



**BILL HASLAM**  
GOVERNOR  
STATE OF TENNESSEE

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CONTACT: David Smith  
OFFICE: (615) 741-3763

**HASLAM LAUNCHES HEALTHIER TENNESSEE COMMUNITIES**  
*Program to recognize communities that show commitment to healthy living*

NASHVILLE – Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam and Governor’s Foundation for Health and Wellness CEO Rick Johnson, joined by representatives from nine cities and counties across the state, today launched Healthier Tennessee Communities, a coordinated initiative supporting physical activity, healthy eating and tobacco abstinence at the local level.

The Governor’s Foundation for Health and Wellness has focused on developing and introducing effective tools for individuals, workplaces and faith congregations. Healthier Tennessee Communities takes a community-wide approach to improving Tennesseans’ health by engaging the local leaders of cities, towns, counties and neighborhoods.

“Encouraging and recognizing community-led change is a critical part of improving the health and lives of Tennesseans,” Haslam said. “The foundation has worked with businesses, schools and faith organizations, and this program brings together leaders at the local level in a coordinated way to support Tennesseans making healthier choices.”

In Tennessee, one in four adults smokes, and one in five high school students uses tobacco. The rate of obesity has risen to almost 34 percent from only 10 percent in 1988. Type-2 diabetes and high blood pressure are at epidemic levels.

“Research has shown that we are much more likely to change our health-related behavior and establish healthy habits when we are encouraged and supported by others – when we are in community,” Johnson said. “That’s why making health and wellness an integral part of life where you live – and with the people who surround you – can make such a positive difference.”

As part of Healthier Tennessee Communities, the foundation will provide guidance and regionally based support, and cities, towns, counties, or neighborhoods interested in becoming a Healthier Tennessee Community will be required to:

- identify local wellness champions to lead the effort,
- create a local wellness council that engages people in workplaces, schools and faith organizations,
- initiate and sustain community-wide events and activities that support physical activity, healthy eating and tobacco abstinence,
- and track and measure outputs and accomplishments of the program.



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Decatur, Dyer, Loudon, McMinn and Rhea counties along with the cities of Franklin, Germantown, Kingsport and Tullahoma are currently piloting the Healthier Tennessee Communities program.

The foundation launched a statewide health awareness campaign in 2013, followed by Small Starts, a series of more than 60 personal health challenges for individuals; Small Starts @ Work, a wellness toolkit for use in workplaces; and Small Starts @ Worship, a wellness toolkit geared toward faith-based communities, enabling congregations to implement and sustain health and wellness programs. The foundation has also released a health and wellness app, Streaks for Small Starts, available for iOS and Android devices.

Cities and counties interested in becoming a Healthier Tennessee Community should contact the Governor's Foundation for Health and Wellness at [tennessee@healthierstate.org](mailto:tennessee@healthierstate.org) or (615) 610-1880. For more information on the program and other Healthier Tennessee initiatives, please visit [www.healthiertn.com](http://www.healthiertn.com).

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