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2010 County Health Rankings Released: *Lafayette County Ranks 34th*

County Health Rankings Report Gives Wisconsin Residents a County-by-County Snapshot of How Multiple Factors Can Influence Their Health

Madison, WI, & Princeton, NJ – Ozaukee County has the healthiest residents in Wisconsin and Menominee County is the least healthy county in the state, according to a new report released today by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute & the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The *County Health Rankings* have ranked the health of Wisconsin counties annually since 2003.

This year, the *Rankings* were expanded to rank the overall health of the counties in all 50 states by using a standard formula to measure how healthy people are & how long they live.

Wisconsin's five healthiest counties are Ozaukee, St. Croix, Washington, Waukesha, and Portage. The five counties in the poorest health are Menominee, Milwaukee, Marquette, Jackson, and Adams. The healthiest of Wisconsin's 72 counties are largely suburban counties near the city of Milwaukee and on the border with the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area; the least healthy counties are primarily located in rural areas of central and northern Wisconsin with the exception of Milwaukee County, the state's most urban county in the southeast.

"This report shows us that there are big differences in overall health across Wisconsin's counties, due to many factors, ranging from individual behavior to quality of health care, to education and jobs, to access to healthy foods, and to quality of the air," says Dr. Patrick Remington, associate dean for public health, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health.

Lafayette County ranks #34 overall in the rankings. Specifically, the county ranks # 53 in health factors and # 34 in health outcomes. Lafayette County ranks in the top half of all counties in health outcomes with strong ratings in quality of life indicators such as environment; issues such as safe air and safe water supply. The rate of communicable disease and teen pregnancy is more favorable than the state as well. Lafayette County has a strong education system and 98% high school graduation rate. Lafayette County ranks less favorably in areas such as the % of uninsured adults (18% vs. a state rate of 10%), and access to care issues such as our local doctor patient ratio and those reporting not getting needed health care (3% vs. the state rate of 2%). We also are challenged by a very high motor vehicle crash death rate (27 vs. 16). Health behaviors such as physical inactivity and those reporting poor health is another weakness; and as a result the obesity rate in Lafayette County is 30% (vs. a state rate of 25%).

"Our vision for Wisconsin is everyone living better longer. The *County Health Rankings* raise awareness in communities about the many factors that we must address in order to make this vision a reality," says Karen Timberlake, Secretary of the Department of Health Services.

The 2010 *County Health Rankings* differ from past Wisconsin rankings. To be consistent with the 49 other state reports, the *Rankings* did not include a separate ranking for the city of Milwaukee & several

different measures were used to determine Health Outcomes and Health Factors rankings. For this reason, 2010 Rankings cannot be reliably compared to the Wisconsin rankings produced in previous years.

The online report, available at www.countyhealthrankings.org, includes a snapshot of each county in Wisconsin with a color-coded map comparing each county's overall health ranking. Researchers used five measures to assess the level of overall health or "health outcomes" for each county: the rate of people dying before age 75, the percent of people who report being in fair or poor health, the numbers of days people report being in poor physical and poor mental health, & the rate of low-birth weight infants.

The report then looks at factors that affect people's health within four categories: health behavior, clinical care, social and economic factors, and physical environment. Among the many health factors they looked at: rates of adult smoking, adult obesity, binge drinking, and teenage pregnancy; the number of uninsured adults, availability of primary care providers, and preventable hospital stays; rates of high school graduation, number of children in poverty, rates of violent crime, access to healthy foods, air pollution levels, and liquor-store density.

The University of Wisconsin's Remington says that "It's easier for people to lead a healthy lifestyle when they live in a healthy community – such as one that has expanded early childhood education, enacted smoke-free laws, increased access to healthier foods, or created more opportunities for physical activity. "We hope this report can mobilize community leaders to learn what is making their residents unhealthy and take action to invest in programs & policy changes that improve health," Remington adds. For more information, please visit www.countyhealthrankings.org