

**JOHNSON COUNTY**
KANSAS
Health & Environment

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Media Contact:

Patrick Lowry, Director of Strategic Communications
Kansas Health Institute
plowry@khi.org
(785) 233-5443

Barbara Mitchell, Public Information Officer
Barbara.Mitchell@jocogov.org

Johnson County Department of Health and Environment Media Line: (913) 477-8436

Johnson County upholds its rank as the healthiest in Kansas

JOHNSON COUNTY, KAN. (March 19, 2019) – Johnson County is the healthiest county in Kansas according to the 10th annual *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*, released today by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI). The *Rankings* are available at www.countyhealthrankings.org.

“Our high ranking reflects the priority this county has placed on improving the factors that affect residents’ health, and it also shows how important it will be for us to sustain those programs if we want to stay healthy,” says Lougene Marsh, director of the Johnson County Department of Health and Environment.

Johnson County ranked first in the state for health outcomes such as a low number of premature deaths (life lost before age 75). The county also ranked number one for health factors such as access to medical and dental care, exercise opportunities, and a healthy food environment. The county also has a high percentage of adults with some post-secondary education and a low number of uninsured adults and children.

The *Rankings* make it clear that good health is influenced by many factors beyond medical care such as housing, education, jobs, access to healthy foods and more. Marsh says our homes, and those of our neighbors, play a critical role in shaping our health and the health of the whole community.

“When our homes are near quality schools and good jobs, it’s easier to get a quality education and earn living wages. When people live near grocery stores where nutritious food is available and affordable, eating healthy is easier. Green spaces and parks encourage active lifestyles,” says Marsh. By contrast, when families spend more than 50 percent of their income on housing—it leaves them with little money to pay for other essentials that contribute to good health, such as healthy food, medicine, or transportation to work and school, she adds.

This year’s *Rankings* indicate that Johnson County is at-risk for poor health when it comes to obesity, excessive drinking and smoking in adults. The report also finds that 85 percent of the Johnson County work force usually drives alone to work – reducing this number could positively impact active living and air quality and reduce traffic crashes.

(more)

Marsh says Johnson County has a number of initiatives underway to address these issues: the Diabetes Prevention Program, an evidence-based program that meets weekly to support participants in making healthy habits a priority; support of [Tobacco 21](#), a policy strategy of increasing the minimum age of sale of tobacco products from 18 to 21; and RideKC's new [Micro Transit](#) pilot which allows anyone within the service boundaries (63rd Street and Shawnee Mission Parkway on the north, Metcalf Avenue on the east, Renner Road on the west and 119th Street on the south and Mission Transit Center and KU Edwards Campus) to summon a ride for \$1.50 using a mobile app or by calling 816-512-5510.

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