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Onorato Launches First Phase of “Healthy Downtown Business Program” in Allegheny Together Communities

PITTSBURGH — Allegheny County Executive Dan Onorato today launched the first phase of the new “Healthy Downtown Business Program” in Bellevue, Bridgeville, Coraopolis, Elizabeth, Stowe Twp., Swissvale, Tarentum and Verona to encourage business owners and their employees to implement regular exercise into their daily routines. These eight communities are currently participating in Allegheny Together, a small business revitalization program that encourages well-planned, well-designed and geographically-focused investment in established urban commercial districts.

“The goal of Allegheny Together is to reinvigorate small businesses by bringing residents back to our traditional, walkable shopping districts,” said Onorato. “We’ve been working hard in these eight communities to improve façades, streetscaping, signage, lighting, and urban gardening. The Healthy Downtown Business Program takes things a step further by encouraging businesses owners and their employees to incorporate exercise into their daily routines. Having more people walking in our business districts will not only make them more vibrant and safe, but it will also help to make residents more aware of their local businesses.”

Every Allegheny Together business owner and all of their employees are eligible to participate in the Healthy Downtown Business Program, which is a joint effort of Allegheny County Economic Development, Allegheny County Health Department, and Town Center Associates (TCA).

In August, TCA staff visited all of the Allegheny Together businesses to let them know about the program and to provide them with the following resources:

- Free Allegheny Together pedometers;
- Walking route map of their business district to make it easy for them to gauge the distance they walk each day and to achieve their mileage goals;
- Downtown business directory to encourage downtown businesses to support one another’s businesses;

— more —

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- Walking log to track their progress, which will be collected by TCA in October; and
- Other handouts provided by the Allegheny County Health Department to encourage and support healthier downtown businesses.

All of the walking maps, printable downtown directories, and program resources are also available online at www.DowntownFirst.net.

"We're delighted to integrate the downtown walking maps and directories into the Downtown First website for the Allegheny Together towns," said Town Center Associates Program Director Mara Dowdy. "By making the walking maps and directories available online, it is easy for small business owners and their employees, as well as the rest of the community, to achieve their fitness goals while walking and shopping in their business districts."

During September, Allegheny Together business owners and employees will log their steps walked, and TCA will select participants to receive prizes to encourage continued participation. An award based on the average number of steps walked per employee will be given to the "Healthiest Downtown Business" and the "Healthiest Downtown Business Employee" in each Allegheny Together community.

"The Healthy Downtown Business Walking Program not only promotes healthier lifestyles, but it enables people to get an up close view of the downtown business district - one that they would never get from a car," said Margaret Fleischauer of the Grand Theatre in Elizabeth. "I can't tell you how many people peek through our front doors on a daily basis because they realize, some for the very first time, that we have a theater here. If everyone would take the time to walk through their downtown, just think of how many businesses they would discover. Plus, the workout would make them feel a lot better!"

The next phase of the Healthy Downtown Business Program, pending available funding, will include business owners providing their customers with free pedometers and walking logs. The pedometers will be given out during an established week in all Allegheny Together communities, and a similar contest will ensue. Additional features will be added to the walking map during this phase of the program to encourage more residents to make exercise and walking in their business district a regular part of their daily routine.

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Through Allegheny Together, communities establish a business revitalization group that develops a vision for their business district. Allegheny Together also assists and encourages property owners and businesses to reinvest in traditional business districts by providing matching grants and low-cost financing. Eligible exterior activities include: façade improvements; streetscaping; business identification signage; awnings; and lighting that highlight architectural features and/or business signage. For additional information, visit www.alleghenytogether.com.