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DOH - Sarasota Recognized as Health Department of the Year by The National Association of County and City Health Officials

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Sarasota - The Florida Department of Health in Sarasota was recognized by The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) as a Large Local Health Department of the Year for 2019 during a ceremony Wednesday evening in Orlando.

"Health departments protect the health of citizens in communities large and small, and NACCHO is pleased to recognize the achievements made by this year's recipients," says NACCHO President George T. Roberts, Jr. "The geographic diversity of this year's winners illustrates the similarities of successes and the contrast of challenges that are represented by this year's awardees."

Applications for the award were judged based on the size of the health department, and were scored on their innovation and creativity, implementation, impact in the community and public health, and engagement of community and diverse partners. The theme for the 2019 LHD of the Year Award was, "Improving Public and Private Partnerships." Cross-sectoral partnerships are the cornerstone of effectively improving health outcomes in communities throughout the nation.

Sarasota County Health and Human Services (SCHHS) is itself a collaboration between the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota and Sarasota County Government.

According to Sarasota County Administrator Jonathan Lewis, this recognition is part of the county's ongoing commitment to providing world class service.
"This collaboration is of the greatest importance for our county. The services provided by department of health improves the lives of everyone in our community, regardless of age," Lewis said. "This is yet another reason that Sarasota County is one of the best places to live."

According to DOH-Sarasota Administrator and Director for Sarasota County Health and Human Services Chuck Henry, the ongoing community collaborations have led to many positive outcomes for residents.

"Whether leading, facilitating, guiding, or supporting, Sarasota County Health and Human Services remains deeply committed to our shared community goals. We are privileged to serve a community that works hard to build strong alliances to improve the health outcomes of all residents and visitors," said Henry.

"This includes collaborations tackling behavioral health, aging, and the first years of life, supported by multiple charitable foundations and agencies committed to finding successful avenues for improvement, said Henry. "By working together and aligning intentions and goals, the community has succeeded in coordinating action to maximize positive outcomes."

NACCHO highlighted three thriving examples of positive community collaborations during the award presentation; The Behavioral Health Stakeholders Consortium, Age-Friendly Sarasota, and First 1,000 Days Sarasota County.

Sarasota County's Behavioral Health Stakeholders Consortium (BHSC) convenes monthly with service providers, law enforcement, hospital representatives, consumers, family members, and the managing entity for state mental health and substance abuse funding to identify and solve system issues. With leadership and staff support from Sarasota County Health and Human Services, the BHSC has developed at least two programs worthy of recognition.

Since 2006, 2,020 participants have been served through a ten-week Voluntary Interim Placement - Enhanced Recovery (VIP-ER) Program developed through the BHSC. The completion rate is 76%, and for 84% of graduates located a year after completing the program, 90% remain sober, while the industry standard for sobriety 12 months after completing a program is 10%. Additionally, 97% remained in stable housing, and 68% remained employed.

With 36% of Sarasota County's population more than 65 years of age and a projected influx of aging baby boomers in the coming years, Age-Friendly Sarasota has been another successful collaboration with far-reaching implications. In its fifth year, Age-Friendly Sarasota is a multi-sector collaboration that connects government, businesses, nonprofit organizations, media, and residents
to build a community for all ages. With support and leadership from local government, The Patterson Foundation, and multiple partners, Sarasota County added age-friendly language to its Comprehensive Plan, so it now considers age-friendly features in the built environment and promotes intergenerational relationships. The Parks and Recreation Department built age-friendly amenities into several parks to encourage active living by seniors and intergenerational activities. The Planning Department created a voluntary universal design and visibility standards for builders, including fast-track permitting as an incentive.

SCHHS also focuses on the early years of life through First 1,000 Days Sarasota County, in which a collaboration was formed to improve access and coordination of services for families and babies. The goal is to ensure improved health outcomes and lifelong success starting with prenatal care. Led and championed by the Charles and Margery Barancik Foundation, First 1,000 Days comprises 40+ nonprofit, early childhood, healthcare, government, and philanthropic partners, including SCHHS.

For more information about the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota please visit www.sarasotahealth.org

About the Florida Department of Health

The department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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