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NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK, APRIL 3 – 9, 2017
MORGANTOWN, WV – MARCH 31, 2017

During the first full week of April each year, the American Public Health Association (APHA) brings together communities across the United States to observe National Public Health Week as a time to recognize contributions of public health and highlight issues that are important to improving our nation.

Americans are living 20 years longer than their grandparents' generation, largely thanks to the work of public health. Yet people in many other high-income countries live longer and suffer fewer health issues than we do. This year's goal is to make the U.S. the Healthiest Nation in One Generation — by 2030. APHA has created the following list to help inform everyone, from policymakers to the general public, of what we must look at to give everyone the opportunity to be healthy — and how we can do it.

Build a nation of safe, healthy communities: Health must be a priority in designing our communities, from healthy housing to accessible parks and playgrounds. Walking and biking must coexist with cars and public transportation. We need to invest in preventing violence and crime so everyone can safely live, work, learn and play.

Help all young people to graduate from high school: Education is the leading indicator of good health, giving people access to better jobs, incomes and neighborhoods. Call for policies that start with early school success and lead to higher on-time high school graduation rates. Be a champion for school-based health centers in your local schools. Become a mentor — you can make a difference!

The relationship between increased economic mobility and better health: The science is clear: Poverty and poor health go hand-in-hand. It’s time to fix our country’s growing income inequality and the unhealthy stresses it puts on adults and children. Support policies that ensure a living wage and remove barriers that make it harder to advance to higher incomes.

Achieving social justice and health equity: Everyone has the right to good health. We must remove barriers so everyone has the same opportunity to improve their lives and their health. Speak out against racism and an unequal criminal justice system. Demand a fair allocation of community resources. Fight against the trend of growing voter restrictions. Everyone needs a voice in improving our communities.

Give everyone a choice of safe, healthy food: Our food system should provide affordable food with nutritious ingredients, free from harmful contaminants. For many families, eating healthy is a daily challenge. Call for policies that help eliminate food deserts and bring healthy food to all neighborhoods and schools. Support measures like menu labeling that help people make healthier choices. Start a community garden. Volunteer for a local food bank!

Preparing for the health effects of climate change: Our health is connected to our environments. What happens upstream in our environments affects our health downstream. Support policies that protect the air we breathe, both indoors and outdoors, and the clean water we drink. Policies that protect our health from natural and manmade weather events and disasters are just as important. Support efforts that help communities prepare for and adapt to the health impacts of climate change.

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**Making the healthy choice the easy choice:** Avoid using tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. Eat healthy foods and exercise. We need to make these and other healthy choices for ourselves. But it doesn’t stop there – we need to work together to create communities that make the healthy choice the easy choice for everyone.

**Provide quality healthcare for everyone:** Health reform was just a start. To fulfill its potential, we must continue to pursue options for expanded access to quality care at the federal, state and local levels. But we also need to shift the main focus of our health system from one that treats illness to one that equally emphasizes prevention.

**Strengthen public health infrastructure and capacity:** Strong and consistent funding levels are necessary for the public health system to respond to everyday health threats and unexpected health emergencies. Support higher budgets for key public health agencies like CDC and HRSA. The agencies strengthen the public health workforce and are a major source of funding for state and local health departments and programs.

Dr. Lee Smith, Executive Director of Monongalia County Health Department and County physician, said “National Public Health Week is a reminder to everyone that we can and need to improve our personal health and health of our communities. Failure to do so will result in pockets where poor health, poverty, and poor education result in a sustained downward spiral and unhealthy communities.” Dr. Smith went on to say that public health should be invested in because it is an integral part in maintaining a sustainable healthy community by improving living standards, improving business communities and promoting equal access to quality healthcare delivery.

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