



**NEWS RELEASE**  
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**Contact:** George Diepenbrock  
Communications Officer  
Office: (785) 856-7360

## **Public invited to honor Health Champions Mitchell Tegtmeier, Dee Boeck, Gene Wee during April 5 breakfast**

**(Lawrence)** – The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department will recognize Mitchell Tegtmeier, of Eudora, and Dee Boeck and Gene Wee, both of Lawrence, as the 2019 Douglas County Health Champions during the Community Health Breakfast 7:30-8:30 a.m., Friday, April 5, at the Community Health Facility, 200 Maine St.

At the breakfast, the Health Department will also honor LMH Health as the first recipient of the Healthier Together Leadership award to honor an organization that has demonstrated commitment to advancing the goals outlined in the Douglas County Community Health Plan.

The event is open to the public and is part of the Health Department’s celebration of National Public Health Week.

Tegtmeier, Boeck and Wee are being honored for their significant efforts to model, encourage and promote health in the community. Tegtmeier has provided education and opportunities to support health and fitness among youth in Eudora. Boeck and Wee are longtime organizers of the Lawrence Thanksgiving Day 5K that has provided support for Lawrence Public Schools marathon clubs and other youth fitness groups around Douglas County.

“As individuals, this year’s Health Champions have all founded efforts that have touched countless lives in our community. We hope you join us in applauding them for their outstanding contributions,” said Director Dan Partridge.

### **About the honorees:**

**Mitchell Tegtmeier**, a Eudora Middle School physical education and health teacher who has spent nearly a decade with the district, is credited with constantly thinking outside of the box in finding ways to promote lifelong wellness to students and the Eudora community. He has advocated through projects and seeking grant funding to help students, staff and neighborhood families gain access to workout equipment and other wellness activities. A few initiatives he has led in the Eudora community include the middle school’s summer conditioning program that includes more than 100 students daily; the popular Read and Bike Lab at the school library; an early advocate for the middle school’s Outdoor Fitness & Learning Center that opened last fall; and, motivating the district to renovate and open the new Cardinal Cardio workout room complete with heart-rate monitors to help students and school staff members and families better benefit

from their workouts.

“Mitchell Tegtmeier is the brainchild in reforming the way our Eudora Middle School and even entire school district and community looks at health and fitness,” said Shanda Hurla, executive director of the Eudora Schools Foundation. “For more than six years, he has been instrumental in starting numerous programs to increase student wellness.”

**Dee Boeck and Gene Wee** are founding members of runLawrence, a nonprofit running club, and longtime key organizers of the Thanksgiving Day 5K race in North Lawrence, which has become a tradition in the Lawrence community. Because planning, organization and hosting of the race relies completely on volunteers led by Boeck and Wee, proceeds from the 5K benefit an awards fund from which Douglas County schools and external clubs are eligible to apply. The fund has helped support the popular Marathon Clubs that have formed at all Lawrence elementary schools as well as two schools in Eudora, the Smart Strength program at Liberty Memorial Central Middle School, the Mini-Mocs Running Group at Haskell Indian Nations University and the Sheppard Shoe fund via Douglas County CASA, which purchases badly needed running shoes for foster care children. Since 2013, the Thanksgiving Day 5K has generated more than \$62,000 to support clubs and activities that instill a lifetime love of fitness and health for young people in Douglas County.

“Dee and Gene truly exemplify the idea of ‘health champions’ in every sense of the word,” said Elizabeth Burger, a member of runLawrence. “We may never know how many lives have been touched by their work because thousands of kids participate in the marathon clubs over the years. However, simply seeing the smile of even one child crossing the finish line at the Thanksgiving Day 5K or reach his or her marathon club goal says it all.”

While this is the first year to honor an organization with the Healthier Together Leadership Award, it is the seventh 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; Melissa Hoffman and Aimee Polson, 2018.

### **About the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department**

The nationally accredited Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department has served the Lawrence and Douglas County community for more than 120 years. Its mission is to advance policies, practices and programs that promote health for all, prevent disease and protect the environment.

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