



THE Lebanon Reporter

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2010

WWW.REPORTER.NET

50¢

NEW COUNTY-BY-COUNTY REPORT RELEASED

Study places Boone among healthiest

BY ROD ROSE

The Lebanon Reporter

A first-of-its-kind study released today ranks Boone County as one of the five healthiest in Indiana.

The County Health Rankings, produced by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, used factors ranging from the percentage of people saying they were in fair to poor health to the number of newborns who weighed less than average.

It is the first time the overall health of the nation's 3,100 counties have been compared using a standard formula.

"For the first time, counties can get a snapshot of how healthy their residents are by comparing their overall health and the factors that influence their health with other counties in their state," the

University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute said in the Indiana report, distributed via e-mail Tuesday under the qualification information not be disclosed before 12:01 a.m. today.

"Our high ranking in this report helps us identify areas where we have succeeded in our county and where we still need to do more," said Dr. Herschell Servies, the Boone County Health Officer. "With this knowledge, we can take steps to improve health in Boone County."

Boone County was ranked fourth in the "health outcomes" category, which gave equal weight to length and quality of life.

Those two measures were further refined by considering the number of days people said they thought themselves in poor physical and/or mental health; the percent of those saying they were in poor physical and/or mental health; the rate of low-birthweight infants and the rate

"Our high ranking helps us identify areas where we have succeeded ... and where we still need to do more."

*DR. HERSCHELL SERVIES
Boone County Health Officer*

of people who die before age 75.

Boone was also fourth in "health factors," which measured health behavior, clinical care, social and economic factors and the physical environment.

Dr. Servies said the measurements demonstrated "the many different players" in Boone County's public health picture.

"Our high ranking helps us iden-

tify areas where we have succeeded ... and where we still need to do more," Dr. Servies said. "We will continue to work with our partners to maintain and improve our high county health ranking for years to come."

Dr. Judy Monroe, Indiana Department of Health Commissioner, was among those due to speak about the rankings at a Washington, D.C. press conference this morning, the RWJ Foundation said in a press release.

During her three-minute presentation, Dr. Monroe was to mention the Boone County Healthy Coalition, a group created after an April 2009 "health care summit" in Lebanon.

Boone was one of 20 Indiana counties invited to create a healthy coalition, as part of a pilot program to help assess the status of health-care state-wide.

The coalition, which has received

funding from the Indiana State Department of Health, is drafting a questionnaire that will be sent to health-care providers later this year. The survey will be scored by Deb Koester, RN, manager of the Population Initiatives Program with Purdue University's Healthcare Technical Assistance Program.

The survey will ask doctors, dentists, optometrists and dozens of others who practice here to identify what they see as crucial health care needs in Boone County.

Marc Applegate, president of the Boone County Board of Commissioners and a member of the healthy coalition, said he was excited by the high ratings.

"At the same time, there is still work to do to improve health and make Boone County a better place to live," Applegate said.

The report can be found at www.countyhealthrankings.org.