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Carver is Healthiest County in Minnesota Seven Years Running **2019 County Health Rankings Report Released**

CHASKA, Minn.—Carver County ranks first in health outcomes and health factors, according to 2019 County Health Rankings report released today by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI).

This is the seventh consecutive year Carver County has ranked first in health outcomes among all Minnesota counties.

In recent years the County has consistently scored well on health behavior measures, such as low teen birth rates, high physical activity rates, and access to healthy foods. Additionally, the County is ranked first out of all Minnesota counties on social and economic factors such as high school graduation rates, low unemployment, low violent crime rates and low injury deaths.

“These rankings reflect the diligent efforts of many partner organizations in advancing health in our community,” said Dr. Richard Scott, Carver County Public Health Department Manager. “While we celebrate the collective progress we have made, we recognize that some factors don’t meet the goals we have set for our county.”

The annual rankings provide an easy-to-use snapshot of how health is influenced by where we live, learn, work and play. The rankings data makes it clear that good health is influenced by many factors beyond medical care and personal behavior. Factors that contribute to positive health outcomes include high quality schools, access to exercise and recreational opportunities, employment, access to quality food, and affordable housing. When residents don’t have this access, due to limited income, physical disabilities, social isolation, limited transportation and/or racial or inequities or language barriers, it makes it difficult for them to engage in activities and services that promote health.

The report shows meaningful gaps in health persist not only by place, but also by race and ethnicity. Additionally, it calls attention to key drivers of health, such as children in poverty. Poverty limits opportunity and increases the chance of poor health. The rankings reveal that 4 percent of Carver County children live in poverty. However, rates are higher among racial and

ethnic groups; 12 percent of Hispanic children and 9 percent of Black children live in poverty in the County, while only 3 percent of white children live in poverty.

“Our children will become more resilient and grow into stronger, healthier adults with greater economic opportunities if we maintain quality education, provide emotional and social support, promote access to quality health care for everyone, and build safe, affordable and stable housing,” says Dr. Scott.

“We will be an even healthier community when all of us have fair and equitable access to the resources and services Carver County has to offer,” Dr. Scott added. “We can work together to find solutions so that all babies, children, and adults—regardless of their race, ethnicity, ability, or economic status—can engage in opportunities to be healthy.”

Carver County Public Health supports various initiatives and programs meant to expand health equity. Health equity is where all persons—regardless of race, income, sexual orientation, ability, age or gender—have the opportunities to reach their full health potential. Public Health is currently participating with the Minnesota Department of Health in a Health Equity Learning Community designed to reduce health disparities. Participation in this learning community led to the development of the Pathways to Prosperity initiative in collaboration with Carver County Community Development Agency, local businesses, faith community, service organizations, concerned citizens and other community leaders. This initiative will enable our community to create the opportunities for all of us to engage in a healthy and productive life.

These initiatives will guide future work plans and activities such as the Community Health Improvement Plan. This program is designed to address specific opportunities to improve the health of the community. Public Health partners with a variety of stakeholders to develop and implement the program in the County. The rankings help drive the conversation around all these programs.

The detailed 2019 rankings report is available at www.countyhealthrankings.org.

Carver County Public Health works to promote and protect the health of all of our residents, in order to make Carver County a place to live for a lifetime of good health.

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