

Culture of Health Prize



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

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Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Awards Eight Communities the 2017 RWJF Culture of Health Prize

*Prize Winners Chosen for Commitment to
Improving the Health and Well-Being of Residents*

Princeton, N.J. —The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) today announced the eight communities selected to receive the 2017 RWJF Culture of Health Prize. The winning communities were chosen from a group of more than 200 applicants.

Honored for their unwavering efforts to ensure all residents have the opportunity to live healthier lives, the 2017 Prize winners are: Algoma, Wisconsin; Allen County, Kansas; Chelsea, Massachusetts; Garrett County, Maryland; Richmond, Virginia; San Pablo, California; Seneca Nation of Indians in western New York, and Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Each winner will receive a \$25,000 cash prize, join a growing network of Prize-winning communities, and share their inspiring stories with other communities across the nation who are building a Culture of Health.

“For the past five years, RWJF Culture of Health Prize communities have inspired hope across the country. We welcome these new eight Prize communities who are forging partnerships to improve health for their residents,” said Richard Besser, MD, RWJF president and CEO. “There are now 35 prize-winning communities across the country that are thinking big, building on their strengths, and engaging residents as equal partners to tackle the problems that they see.”

Prize communities see health as not merely medical care; they know that safe and affordable housing, access to healthy foods, education, and a strong talent pipeline from cradle to career are vital to health and well-being. These communities understand the urgency to collaborate, explore, learn, and innovate.

Each community is unique with its own distinct vision for the future but all are aligned in their commitment to deliver the promise of opportunity for their residents. The winning communities are:

Algoma, Wisconsin — A community of caring hearts and big ideas define Algoma, a rural city on the shores of Lake Michigan. Encouraged by a school district whose leaders recognize the connections between quality education, good health and a strong local economy, youth are the driving force behind a shared commitment to helping all residents thrive. Students conduct CPR trainings for employees of local businesses, lead welding classes at the community “Fab Lab,” and garden side by side with adults with disabilities. The city’s Community Wellness Center, attached to the high school, offers free confidential health care consultations, healthy eating classes, and physical fitness programs for youth and adults. Residents, businesses, and health providers have united behind the landmark “Live Algoma” initiative to promote physical, emotional, and financial well-being.

Allen County, Kansas—Residents of rural Allen County, Kansas are working together to improve health and opportunity for all. In 2010, residents voted to raise local taxes to fund the building of a new hospital. Not only was access to health care expanded, but the old hospital site has been repurposed into a grocery store and housing development. To address poverty, child and family support projects including a “Meals and Reading Vehicle” have been developed. And Allen County has created more ways to live actively with miles of new biking and hiking trails. These efforts have been powered by Allen County’s commitment to build connections and understanding between all residents through activities like “community conversations” that bring neighbors together for frank and sometimes uncomfortable discussions.

Chelsea, Massachusetts—In a community where approximately 75 percent of the population identifies as an ethnic or racial minority and where more than 35 languages are spoken in 1.8 square miles, Chelsea’s diverse community members come together to promote better health for all. Residents, including many youth, are taking back their environment and boosting health by reducing diesel fuel emissions, reclaiming the waterfront, and improving the energy efficiency and indoor air quality of homes. A community policing model was developed to build trust within the community, and 60 other communities have since adopted the model. Community health workers, non-profit developers, and collaborators from across Chelsea are helping residents get a multitude of services they need to be empowered to lead healthy, prosperous lives.

Garrett County, Maryland— Garrett County, Maryland, a rural Appalachian community bordering Pennsylvania and West Virginia, is tackling poverty through education, housing, and jobs. To meet the workforce needs of tomorrow, the county offers all high school graduates full scholarships to Garrett College. The 2-G (Two Generation) Program is helping families create their own roadmap to economic stability and better health by connecting them to the resources they need to succeed. When faced with the decision of expanding their county jail or building a new recreation center, residents chose recreation-- establishing an important hub for the entire community. Public and private partners have joined forces to expand low and mixed-income housing options and Garrett’s online planning tool virtually connects residents spread out over more than 645 square miles while informing community-wide priorities.

Richmond, Virginia—A city whose education, housing and everyday life was historically divided by race, Richmond is striving to build a community of inclusion and opportunity. Stakeholders from across the city are coming together to empower residents to make healthy lifestyle choices and forge pathways out of poverty. Bold examples include: the Office of Community Wealth Building’s goal to reduce poverty in the city by 40 percent by 2030; efforts to support the successful

transition of public housing residents into mixed-income housing; the development of an impressive bicycling and bus infrastructure; and the multitude of youth-driven programs that are cultivating a generation of new leaders. Richmond's broad approach to improving health and well-being has been embraced by local leaders and shaped by an engaged community.

San Pablo, California—With a jobless rate that soared to 20 percent five years ago, San Pablo made eliminating barriers to employment and supporting small businesses a priority. The Economic Development Corporation leads the charge by providing services like job skills training, and affordable child care. In a city where 89 percent of residents are non-white, diversity and inclusion are a way of life—from Community Emergency Response Trainings in English and Spanish, to empowering young people through a Youth Commission. San Pablo is strengthening police-community relations through a Community Police Academy and robust community programming. The city is increasing healthcare access through infrastructure expansion. They also support residents' well-being with a community center, youth sports park, and a vibrant senior center, all offering activities to keep San Pablo moving.

Seneca Nation of Indians in New York—The Seneca Nation of Indians is a federally recognized Indian tribe in western New York. With more than 8,000 members, the Seneca Nation is looking to its rich traditions to help shape its future. By integrating the Seneca language and culture into early childhood and adult immersion programs, offering programs to promote healing and restoration from the historical trauma many families have endured, and honoring their connection to the land, the Seneca people are embracing a broad definition of health. The Seneca Nation is also addressing high unemployment rates through its Employment Training Department. And, it is building a fiscally strong community through its Federal Credit Union and its Economic Development Corporation, which is certified as a Native American Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI).

Vicksburg, Mississippi—Residents of Vicksburg, a city that sits on the high bluffs above the banks of the Mississippi River, are coming together in unique ways to support happier, healthier lifestyles for all. Vicksburg has received national recognition for its innovative strategies in education, including universal pre-K, leadership and life skills training, and career development for students. New housing, restaurants, shops, and museums are helping to revitalize Vicksburg's historic downtown district, expanding economic growth while celebrating its rich culture. People of all races, creeds, and economic backgrounds are coming together to support each other and build a Culture of Health.

Learn more about this year's winners, including videos, photos, and more at www.rwjf.org/Prize. While there, communities can also find out how to apply for the 2018 RWJF Culture of Health Prize.

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About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

For more than 40 years the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has worked to improve health and health care. We are working with others to build a national Culture of Health enabling everyone in America to live longer, healthier lives. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org. Follow the Foundation on Twitter at www.rwjf.org/twitter or on Facebook at www.rwjf.org/facebook.

About the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute

The [University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute](http://www.uwpophealth.org) advances health and well-being for all by developing and evaluating interventions and promoting evidence-based approaches to policy and practice

at the local, state, and national levels. The Institute works across the full spectrum of factors that contribute to health. A focal point for health and health care dialogue within the University of Wisconsin-Madison and beyond, and a convener of stakeholders, the Institute promotes an exchange of expertise between those in academia and those in the policy and practice arena. The Institute leads the work on the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps and the RWJF Culture of Health Prize. For more information, visit <http://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu>.

