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Date: Thursday, March 17, 2016

***Winnebago County's 2016 Health Rankings Continue to Stress
the Impact of Social and Economic Factors on the Health of the Community***

The national *County Health Rankings* report by the Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) released continues to reinforce that health is not simply determined by healthcare but is influenced by a range of factors including socioeconomics, health behaviors, and the environment.

Over the past two previous years, Winnebago County had seen improvement in its overall health ranking, but this year, the ranking fell back from 72 to 88 out of 102 Illinois counties. Clinical care continues to be a strength in Winnebago County ranking in the top 1/3rd of the state. Social and economic factors including education, employment, poverty, income inequality, and crime continue to drive the overall ranking down ranking in the bottom 1/3rd of the state. The Winnebago County Board of Health recently refreshed its Strategic Plan and set an overarching goal of a County health ranking in the top 1/3rd of the state. As Winnebago County conducts its Community Health Improvement Process, the County Health rankings are the metrics that will be used to gauge our progress.

"We need to continue to create a sustainable public health system that addresses the social determinants of health to achieve *healthy people in healthy communities without health disparities*. The Winnebago County Health Department will continue to work to engage community partners and the community that we serve, align limited resources to address the most critical determinants, and to implement strategies and programs that will have a positive impact on health," said Sandra Martell, RN, DNP, Winnebago County Health Department Public Health Administrator. There has been tremendous activity through community initiatives and organizations such as *Transform Rockford*, *Rockford Health Council*, *Alignment Rockford*, *Rockford Police Department*, *Winnebago County Sheriff*, and the *United Way of Rock River Valley* to address the social and economic factors outlined in the County Health rankings. Community participation at every level from the individual to our business community is needed to address these issues.

Funding Public Health infrastructure in Illinois to support health to address the social determinants of health is essential if this work is to continue. The budget impasse in Illinois has a negative impact on the organizations that work to improve the social and economic conditions in Winnebago County.

"The County Health Rankings show how important it is to examine all the conditions that impact well-being and can help families thrive," said Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, MD, RWJF president and CEO. "Communities around the nation are using the County Health Rankings to drive improvements in education, housing, job training, healthy food options, and more, as they work to build a Culture of Health." The complete report is online and available at www.countyhealthrankings.org.

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