



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **City of McAllen Wins Statewide Community Health Challenge**

*Texas-sized competition promoted healthy living*

**McAllen, TX-** For the second year in a row, the City of McAllen was not only the winner for its size category in the *IT'S TIME TEXAS (ITT) Community Challenge*, which ended March 4, but also, the top point getter in the entire state of Texas. More than 4,195 members of the McAllen community participated and uploaded 7,234 Healthy Selfies, logging 14,851 minutes of activity and losing 487 pounds during the challenge.

"This was a unique opportunity for McAllen residents to get healthy. It was a win all the way around. We increased healthy activity and we have bragging rights now for being one of the healthiest large cities in Texas," Mayor Jim Darling said. "I am so proud of our community for stepping up once again and showing their commitment to a healthier future."

This growing statewide competition encourages communities of all sizes, including schools, businesses, and mayors, to commit to healthy living and ultimately transform the community's health. More than 21,000 Texans representing over 200 communities participated this year. Once again, Mayor Darling and the McAllen City Commission signed a healthy pledge as part of the challenge and joined in partnership with McAllen I.S.D. to promote healthy living and active lifestyles among all of its residents, including the youth.

The partnership with McAllen I.S.D. was extremely important to the City of McAllen, as establishing healthy habits now will mean a healthier adult in the future.

"I am so proud once again that our community came together to communicate the importance of a healthy lifestyle," said McAllen City Manager Roel "Roy" Rodriguez, P.E. "McAllen continues to shine among cities across this great State of Texas. Winning this challenge should send a strong message that we are committed to continue to improve our health for both employees of the City of McAllen and citizens throughout our wonderful city."

The Mayor's Wellness Council, established last year during the Challenge, kicked off the competition by hosting a Victory Lap and Kick-Off, to celebrate winning last year's competition and to get more community members participating, as well. Additionally, the Mayor's Wellness Council, hosted a pair of free, low-impact outdoor exercise sessions of pilates and ReFit! with physical therapy instructors from Rio Grande Regional Hospital, members of the MWC, to help encourage McAllen residents to move and garner challenge points by registering for the competition and uploading a healthy selfie to the ITT website.

"Rio Grande Regional Hospital is committed to help improve the well-being of our community partners and members," said Cris Rivera, Chief Executive Officer at Rio Grande Regional Hospital. "I am extremely proud to partner with the City of McAllen. We will continue to offer fun and effective educational classes to keep the employees motivated and interested in their health."

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The City of McAllen Health & Code Enforcement Department reached out to partnering agencies in the community, including private businesses to get involved and signed up. This year, **18** businesses registered, hoping to get not only the community, but also and just as importantly, their own employees healthy and living active and well.

“This healthy challenge invited the entire McAllen community to get in the game,” said Steven Kotsatos, Director, City of McAllen Health & Code Enforcement Department. “We leveraged the strength of our organization, the citizens, businesses, schools, and non-profits and we won the competition, and more importantly, encouraged more residents to get started, or continue on their health goals.”

“This was a great opportunity to see the entire organization of the City of McAllen work towards a common goal that was beneficial not only to themselves, but also, to the community. It was an awesome experience for everyone involved.”

The competition pitted cities of similar size against each other. McAllen competed against Garland, Pasadena, Plano, Lewisville and Brownsville, to name a few. The winning cities will receive an \$1,800 grant to put toward future community health efforts, an *ITT Community Challenge* trophy, a winning community banner, a digital banner and a badge for their websites. An awards ceremony is being held at McAllen City Hall on April 8.

With Texas recently ranked among the top 10 states struggling with high obesity rates, the annual community challenge is a much-needed and impactful program which pulls together partnerships at all levels, from businesses and government to schools, nonprofits and faith-based organizations. Within the first six years, the *IT'S TIME TEXAS Community Challenge* has inspired more than 3.1 million healthy actions and has engaged more than 750 Texas communities of all sizes.

### 2019 It's Time Texas Community Challenge Champions:

- METRO: **Austin**
- LARGE: **McAllen**
- MID-SIZE: **Harlingen**
- SMALL (TIE): **Prosper and Lancaster**
- EXTRA SMALL: **Smithville**

### Participating McAllen Businesses:

#### Rio Grande Regional Hospital

Apples & Stars Learning Center  
Behavioral Health Solutions  
Boggus Ford  
Balanced Brew Coffee  
Chick Fil-A (Nolana & 23rd Street)  
College of Health Care Professionals

Fit-Fillet

Health Nut

JJ's Party House

Keep McAllen Beautiful

LFD Home Furnishings

McAllen Chamber of Commerce

McAllen I.S.D. School Board

PR Nutrition Consulting

Spectrum

STC-Health & Wellness

Thermography RGV

The Monitor

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