

Study Ranks St. Charles County Among Missouri's Healthiest for 4th Straight Year

March 20, 2013

Contact: Doug Bolnick, Public Information Officer, 636.949.7408

St. Charles County – A national study released today ranks St. Charles County atop a list of Missouri's healthiest counties. For the fourth consecutive year, the County Health Rankings compiled by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin's Population Health Institute placed St. Charles County first in Missouri for its "Health Outcomes" and "Health Factors" categories. The complete nationwide and Missouri-specific rankings may be viewed at www.countyhealthrankings.org.

"Earning this distinction as one of Missouri's healthiest counties for the fourth year in a row is a tremendous recognition for the importance that St. Charles County residents and our medical community place on healthy lifestyles," said Hope Woodson, interim director for the St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment. "Beginning with a healthy and active community allows our staff to be proactive in dealing with potential risks and in educating residents on ways in which they can improve their quality of life."

Coupled with the overall healthy lifestyle of area residents, initiatives begun by the St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment have enhanced the well-being of our community. Department staff actively networks with medical professionals and care providers to monitor disease threats, reduce incidences of chronic disease and assess the health needs of residents. An example of this outreach is the more than 650 nutrition and fitness, alcohol abuse prevention, tobacco cessation and other programs presented to day care centers, schools, businesses and senior centers by our Health Education staff. Other impactful programs include free immunizations for children through the Vaccines For Children program (VFC), low-cost vaccinations for uninsured or under-insured children and adults participating in the Children's Immunization Program (ChIP) and the Adult Immunization Program (AIP), and low-cost treatment and prevention services through the STD Clinic. Additionally, the County's Women, Infants and Children program (WIC) counsels pregnant women and mothers with infants or young children on the importance of proper nutrition from the beginning and provides supplemental, nutritious foods that give families an opportunity enhance growth and development.

The rankings are based on recent public data collected from vital statistics and government health surveys. Statistics measured include premature deaths (those who die from preventable diseases before the age of 75), obesity rates, binge drinking, smoking, access to healthy foods, unemployment, high school graduation rates, pollution, access to primary care providers, and self-assessed health status. The "Health Outcomes" are a representation of the health of a community, with rankings determined by how long people live (mortality) and how healthy people feel (morbidity). The "Health Factors" are what influences the overall health of the community, and these rankings are based on the community's health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic conditions, and physical environment.

Along with the continued population growth shown by the recent Census updates and improved economic conditions, these rankings further the notion that St. Charles County is an excellent location to raise a family or start a business. With a premature death rate that is both below the Missouri and National benchmarks, the study ranks St. Charles County second in Missouri in Mortality and 12th in Morbidity to top the state's Health Outcomes list. Topping the state in social/economic factors, ranking fourth in clinical care and placing fifth in healthy behaviors also led to the county's first-place ranking in the state's Health Factors category.

The St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment is committed to the protection and enhancement of health and the quality of life for all members of our community. For information on programs offered and to discover ways the Department assists our community, please visit www.scchealth.org or call 636.949.7400.

Issued since 2010, the County Health Rankings are a joint effort by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute that is designed to lay groundwork for health improvement efforts by government officials, organizations and citizens throughout the United States. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, measurable, and timely change. For information, visit www.rwjf.org. The University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute is the focal point within the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health for translating public health and health policy research into practice. For more information, visit <http://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu>.

###