



www.mcallen.net

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 3, 2019

CONTACT: Xochitl Mora, Director, Office of Communications, O: (956) 681-1202 / M: (956) 662-9269

E: xmora@mcallen.net

McAllen MSA Ranked 4th Among Cities with Healthiest Diets

City of McAllen well on its way to getting residents on the right track

Vegetables, fruits, lean protein, water and dairy, hooray! It's all about making healthy dietary choices and, according to a recent Gallup and Sharecare's Community Rankings for Healthy Eating report, the McAllen MSA ranked 4th out of 40 cities across the U.S. with healthiest diets.

"After being ranked as one of the fattest MSAs in America, it's comforting to see that our residents are on the right path to making better choices," said McAllen Mayor Jim Darling, an avid cyclist and fitness enthusiast, hoping to inspire residents to make health and wellness a priority. "As a city, we'd like to give residents the best opportunities to develop healthy habits."

To identify the 40 cities with the healthiest diets, 24/7 Tempo reviewed Gallup and Sharecare's 2016 Community Rankings for Healthy Eating Report. Researchers selected the 40 metro areas — of the 189 reviewed in the report — where the highest share of adults reported eating a healthy diet all day. The share of the population living more than a mile from a grocery store also came from the report.

McAllen had just over 72% of the respondents in the survey report they ate a healthy diet all day.

Knowing what exactly what healthy food choices to make, as well as income, play a major role in people's food choices, according to Dan Witters, research director for the Gallup National Health and Well-Being Index.

In fact, having a lower income is one of the most challenging factors to eat healthy, but a healthy diet is possible to do on a budget. "McAllen, Texas, one of America's poorest cities, regularly ranks among the very best in healthy eating," Witters writes in his report. This "provides us a good illustration of how local communities can overcome demographic handicaps."

Educational programs and community gardens are some of the ways that contribute to healthy eating, regardless of the hurdles.

-more-

McAllen MSA Ranked 4th Among Cities with Healthiest Diets / page 2 of 2

Every Saturday, a Farmer's Market is hosted at both the McAllen Public Library and Firemen's Park, features locally grown produce. The City of McAllen recently took great lengths to save a long-established community garden, which provides 54 varieties of produce, from demolition as the neighboring fire station was remodeled. Currently, the City of McAllen has plans under way to develop a second community garden in north central McAllen.

In fact, the City of McAllen recently partnered with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service to provide healthy cooking lessons for its employees. The educational outreach hosts the Dinner Tonight Healthy Cooking School, a live food demonstration featuring recipes that are cost effective, easy to prepare, and fit into a healthy meal plan. Last year, Mayor Darling hosted a dinner free and open to the community, in which he, as the chef, helped demonstrate a healthy, low-cost and culturally-relevant meal.

"And delicious. It was simply delicious," he added.

While pounding the pavement and working up a sweat all contribute to maintaining health and wellness, healthy eating is also imperative to one's routine. The City of McAllen also strives to provide citizens and visitors with opportunities, resources and access to some of the best hike and bike trails, parks, and other public recreation spaces throughout the Rio Grande Valley. A total of 88 parks, 34 miles of hike and bike trails, four pools and bike lanes, a Bike Barn and a B-cycle program are all ready to give everyone in McAllen the chance to live a healthy and active lifestyle.

Another resource for residents is the Mayor's Wellness Council. Established in 2018, the council is comprised of approximately 50 members ranging from city staff, to business leaders to community activists who promote healthy living and wellness. Since its inception, the council has organized and led various activities such as Yoga in the Park, all beneficial to body and mind. For the past two years, McAllen has taken first place in the It's Time Texas Community challenge which pits cities from across Texas vying for the healthiest city title. In 2018, McAllen placed first in the large city category, however in 2019, the community rose to the top with the most points in the entire State of Texas.

"McAllen residents have proven they understand what it takes to lead an overall healthy lifestyle," concluded Mayor Darling. "Now, let's make sure the next generation is active, eats healthy and lives well."

A copy of the full report is available for full download by following the link here: <https://wellbeingindex.sharecare.com/download-reports/?submissionGuid=840fe2ab-07da-4a5b-9501-5af1bdd82493>



@cityofmcallen

###



Instagram



McAllenTX