



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 16, 2018

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## **City of McAllen Wins Statewide Community Health Challenge** *Texas-sized competition promoted healthy living*

**McAllen, TX-** For the first time, the City of McAllen was the winner for its size category in the *IT'S TIME TEXAS (ITT) Community Challenge*, which ended March 4. More than 2,200 members of the McAllen community participated, logging 1,881,750 minutes of activity and 273 pounds lost 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 city 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. Mayor Darling established a McAllen Mayor's Fitness Council and signed a healthy pledge as part of the challenge.

"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 City of McAllen also hosted a pair of free, low-impact outdoor exercise sessions of yoga and tai chi 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. Other activities organized by staff included walks around the various municipal buildings and a stair climb challenge at the McAllen City Hall.

The City of McAllen Health & Code Enforcement Department reached out to partnering agencies in the community, such as McAllen I.S.D., head start schools and even private businesses to get involved and signed up. A highlight for the department was registering former astronaut and McAllen resident Michael Fossum for the challenge.

"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

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## **City of McAllen Wins Statewide Community Health Challenge / page 2 of 2**

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.”

challenge. We boldly asked for the community’s support and they gladly jumped on board. This was

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 won 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 April 9.

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.

### **2018 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:**

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 Homefurnishings  
McAllen Chamber of Commerce  
McAllen I.S.D.  
McAllen I.S.D. School Board  
PR Nutrition Consulting  
Spectrum  
STC-Health & Wellness  
Thermography RGV

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