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## 2020 Kansas Health Champions Announced

**WICHITA** – The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and the Governor's Council on Fitness (GCOF) presented the 2020 Kansas Health Champion Awards during a luncheon at the Community Health Promotion Summit today, Thursday, January 30.

The Health Champion Award was developed by the Governor's Council on Fitness to recognize and promote exemplary contributions to fitness in Kansas. Those recognized include an individual and organization, as well as honorable mentions in each category.

- Individual Health Champion: Andy Fry, Topeka
- Organizational Health Champion: Redemption Plus, Lenexa
- Individual Honorable Mention: Jim Blackwell, Hoisington
- Organizational Honorable Mention: West Bourbon Elementary School, Uniontown

“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 Candice McField, GCOF Awards Chair. “The winners were selected from the nominations of several worthy candidates in each category.”

This is the seventh year for these awards.

“Congratulations to these individuals and organizations for being exceptional in their efforts to model, encourage and promote fitness in Kansas,” said KDHE Secretary Dr. Lee Norman.

### Health Champions

**Andy Fry** of Topeka serves in a volunteer capacity as the President of the Topeka Community Cycle Projects. Andy has planned events around cycling and has written and received several thousands of dollars'

worth of grants and additional monies through fundraising to support local bike and pedestrian activities. He has led different community groups and boards and is one of the most vocal advocates on the city and state level for bike and pedestrian-related issues. These are just a few of the many accomplishments over the last 10 years.

Jenny Kramer, State Bike and Pedestrian Coordinator at Kansas Department of Transportation, who nominated Fry said, “The work Andy does will continue to have ripple and long-lasting effects. Andy and his like-minded friends, and the decision-makers he has influenced, have made Topeka a place that people want to live and work.”

**Redemption Plus** a merchandising company in Lenexa, is described as a “a one-of-a-kind organization where enthusiastic, caring people can lead full lives by bridging their professional and personal worlds.” Through their Wellness Platform, employees can participate in education as well as personal, group and company-wide challenges. They offer daily healthy meals, stretching and meditation plus a variety of workout options throughout the week with special classes. They even let their vendors know they are a health and wellness-oriented company and ask that they not send unhealthy treats.

Julie Annett, Wellness Crusader (Director) of Redemption Plus, says one employee who joined them from another company has been positively impacted by the organizational efforts around health and wellness after losing 30 pounds and gaining higher levels of job satisfaction. Brittany Stucky, Culture Champion for the business, adds “it’s about serving customers to the best of my ability while also being able to be committed to myself and my family.”

### **Honorable Mentions**

**Jim Blackwell** of Hoisington understands that where a person lives and works influences their health. Jim is a proponent of healthy living, is very visible in the community and always models and participates in the policies and programs that support health and fitness. Jim's approach to improve health disparities is to find innovative ways to shrink the gaps. He supports efforts to build a safe and walkable environment. Most recently he led an initiative to fill a sidewalk gap around the high school which created another community walking loop and provides easy access to the grocery store.

“Jim’s desire for these projects comes from wanting to cultivate health and wellness not only for the hospital staff but for the entire community,” said Karla Crissman who nominated Jim. “His strong commitment to health and wellness has changed the trajectory of health in our community for generations to come.”

**West Bourbon Elementary School** in Uniontown is challenging students to be healthy movers for life. Faculty in the school help make physical activity become something more than just a class. Activities throughout the school include morning fitness activities, brain breaks and fitness equipment. In September, 98 parents took part in an event called Take Your Parent to PE Week, the third year of the program. Through this program, students are taught about healthy habits, including development of a personal fitness plan.

Jackie Hall, Physical Education teacher at the school, in her nomination shared, “I am very proud how our school and district are committed to helping our students, as well as the community, maintain and create healthy habits for life.”

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