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**CONTACT:**

Sharon R. Hoggard  
Marketing Manager  
757-393-5143 EXT. 6265  
[hoggards@portsmouthva.gov](mailto:hoggards@portsmouthva.gov)

## **Portsmouth Named a Health Champion by the American Diabetes Association**

**PORTSMOUTH, VA (JUNE 6, 2018)** – The city of Portsmouth was notified May 31, that it has been named *Health Champion* by the American Diabetes Association, for implementing healthy initiatives throughout the city organization including programs for weight management, diabetes prevention, smoking cessation, and promoting walking activities like the annual *Walk and Talk with the City Manager* event held June 1, to kick off the city’s wellness program. “The designation is given to organizations that provide a culture of health and wellness for their employees,” said Courtland Marriner, wellness coordinator for the city. “For us, the *Health Champion* designation means that we have already successfully completed initiatives that have established a culture of wellness among employees and staff.”

Specifically the city of Portsmouth, through partnerships with Optima Health, Healthy Portsmouth, the Virginia Cooperative Extension, EVMS, the Portsmouth Health Department and other groups, has adopted an ethos of health and wellness by providing employees with online tools to track food choices and physical activity, designated safe places for walking, encouraging employees to take the stairs instead of the elevator, vending machines that offer water, non-sugary drinks, decaf coffee, low-fat snack options and other healthy options. “In addition, the Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services Department offers events and activities that help employees and the community to stay healthy and active,” added Marriner. In addition, the city co-sponsors exhibits and demonstrations for National Nutrition Month and promotes the local farmers market so employees have ready access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

Marriner notes that a culture of health and wellness not only impacts the city’s bottom line, but it demonstrates that the organization’s leadership has a vested interest in the health and well-being of its workforce. “These kinds of programs reduce sick leave usage, increase productivity and increase employee engagement. I am excited that Portsmouth has received the Health Champion designation and so were the American Diabetes Association representatives.”

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