



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STUDY RANKS ST. CHARLES COUNTY AMONG MISSOURI'S HEALTHIEST FOR 5th STRAIGHT YEAR

"County Health Rankings" Places St. Charles County In State's Top Three for Health Outcomes, Health Factors

St. Charles County, Missouri – For the fifth consecutive year, a national study rated St. Charles County among the healthiest in Missouri. The annual **County Health Rankings**, compiled by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin's Population Health Institute, placed St. Charles County in the top three in Missouri for both its "Health Outcomes" and "Health Factors" categories.

"In addition to healthy behavior and medical support, a community's organization and environment impact the well-being of its residents," **Julie Eckstein**, director for St. Charles County's Department of Community Health and the Environment, said. "Healthy people and a healthy economy work hand-in-hand. An active and able citizenry aids the economy through increased productivity and less demand for ongoing medical support, while extended education and an active workforce lead to better performance and higher employment. We, in St. Charles County, work diligently to ensure both a healthy workforce and strong economy that contribute to the vitality and successes of our community."

The rankings are based upon public data collected from vital statistics and government health surveys. Health Outcomes are a representation of the current health of a community, with rankings determined by how long people live (mortality) and how healthy they feel (morbidity). Health Factors allude to the population's health in the future and the items that influence overall well-being. Categories including community behaviors, clinical care, social and economic conditions, and the physical environment determine these rankings. The complete nationwide and Missouri-specific rankings may be viewed at www.countyhealthrankings.org.

Along with the continued population growth shown by Census updates and improved economic conditions, these rankings further the notion that St. Charles County is an excellent location to raise a family and to start, grow or move a business. Our premature death rate — that is lower than both Missouri and national benchmarks — contributes to the county's ranking in Health Outcomes. Topping the state for the second consecutive year for "Social and Economic Factors," as well as high marks for "Clinical Care" and "Health Behaviors," contributed to the county's ranking in Health Factors.

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Coupled with the overall healthy lifestyle of area residents, Department of Community Health and the Environment programs enhance the well-being of our community. Department staff actively networks with medical professionals and care providers to monitor disease threats, reduce incidences of disease and assess the health needs of residents. Last year, this system investigated and managed more than 2,400 potentially threatening illness cases in our community. Other programs with direct impact on the health of the community include free immunizations for children through the Vaccines For Children program (VFC), low-cost vaccinations for uninsured or under-insured children participating in the Children’s Immunization Program (ChIP) and adults in the Adult Immunization Program (AIP), as well as low-cost treatment and prevention services through the STD Clinic. Additionally, the Women, Infants and Children program (WIC) counsels more than 1,600 participants each month on the importance of proper nutrition for families and provides supplemental, nutritious foods that give pregnant women and young children enhanced opportunities for growth and development — saving money and lives in what otherwise could result in pre-term births or birth defects.

In addition to medical support programs, the department guides residents and organizations on health and well-being through outreach and education. One example of this outreach is the regional collaboration to host the ongoing Faith Based Emergency Preparedness workshops designed to help churches and organizations develop response plans that would aid congregations in times of need. The department’s Health Education staff also presented more than 350 nutrition and fitness, alcohol abuse prevention, hygiene and other programs to day care centers, schools, businesses and senior centers in the last year.

As a result of St. Charles County’s healthy lifestyle, department staff and other agencies can be proactive in dealing with potential risks that may contribute to poor health. Seventeen percent of adult survey respondents within the county cited that they smoke every day. Smoke-free initiatives in municipalities like O’Fallon and Lake Saint Louis, as well as the department’s smoking cessation classes for adults and educational programming for children, are designed to decrease these figures in the future. Another category, “Physical Environment,” cited that 87 percent of respondents commute alone to work. Eckstein noted that the commitment to a sound transportation system under the leadership of County Executive Steve Ehlmann (as seen through the Highway 364/Page Extension project) and an increase in the number of business opportunities available can continue to make these commutes safer and more efficient.

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. Through three divisions — Public Health, Environmental Health and Protection, and Humane Services — the department coordinates with federal, state, and local organizations to provide a wide range of services that have a profound impact on the lives of St. Charles County’s residents and visitors. To discover ways that the department assists this region or to learn about volunteer opportunities with any of the divisions, please visit <http://health.sccmo.org/health> 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>.