

NEWS RELEASE
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Public invited to honor Health Champions Melissa Hoffman and Aimee Polson during April 6 breakfast

(Lawrence, KS) – The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department will recognize Melissa Hoffman and Aimee Polson, both of Lawrence, as the 2018 Douglas County Health Champions during a community breakfast 7:30-8:30 a.m. April 6 at the Community Health Facility, 200 Maine St. The event is open to the public and is part of the Health Department’s celebration of National Public Health Week.

Hoffman and Polson are being honored for their significant efforts to model, encourage and promote health in the community. Hoffman has provided education and support to mothers who have experienced perinatal mood and anxiety disorders. Polson has been a champion for local food production and consumption in our community. “They’ve both founded efforts that have touched countless lives in our community,” said Director Dan Partridge. “We hope you join us in applauding them for their outstanding contributions.”

About the honorees:

Melissa Hoffman, a registered nurse, has dedicated her career to promoting health and wellness of expectant and new parents. She is certified in childbirth and breastfeeding education. She facilitates a peer-to-peer perinatal mood support group at Lawrence Memorial Hospital. She is a founder of Build Your Village of Douglas County and Postpartum Support International of Kansas, organizations dedicated to strengthening education and services for women and families coping with perinatal mood and anxiety disorders in Kansas. As state coordinator of Postpartum Support International, Hoffman provides support to families and provides maternal mental health education for communities across Kansas. She is pursuing a doctorate in nursing practice with a psychiatric and mental health focus at the University of Kansas School of Nursing.

“Melissa’s work to increase awareness and address the intersection of mental health and maternal health has had an important, positive impact in our community,” said Vicki Collie-Akers, of KU Center for Community Health and Development. “She has worked tirelessly to enhance social support for women through education and social support groups and networks.”

Aimee Polson is a founding member the Common Ground Program, a community gardening and urban agriculture program created by the City of Lawrence in 2012. She has been the project coordinator for the Garden Incubator at John Taylor Park, Seventh and Walnuts streets, since its inception. Polson has devoted countless hours to designing, building and continuously expanding the unique garden area for the past six years. The Garden Incubator nurtures beginning gardeners, including children from the Ballard Community Center, and beginning and experienced gardeners of all ages while also providing startup opportunities for aspiring food producers. Produce from the Garden Incubator also has helped feed people in the community.



Polson, who works at KU Endowment Association, received a Master of Regional and Community Planning degree from Kansas State University with an emphasis on horticulture therapy.

“More than six years ago, Aimee answered the City’s call for proposals to use available public lands for community gardening initiatives,” said John Thornburg, a Lawrence gardener. “Aimee’s idea of a Garden Incubator has successfully met and exceeded anyone’s expectations, and it’s because of her dedication and tireless work.”

This is the sixth year for the Douglas County Health Champion awards. Previous winners: Michel Loomis and Josie Naron, 2013; Ellen Young and Logan Brown, 2014; Rick Martin and Di Xie, 2015; and Linda Cottin and Marilyn Hull, 2016; and Evan Jorn and Adam and Rachel Rolf, 2017.

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