Triathlon and a Summer Pool Beach Bash. New events being planned for 2009 include: Inside Out Wellness Fair, Kilometer Club and Boot Camp.

Town of Lacombe

Contact: Sandi Stewart
Phone: 403-782-1266

- A BMX park was built in 2008, an accessible playground is in the planning stages and new community events were held, including First Trails Day Event, Triathlon, Art in the Park and Arts Day.
- Lacombe is more consciously aware of altering new and old programs and ways of thinking to make healthier choices.

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