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News Release _____

**The HEALTH COLLABORATIVE RECOGNIZED AS A SPOTLIGHT AWARD WINNER
IN THE HEALTHIEST CITIES & COUNTIES CHALLENGE
Public announcement scheduled for Thursday, February 1 at 12:30 pm**

Dan River Region organization is one of 10 U.S. communities receiving award recognition

Danville, VA, Feb. 1st, 2018 — The Health Collaborative has been selected to receive \$25,000 as part of the Healthiest Cities & Counties Challenge (the Challenge) Spotlight Award. Ten winners and five honorable mentions were selected for their ability to address the need to improve opportunities for all Americans – regardless of income, education or ethnic background – to take an active role in healthy living.

The award is part of the Healthiest Cities & Counties Challenge – an initiative launched in 2016 by the Aetna Foundation, along with the American Public Health Association (APHA) and the National Association of Counties (NACo), empowering 50 small-to-midsize cities and counties to implement innovative solutions for their local public health issues.

The Challenge is a \$1.5 million prize competition among small and mid-sized U.S. cities, counties and federally-recognized tribes that plan to address social determinants of health such as improving access to healthy foods, increasing physical activity and reducing violence and crime. The 50 original participants were chosen based on strategies to improve the health of their communities in at least one of five domains: healthy behaviors, community safety, built environment, social/economic factors and environmental exposures.

In this first year of the Challenge, the 50 original projects, have tackled community-specific health disparities head-on and developed practical, evidence-based strategies to improve health conditions and promote healthy living. As one of 10 Spotlight Award recipients, The Health Collaborative has been highlighted for identifying creative partnerships and enacting sustainable and replicable programs, policies and built environment changes that address the unique health issues facing the Dan River Region.

The public announcement of the Spotlight Award will take place on Thursday, February 1 at 12:30 pm at Cottontail event space 600 Craghead Street in Danville.

“The Health Collaborative understood early on that the health challenges faced by our community were too great for one organization to solve alone,” said Elyse Jardine, project manager of The Health Collaborative. “It’s taken each one of our over 50 partners coming to the table and brainstorming ideas

and pooling resources to discover how together we can make our communities healthier. As a finalist in the Challenge, we've had access to tools, resources and technical assistance that have helped us to plan strategic and long-term solutions as we work towards a healthier, vibrant and more resilient Dan River Region."

As a cross-sector team of community-minded organizations and individuals, The Health Collaborative is working across the City of Danville, Virginia; Pittsylvania County, Virginia and Caswell County, North Carolina to improve health outcomes of residents. The Collaborative focuses on creating environments that make the healthy choice the easy choice where people live, learn, work and play. With four main goal areas -- active living, healthy eating, access to healthcare and creating healthy spaces, The Health Collaborative recognizes that a healthy population is vital to ensuring our social, economic and physical vitality.

"At the Aetna Foundation, we know that a positive health impact can be made when communities work together to tackle social determinants of health," said Dr. Garth Graham, president of the Aetna Foundation. "We are honored to showcase these innovative organizations as Spotlight Award winners for their commitment to improving local health conditions and creating healthier, safer places."

For the Challenge, The Health Collaborative is committed to 1) creating walkable and bike friendly communities by adopting complete streets policies and walkability plans, 2) building a stronger local food system by empowering youth to become change agents for healthy behaviors in their own neighborhoods and communities, 3) improving access to local, fresh and healthy food by working with the Community Health Worker (CHW) Project and other clinical partners and 4) creating healthy environments at schools, worksites, faith communities and during out of school time.

During the second year of the Challenge, The Health Collaborative will continue to focus on achieving these goals, while providing more leadership opportunities and supporting more efforts that are designed and led by community residents. The Health Collaborative will continue to focus on reducing health disparities and creating effective and inclusive policies that create health for all people in the Dan River Region.

For more information on the Spotlight Awards, the recognized organizations and the Challenge, visit www.healthiestcities.org.

The Health Collaborative is a cross-sector group of organizations and residents who are working together to improve the health and well-being of the Dan River Region. We aim to take an integrated approach complementing existing initiatives with policy, systems and environmental changes in order to provide opportunities for all to live healthy. The Health Collaborative is supported by Centra, Virginia Cooperative Extension – Central District, and Danville Regional Foundation. It is managed in partnership with the Institute for Public Health Innovation.

For more information on The Health Collaborative and to get involved, visit www.thehealthcollab.com

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