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Where We Live, Work, and Play Affects Our Health

TWIN FALLS – The 2011 *County Health Rankings*, released today, is the most comprehensive report of its kind to rank the overall health of nearly every county in all 50 states by using a standard way to measure how healthy people are and how long they live. These county rankings, now in their second year, are produced by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute in collaboration with and support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

County Health Rankings tells us that improvement is necessary -- and possible -- regardless of rank. They tell us that where we live, learn, work, and play matters to our health. Health care is vital for healthy populations, but it is only part of the story. We must find ways to create places, policies, programs, and social structures that promote health across the lifespan, especially for those members of our communities who have the fewest resources and options.

“The study shows that much of what influences our health happens outside of the doctor’s office, like our levels of education, income, access to nutritious foods, and access to smoke-free air to breathe,” says Rene LeBlanc, South Central Public Health District (SCPHD) Director.

High ranking counties include areas where people live longer than 75 years, their health is generally good, and their quality of life is high. Low ranking counties are those where healthier living, as defined by this report, is harder to achieve. The County Health Rankings illustrate the impact that factors such as access to education and income have on the public’s

health. They underscore the need for effective partnerships between other sectors of the community and their local health department.

“Communities should celebrate their strengths and build on them, while also acknowledging their challenges, taking steps to improve them,” says Rene LeBlanc, “Whether at the top of the list, in the middle, or at the bottom, we all must work together to lift the barriers to good health.”

The County Health Rankings, available at www.countyhealthrankings.org , include snapshots of U.S. counties that compare each county’s overall health with other counties in each of the 50 States.

For more information on the services of the South Central Public Health District and office locations, please visit www.phd5.idaho.gov .

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