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NEWS RELEASE

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County Health Study Seen As Tool to Improve County Health “University Of Wisconsin ‘Snapshot’ Supports Findings of Community Health Assessment”

A ranking of New York State’s 62 counties finds Oneida County in the middle of the pack overall for those factors influencing population health, but towards the bottom of the list in terms of overall health status; a similar conclusion to those of the recently completed *Community Health Assessment*, health department officials announced today.

Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente, Jr. said the intent of the University of Wisconsin ranking is to mobilize community action around certain health issues.

“This study reinforces what our Community Health Assessment (CHA) already determined: we as a community need to come together to improve the overall health of our area,” Picente said. He continued, *“I would like to thank all of those involved with the CHA for putting us in a position to come out ahead of this study and for giving us a course of action so that we are able to improve our County’s health. The CHA has already established committees that are developing projects which focus on the priority health concerns and these groups will be launched in conjunction with the release of the Community Health Assessment next month.”*

Acting Director of Health, Daniel W. Gilmore supported the notion that these rankings will in no way alter the plans set in motion.

“Our partnerships will continue to identify our health priorities, advocate necessary changes, leverage resources and mobilize shared resources so as to effectively address such issues as mental health/substance abuse, chronic diseases, healthy mothers/healthy babies, physical health/nutrition and access to health care.”

The ranking project, undertaken by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in conjunction with the University of Wisconsin, looked at factors that affect people’s health within four categories: health behavior, clinical care, social and economic factors and physical environment. Among the many health factors they looked at in each county were the rates of adult smoking, adult obesity, binge drinking and teenage pregnancy; the number of uninsured adults, availability of primary care providers, and preventable hospital stays; rates of high school graduation, number of children in poverty, rates of violent crime, access to healthy foods, air pollution and liquor store density. Oneida County was ranked 29th in overall factors influencing health.

In overall health outcomes the county did not fare as well coming in 54th among the 62 counties. The data used in the project covered the period 2000-2008 and considered such factors as premature death, low birth weights, and self-reported information regarding health-related quality of life and poor physical and mental health days.

“Although some of the data used to compile the rankings is subjective in its reporting, the report highlights the fact that community health is the responsibility of the entire public health system comprised of individuals, schools, non-profits, faith-based organizations, and public safety, as well as health care providers,” Gilmore said. “This report is an opportunity to engage more people in the health of the community, not only in terms of their personal behavior, but in working to build a healthy environment in which we live, work and play.”

The entire report and complete ranking of all counties can be found at www.countyhealthrankings.org.

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