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COUNTY HEALTH RANKINGS

(Richmond, VA)— The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, today released the first-ever nationwide County Health Rankings. These rankings show how cities and counties within Virginia compare on many factors that influence health and provide a snapshot of residents' health in each locality. The purpose of the County Health Rankings is to compare counties and cities within states; the report focuses on state-specific rankings and does not provide rankings among states.

“The health of a community depends on many factors, including individual behaviors, the quality of health care, education, jobs and the environment,” said State Health Commissioner Karen Remley, MD, MBA, FAAP. “All of us - from public health to business leaders -- have a role to play in raising awareness about the multiple influences on health.”

The County Health Rankings is based on a model of population health improvement in which health outcomes are the result of a set of health factors. Counties' health was ranked on two sets of measures: health outcomes (length and quality of life) and health factors (health behaviors, access to and quality of clinical care, social and economic factors, and the physical environment).

“The Virginia Department of Health, working closely with our local health departments, the healthcare community, local governments and community partners, has tackled such issues as infant mortality and obesity, seeing great strides made in both areas. Just this past December, a statewide ban on smoking in restaurants and bars took effect, protecting Virginians from the negative health affects of second-hand smoke,” said Remley. “We are inspired by these successes and spurred forward by the knowledge that there is much more to do. For communities to be healthy, each of us needs to take actions to improve our individual health as well as community level actions.”

Based on health outcomes, Fairfax County was ranked as the healthiest county in Virginia. "While this report reflects an overall favorable health outcome ranking for Fairfax, we recognize there are still areas for improvement and remain committed to working together with community partners to address existing inequities in health outcomes and determinants within our diverse community" said Fairfax Health Director Dr. Gloria Addo-Ayensu.

“The news that a county in our region, Buchanan, ranked lowest in health outcomes for Virginia is not a surprise to us,” said Cumberland Plateau Health Director Dr. John Dreyzehner. “We already had the diagnosis and we’ve spent more than two years creating a treatment plan we call our ‘Blueprint for Health Improvement and Health Enabled Prosperity.’ We also established a Health Authority understanding that ‘place matters’ and as Mountain People with a proud history and rich culture we are implementing our vision to achieve continuous improvement in the health and prosperity of our region.”

To view the report for Virginia, click here <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org>. For more information about how the Virginia Department of Health and Virginia’s leaders are measuring and improving the health and well-being of our communities, visit <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov> and <http://vaperforms.virginia.gov/>.