



Donald L. Carcieri
Governor

NEWS

Office of the Governor

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CARCIERI RECOGNIZES CREATIVE PROGRAMS TO KEEP RHODE ISLANDERS HEALTHY WITH GOVERNOR'S AWARDS FOR WELLNESS INNOVATION

Six organizations in community, worksite, and educational settings throughout Rhode Island were honored by Governor Donald L. Carcieri at a State House ceremony today for their creative approaches to wellness programs designed to promote healthy behaviors.

The competitive award process invited Rhode Island worksites, schools, community-based and faith-based organizations, city or town governments, state departments, healthcare organizations, organized labor, and media to submit applications highlighting programs and policies that address at least one of the following health concerns: tobacco control, healthy weight, physical activity, nutrition, and/or seat belt use. The awards program was developed by the Governor's Office and the RI Department of Health, and was launched in July of this year.

The Governor's Awards for Wellness Innovation were given to six recipients, including the Guiteras School in Bristol; the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training; the Department of Veteran's Affairs Providence Medical Center; Leftkowitz, Champi & DeRienzo P.C.; the Leon Mathieu Senior Center in Pawtucket; and Johnson & Wales University. Four "honorable mentions" were recognized as well, including Shape Up RI, The Genesis Center, the Lincoln School Department, and Sodexho School Services in the Pawtucket School System.

"The recipients of the Governor's Awards for Wellness Innovation and the honorable mentions serve as winning examples of resourcefulness in wellness and health promotion," said

Governor Carcieri. “Some showed a creative use of limited resources, others developed programs with an element of fun, and some were particularly successful in reaching underserved populations. The bottom line is that we can learn from all of them.”

“Celebrating these good health practices and programs is a powerful way to promote and reinforce healthy lifestyles,” said Director of Health, David R. Gifford, MD, MPH. “Positive health behaviors are among the most important elements in achieving good health.”

The Governor’s Awards for Wellness Innovation is a component of Governor Carcieri’s Wellness Initiative, one of five pillars of his healthcare agenda. The initiative seeks to encourage public and private sector efforts to promote healthy lifestyles for all Rhode Islanders, and cut in half the number of Rhode Islanders with unhealthy and unsafe habits. Wellness programs raise awareness and offer programming highlighting good nutrition, adequate exercise, and regular seat belt use, while discouraging smoking and obesity.

“Wellness programs are essential for improving our quality of life and to help slow the trend in healthcare cost increases,” said Governor Carcieri. “The prevalence of conditions such as obesity and diabetes underscore the need to take better care of our health -- before debilitating and expensive illnesses set in.”

In April, Rhode Island was recognized by the Wellness Councils of America (WELCOA) as the first “Well State” in the nation. To meet the criteria for this award, a state must have 20% of its working adult population employed by companies or organizations that are certified as “well workplaces” for their health promotion policies and programs. Rhode Island reached this threshold in late 2006, and submitted a successful application to WELCOA.

“Each of the schools, worksites, and community organizations recognized today have shown creativity and an outstanding commitment to wellness. They approached wellness by thinking ‘outside the box’, and the results of their efforts were inspiring,” said Governor Carcieri. “Thousands of Rhode Islanders have reaped tremendous benefits from the healthful activities that each awardee has offered and promoted.”

(Please see attached sheet for details about each of the award winners and honorable mentions.)

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