



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Jacksonville Awarded “Fit Community” Designation

RALEIGH, N.C. – The City of Jacksonville was named a Fit Community today at the third annual awards presentation in Durham because of its demonstrated commitment to the health of its citizens. Jacksonville was one of three North Carolina municipalities to receive the Fit Community designation, which recognized their success in promoting healthier lifestyles among their residents.

The Fit Community designations were made by Fit Together, the statewide initiative of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC) and the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) to combat obesity and excessive weight. Lt. Gov. Bev Perdue, chair of the HWTF, and Bob Greczyn, president and CEO of BCBSNC, presented the award to Victoria Lukasina, Jacksonville’s recreation program supervisor, on behalf of Mayor Sammy Phillips.

The Town of Black Mountain and the Town of Tarboro were also awarded the Fit Community designation. The designation rewards communities for supporting healthy eating, physical activity and tobacco-free living through policy and community infrastructure.

“By promoting healthy living, these communities are making a real difference,” said Lt. Gov. Perdue. “These Fit Communities are improving the well-being of their residents and helping lead the way to a healthier North Carolina.”

Jacksonville exemplifies the “Fit Community” designation through a local health partnership between schools and grocery stores that together created a logo campaign that helps students and their parents choose more nutritious foods. The city supports active lifestyles through sidewalk requirements for all new construction, a comprehensive public transit system and a variety of parks and recreational opportunities.

“Healthy lifestyles are related to the environments in which we work, live and play,” said Greczyn. “It’s a lot easier to get fit when you have access to biking trails, sidewalks and smoke-free living right in your backyard. We applaud these communities for making that commitment.”

Communities chosen for the Fit Community designations receive highway signs to place on their roadways; plaques; recognition on the Fit Community Web site, www.FitCommunityNC.org; and use of the Fit Community logo.

All North Carolina municipalities and counties were eligible for the Fit Community designation. Applications were judged based upon objective criteria collected from peer-reviewed studies and national programs, and the selection process was managed by Chapel Hill-based Active Living by Design, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Obesity has emerged as a major threat to children and adults across the U.S., and especially here in North Carolina. According to the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 61 percent of North Carolina adults are overweight or obese, and 25 percent reported no exercise in the prior 30 days. Fit Together’s mission is to support programs and initiatives that address this growing problem.

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About NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund

The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund was created by the General Assembly in 2000 to allocate a portion of N.C.'s share of the national tobacco settlement. HWTF has invested \$143 million to support preventive health initiatives and \$102 million to fund prescription drug assistance programs. For more information, please visit www.HealthWellNC.com.

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina is a leader in delivering innovative health care products, services and information to more than 3.7 million members, including approximately 904,000 served on behalf of other Blue Plans. For 75 years, the company has served its customers by offering health insurance at a competitive price and has served the people of North Carolina through support of community organizations, programs and events that promote good health. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. Access BCBSNC online at www.bcbsnc.com.

About Active Living by Design

Active Living by Design is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, established to create, enhance and promote environments that make it safe and convenient for people to be more physically active. The goal of Active Living by Design is to encourage changes in design, transportation and policies to cultivate and support active living. The \$15.5-million program is based at the School of Public Health at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. For more information, please visit www.activelivingbydesign.org.

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To download a photograph of local officials receiving their awards, please visit www.FitCommunityNC.org after 2 p.m. today.