



Northeast District Department of Health

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PRESS RELEASE

Dated: January 9, 2012

Release Date: For Immediate Release

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NDDH, HealthQuest Selected for National Healthy Community Grant Coalition Members to Mentor Norwalk, CT Community

(Brooklyn) - The National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD) has announced that the Northeast District Department of Health and its HealthQuest Northeast Connecticut coalition have been selected to mentor a Norwalk, Connecticut community as part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Action Communities for Health, Innovation, and Environmental change (ACHIEVE) initiative. ACHIEVE brings together concerned citizens to create healthy communities and provide local leaders with education and resources to solve specific health problems. Norwalk is one of 15 newly selected communities in 17 states that will develop and implement local activities focused on preventing chronic disease through building partnerships and raising public awareness about the harmful effects of tobacco use and exposure, poor nutrition, and physical inactivity. For the first time since the initiative launched in 2008, a mentoring component has been added, which the national partners believe will contribute to the sustainability of these local efforts. The HealthQuest coalition has shown success in producing policy, systems and environmental impact and was selected as a mentor community to support and replicate success in the 2012 Norwalk ACHIEVE community. In addition to their mentorship responsibilities, the HealthQuest coalition will also be required to expand upon their current policy successes.

“HealthQuest partners have been collaborating together and working strategically with NDDH since 2007 to improve the health of our communities,” said Linda J. Colangelo, NDDH Education and Communications Coordinator. “We are honored that our efforts have been recognized on a national level and look forward to sharing our experiences with our sister community in Norwalk. ACHIEVE has taught us that while communities may differ demographically and geographically, we all share common ground, challenges, and opportunities when it comes to creating healthier places where people live, learn, work, and play. I’m sure this will bring mutual benefit to both communities.”

Colangelo, who currently serves as the HealthQuest coalition coordinator, will serve as the lead mentor and Delpha Very, Director of Putnam Economic and Community Development, will serve as the community partner mentor.

“Delpha was a natural choice to assist on this initiative,” cites Susan Starkey, NDDH Director of Health. “As a director of economic and community development and member of HealthQuest, she understands both the economic and public health benefits of building communities with healthy infrastructures. People are attracted to towns and cities that support healthy eating, active living, and tobacco-free environments. With this dual emphasis, buildings, environments, and people should be here for a very long time.”

HealthQuest Northeast CT is a national ACHIEVE community, funded by NACDD in 2009, and a collaborative partnership of NDDH, Day Kimball Healthcare, Generations Family Health Center, the Northeastern CT Chamber of Commerce, Plainfield Public Schools, Plainfield Recreation Department, Quinebaug Valley Community College, Representative Mae Flexer, Senator Donald Williams, Steven Townsend, Thompson Ecumenical Empowerment Group, Town of Putnam Community Development and WINY Radio.

The coalition focuses on reducing obesity-related chronic diseases by increasing physical activity and improving access to better nutrition in northeast Connecticut schools, worksites, communities and homes. The two-year ACHIEVE Mentor grant will provide a total of \$40,000 in funding to support training, travel, supplies, advertising, mentors, and a return visit by national walking expert Robert Sweetgall to launch more schools on the HealthQuest WriteSteps School Walking initiative.

Since 2008, NACDD, along with other national partners, have collaborated to provide training, technical assistance, and support to the now 149 ACHIEVE communities across the nation.

For a complete listing of all funded communities, please visit the ACHIEVE website at www.achievecommunities.org and CDC’s Healthy Communities Program’s website at www.cdc.gov/healthycommunitiesprogram.

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