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2019 Kansas Health Champions Announced

Recognized by the KDHE and the Governor's Council on Fitness

TOPEKA – The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and Candice McField of the Governor's Council on Fitness presented the 2019 Kansas Health Champion awards at a luncheon today during the Community Health Promotion Summit in Manhattan. The Health Champion Award was developed by the Governor's Council on Fitness to recognize and promote exemplary contributions to fitness in Kansas.

"Eligible nominees include volunteers, schools, communities, employers, media organizations and policy makers that put forth exceptional efforts to model, encourage, and promote fitness in Kansas," said Awards Committee Chair, Candice McField. "The winners were selected from the nominations of several worthy candidates in each category".

This year's winners were:

- Individual Health Champion: Pastor Adrion Roberson, Kansas City, Kansas
- Organizational Health Champion: The Monarch Cement Company, Humboldt
- Individual Honorable Mention: Jody Hoener, Fort Scott
- Organizational Honorable Mention: City of Emporia

Health Champions

Pastor Adrion Roberson serves as co-pastor of the Berean Fellowship Church in Kansas City, Kansas. And CEO/Co-Founder of KC United! Youth Sports & Education Initiative. In 2008, it all started as the Wyandotte County Youth Football and Cheer. As of 2016 KCU! has evolved into the Mary Ann Flunder Summer STEAM Sports & Arts Camp. For the parents and guardians of the participants he has started the GAMECHANGERS program. Under his leadership he is developing an

idea for a year-round after school program that will help strengthen student/athletes and students who love the arts in the S.T.E.A.M. disciplines. Lastly, he has a vision for the old Indian Springs Mall that will transform it into a youth sports tourism / community revitalization center focused on among other things strengthening the 'holistic health' of the city. Lenton Bailey Jr. who nominated Pastor Roberson for the award said, "Although at times the challenge has been great, he has remained committed to his vision of creating the healthiest community in Kansas". Throughout, his time with the organization KC United! has given over 5,000 youth and parents with a higher level of community engagement. His partnerships with dietitians, local healthcare programs and various wrap around services, ensure that those who attend the organizations summer camps receive a healthy breakfast and lunch each day.

The Monarch Cement Company places an immense value on their employees and their overall health. They have an onsite clinic for employees and dependents. The clinic offers basic labs, medications, and immunizations at no cost with over 86% using the clinic in one way or another. Monarch is a WorkWell Kansas worksite and in 2017, a primary focus became physical activity. Every employee received training on proper stretching, and the company has a designated walking path in the corporate office. Elizabeth Ablah who nominated the organization remarked, "Improvements have been made, and are continuing to be made, which will have a lasting impact on the lives of Monarch's employees, families and their community for a long time to come." Interest by employees in other physical activities, like pickleball, has spread over to the community; where the local recreation department is developing plans to put pickleball courts in the city park and even offered equipment to the local elementary school.

Honorable Mentions

Jody Hoener is the Grant coordinator for the Pathways to a Healthy Kansas Grant Coordinator and serves as Bourbon County's Economic Development Director. Under her leadership she has taken her county to the tops of the charts in terms of making impactful change to improve the health and fitness of her friends and neighbors. She has made great strides working with worksites. "Jody's work will contribute to improving the health for more than 1,800 people," said Elizabeth Ablah who nominated Jody for the award "that is not even counting the residual effect it will have on families and the neighborhood at large." Aside from working in her own community, as a WorkWell Kansas champion, she also takes times to support others across the state who are working on similar projects.

City of Emporia has been hard at work making improvements to encourage more physical activity in their community. In March, they adopted an ordinance banning all tobacco and electronic cigarettes on playgrounds and at youth sporting events. Ongoing events welcomed by the city such as Dirty Kanza and Disc Golf, both internationally known and recognized, have resulted in large groups of community members who come to take part in one or both activities. In August, the city expressed support for the Safe Routes to Healthy Food Access resolution that will now offer biking and walking infrastructure to help people get safely to and from grocery stores and farmers markets in low access areas. "Their willingness to support, expand and advocate for public health can be a model for other communities across the state," said Theresa Briggs of Healthier Lyon County who also nominated the city for the award.

“Congratulations, to these fine individuals and organizations and their support in being exceptional in their efforts to model, encourage, and promote fitness in Kansas,” said McField.

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