



PRESS RELEASE FOR LOCAL MEDIA

Central Michigan District Health Department
“Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities”

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To: Arenac County Media

From: Sarah M. Kile, Advocacy Coordinator, skile@cmdhd.org

RE: County Health Rankings

Release Date: March 20, 2013

CENTRAL MICHIGAN IS GETTING HEALTHIER

Each year since 2010, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin’s Population Health Institute have released the annual *County Health Rankings*. Counties in each of the 50 states are ranked according to summaries of a variety of health measures. Those having high ranks (e.g. 1 or 2) are considered to be the “healthiest.” Counties are ranked relative to the health of other counties in the same state. The 2010 County Health Rankings painted a troubling picture for the counties of central Michigan. Of the 82 Michigan counties evaluated, 6 central Michigan counties fell in the bottom half on health outcomes, and 3 of the 6 counties were ranked in the bottom 10 counties. In 2010, Arenac ranked 72 of the 82 Michigan counties included in the report, this year they fell to 79.

Since the *Rankings* release in 2010, the Central Michigan District Health Department embarked on the Together We Can initiative, an effort to improve the overall health of the more than 196,000 people within its health district; which includes the central Michigan counties of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola, and Roscommon. The primary strategy of the health improvement effort was to engage the community both as a whole and within each county with a call to action.

In late 2012 Arenac County began their Health Improvement workgroup, which has been working to improve the *Rankings* for the community. The first thing the group did was conduct a community survey to find out where the majority of their efforts should be focused. The top three priority areas were Health Services, Family Life/Parenting and Nutrition and Physical Activity. The group is now in the process of writing their goals and objectives and already has an event (Bicycle Safety Rodeo) planned for May 2013.

According to CMDHD's Health Officer, Mary Kushion, "This group of hardworking individuals has just begun but has already shown immense dedication!"

The *County Health Rankings* will be discussed at The 4th Annual Public Health Summit on April 8th, at The Comfort Inn in Mt. Pleasant. The event is free and will feature Lt. Governor Brian Calley, Dr. Craig Thomas from The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Melissa Kesterson, a community garden coordinator. For more information, please contact Allison Dunn at (989)773-5921 ext. 8413. We do ask that each person bring a fresh fruit or vegetable to be donated to local food banks

If you would like an opportunity to get involved to improve the health of Arenac County consider joining Together We Can or The Arenac Health Improvement Planning workgroup. For more information LIKE Together We Can on Facebook or email us at TogetherWeCan@cmdhd.org.

This article has been brought to you by Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the counties of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola and Roscommon. Visit our website at www.cmdhd.org and LIKE Central Michigan District Health Department on Facebook.

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For an interview opportunity with Health Officer Mary Kushion, please go to our website and complete the on-line interview request form (left column, yellow box).