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Carver is Ranked Healthiest Minnesota County for Ninth Straight Year 2021 County Health Rankings Report Released

CHASKA, Minn.—For the ninth consecutive year, Carver County ranks first among all Minnesota counties in the annual County Health Rankings report, released today by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI). The County also ranked second in health factors.

The County Health Rankings provide an easy-to-use snapshot that compares counties within states, and show where you live influences how well and how long you live. The local level data makes it clear that good health is influenced by many factors beyond medical care, including education, jobs, housing, access to healthy foods, and more.

Carver County regularly scores well on health behavior measures, such as low teen birth rates and access to exercise opportunities. Additionally, Carver County ranked first out of all Minnesota counties on social and economic factors, such as high school completion rates and low unemployment rates.

“The 2021 County Health Rankings reflect the diligent efforts of our partner organizations in advancing health in our community,” said Dr. Richard Scott, Deputy Division Director for Health Services. “While we celebrate the collective progress we made, we recognize that many of our residents are still in need of support and opportunities to maximize their health and wellbeing. We are committed to working together to better understand these challenges and improve access and utilization of the wealth of resources in our county.”

The data used to calculate the 2021 County Health Rankings are from 2019 and earlier, and therefore, do not yet reflect the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact. The County Health Rankings do show differences in health and opportunity by place, and highlight health barriers disproportionately impacting communities of color and families with lower incomes, which were likely worsened by COVID-19.

One new measure featured in this year’s County Health Rankings is broadband access, which is the percentage of households with broadband internet connection. As we learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, broadband access is a digital lifeline to everything from education, employment and healthcare opportunities, to fostering social connectedness.

In Carver County, 91 percent of households have broadband internet access. This means nearly one in ten households in Carver County do not have any broadband internet access. Moreover, some broadband internet may not be fast enough to meet the needs of the household. To address this issue, Carver County used grant and Federal funding to secure mobile Wi-Fi hotspots residents could checkout if they were lacking sufficient broadband internet access. Public school districts also needed to be creative to ensure their students had internet access to participate in distance learning. The pandemic placed a spotlight on a resource many of us don't think much about during our regular, pre-pandemic day-to-day activities.

Carver County has worked hard with numerous community partners to help residents navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. Some key initiatives developed and launched during the COVID-19 pandemic include:

- Carver County Public Health has partnered with multiple agencies and cities to distribute food to residents that have been impacted by the pandemic. These partnerships were vital to make these events happen, and reach our residents who may have the greatest need.
- Carver County's Mental Health Crisis Team offered a virtual "Challenging Times" support group during spring and summer 2020. This offered a space for individuals to discuss their thoughts and concerns with others. The support group was led by a licensed mental health provider.
- Carver County used CARES Act funding to purchase a mobile clinic trailer, in partnership with Ridgeview, to help support vaccination efforts. The mobile clinic trailer will be used after the pandemic to offer health services in the community.
- Carver County Public Health has partnered with smaller clinics and pharmacies in the community to ensure equitable vaccine distribution. Additionally, Public Health has created a Vaccine Strike Team that has held small vaccine clinics for specific hard-to-reach populations, such as our immobile seniors.

While these and many strategies were implemented to support residents during the pandemic, the impact of COVID-19 will begin to emerge in the 2022 County Health Rankings data. The detailed 2021 County Health Rankings report is available at www.countyhealthrankings.org.

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

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