

# Which Shore towns are the healthiest?

ELISE SCHOENING  
ASBURY PARK PRESS

In the seaside town of Bay Head, local residents flock to the beaches each morning for community yoga. Or residents might be found at a canoe race, a cooking class or a low-cost fitness instruction.

It's all part of how Bay Head strives to be a healthy town, as part of the statewide Mayors Wellness Campaign. The campaign celebrated its 10-year anniversary on Wednesday, June 1.

"It's hard to believe it's gone on for 10 years," said Bay Head Mayor Bill Curtis. "I know we were one of the first towns to get involved."

Mayors across New Jersey have partnered with the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute and the New Jersey League of Municipalities to implement programs and activities that promote a healthy lifestyle through regular exercise and mindful eating.

"Our intent is to involve all age groups, and so far we've been very successful in doing that," Curtis said.

In 2011, Bay Head was honored for its hard work and recognized as one of two Healthy Towns in the state.

"We became the first shore community to receive that (award)," Curtis said. "I was very proud of it, as was the (town) council and the community. We have it displayed by our tennis courts."

This year, Beachwood and Jersey City were named the state's top two Healthy Towns. Beachwood only joined

the wellness campaign two years ago, but its commitment to healthy living earned it a spot as a Town to Watch in 2015.

Over the past two years, the town has teamed up with the local ShopRite to create free classes on healthy cooking. Residents are also invited to take two-mile walks with Mayor Ronald F. Roma in the fall. Yoga and Zumba classes were introduced as a low-cost fitness alternative. According to Roma, the classes have seen such a high demand that they will now being carried over to the winter months.

"Beachwood surveyed their residents and they didn't have a yoga studio in the town, so they hired an instructor to come every Saturday morning," said Janan Dave, director of community health for the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute. "They did it on the beach, so they kept the cost low. There's a lot they do that's very creative and serves the needs of the town."

The Mayors Wellness Campaign was started shortly after the Institute of Medicine released a report detailing the rapid rise of obesity across the nation and the need for action.

"They had a vision that New Jersey mayors as the elected officials and leaders throughout the state would be champions for change," said Linda Schwimmer, president and CEO of the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute.

The wellness campaign has grown steadily since its launch a decade ago. Now over 350 New Jersey municipalities participate in the wellness campaign.



Mayor Bill Curtis leads a town walk to the Bay Head Yacht Club in the summer of 2015.



## MAYORS WELLNESS CAMPAIGN

STAY ACTIVE, EAT WELL, FEEL GREAT!