To: Osceola County Media  
From: Sarah M. Kile, Advocacy Coordinator, skile@cmdhd.org  
RE: County Health Rankings  
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PROOF OSCEOLA COUNTY 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, Osceola County was ranked 45th of the 82 Michigan counties ranked. However the new rankings place Osceola County at 29, a gain of 16, which paints a great picture for Osceola County residents!

Why the improvement? Since the Rankings were 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 2011, Osceola County began their Health Improvement workgroup, which has been working to improve the health rankings for the community.

According to CMDHD’s Health Officer, Steve Hall, “This is an immense success for the Osceola HIP workgroup. With partners that include representation from all over the community, this workgroup has certainly made headway.” Projects like the new Community Garden program in Reed City, for instance, show a concerted effort
between businesses, schools, faith-based organizations, and local residents to really take a look at the overall health of their communities and not just talk, but actually do something about it.

The County Health Rankings will be discussed during the 5th Annual Public Health Summit on April 22nd, at The Comfort Inn & Suites Hotel Conference Center in Mt. Pleasant. Put on by the CMDHD, the event is free to the general public and will feature a theme that will help every person determine what they can do to improve health both personally and within their community. 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 Osceola County consider joining Together We Can or The Osceola County Health Improvement Planning workgroup. For more information, visit www.together-we-can.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 Steve Hall please go to our website and complete the on-line interview request form (left column, yellow box).