



Mayor's Global Alliance for Community Wellness
Best Practices

ALBANY, NEW YORK
MAYOR GERALD D. JENNINGS

List the programs and/or initiatives in place in your city that address the key areas:

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Firefighter Wellness Program: Firefighting is one of the most physically demanding jobs in the world. Therefore, the City of Albany has been working diligently to make health a priority among its many dedicated firefighters. By providing firefighters with access to the tools necessary to create a well-balanced diet and active lifestyle, the City of Albany aims to reduce the number of heart attack related deaths in its firefighting community. Increasing firefighter's physical fitness and overall wellness also impacts the citizens of Albany by offering them more physically capable service personnel, able to perform their job in a more safe and efficient manor.

MENTAL HEALTH

Wellness Day: Each year, the City of Albany sponsors "Wellness Day," comprised of local, regional and national resources for personal wellness, including mental health. In 2008, the Annual Tulip Festival will also host a "Wellness Garden" to assist residents in their personal wellness journeys.

SAFETY

Red Cross Preparedness Initiative: Preparing Albany, kicking off in September, which is National Preparedness Month, **Preparing Albany**, will be an ongoing community initiative offering the following:

- Regularly scheduled *Get Ready-Be Safe* programs for City employees.
- Training for City employees so that they can become Red Cross-certified *Get Ready-Be Safe* instructors.
- Mailings of preparedness tips and other useful information to City residents.
- Posters and pertinent information posted in City offices, public housing, and other facilities.
- Other Red Cross courses such as CPR, first aid, and babysitting training will be offered so that all City residents, particularly our youth, will be better equipped to respond to all types of emergencies.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

EAP Program (City Employees): Employees or family members experiencing problems are referred to qualified community providers. The program addresses whatever problems are affecting an employee, including serious issues with alcohol or drugs.



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VIOLENCE PREVENTION

The Gang Prevention Program: This was started in October of 1999 through a grant funded by the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). The program is designed to provide educational and awareness programs to Albany's communities regarding youth gangs. The program has surpassed its goals of attracting the city's youth and has swelled to over 700 kids as of July 1, 2005. Providing positive structured activities along with the necessary counseling, the GPP helps kids to handle the negative peer pressures they encounter on the streets and aids them in achieving their personal goals and dreams. Utilizing community resources that already exist along with providing numerous alternatives the GPP offers kids opportunities to realize their potential and build a positive foundation for the future.

Based upon the programs and initiatives previously listed, which have had the greatest impact on your city?

For the City of Albany, promoting the safety and wellbeing of its firefighters is an important initiative. The U.S. Fire Administration released a comprehensive study, which examined various causes of death for on-duty firefighters. The "USFA Firefighter Fatality Retrospective Study" identified the leading cause of death for the firefighters to be heart attacks, which account for roughly 44% of all deaths. With these statistics in mind, the City of Albany created the **Firefighter Wellness Program**, designed to help significantly decrease firefighter morbidity, injury, and mortality resulting from cardiovascular issues caused by an unhealthy lifestyle. The goal of the Firefighter Wellness Program is to encourage a more proactive and holistic approach to health and fitness among the City's 260 firefighters. Partnering with local Hannaford Supermarkets, firefighters are introduced to healthier eating habits and more nutritious food options. The City Department of Recreation assists members with individualized workout regimens and training sessions to emphasize the importance of strength and endurance. In addition, firefighters are also encouraged to receive cardiac calcium screening, which can help identify those with an increased risk of heart disease. This program is an innovative way to ensure that all City firefighters have access to the necessary tools available to remain healthy and safe throughout their careers, allowing them to be able to respond to emergencies in a more safe and efficient manner.



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Briefly explain the steps taken to create this program or initiative (feel free to share more than one program/initiative). If possible, also include a website to which we can direct our members for more information.

The Firefighter Wellness Program would not be possible without the generous help of Hannaford Supermarkets, who provided healthy eating habit instruction and food demonstrations for our City Firefighters and the Department of Recreation, who provided fitness instruction. The wonderful support of City residents and peer encouragement also inspired firefighters to achieve these new lifestyle goals, improving health, service, and quality of life within the City of Albany.