

NEWS RELEASE

March 16th, 2016

MASON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

**411 NORTH 5TH ST
SHELTON, WA 98584**

TO: KMAS, KRXY, SHELTON-MASON COUNTY JOURNAL, THE OLYMPIAN, SHELTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, NORTH MASON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, CITY OF SHELTON, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, THE SUN

RE: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

Mason County Continues to Move Forward!

Mason County, once again, has vaulted forward in the *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps* for 2016. Ranked as low as 37th out of 39 counties during the *Rankings* inception in 2010, the County has moved up to 29th in 2016. Since 2010, The *Rankings* have helped expand the conversation about the broad range of factors that impact a community's overall health. These *Rankings* measure vital health factors, including high school graduation rates, obesity, smoking, unemployment, access to healthy foods, the quality of air and water, income, and teen births in nearly every county in America. They provide a revealing snapshot of how health is influenced by where we live, learn, work and play, and they present a starting point for change in communities. The goals of these rankings are to build awareness, help identify opportunities for sustainable health improvements and community change, and to connect and empower community leaders working to improve health.

Data within the *Rankings* fall into two major categories: *Health Outcomes* and *Health Factors*. *Health Outcomes* is a combined measure of a county's average length of life and quality of life; a snapshot of today's current health status. In 2010, Mason County's *Health Outcomes* ranked 37th out of 39 Counties, however a new ranking of 29th in 2016 demonstrates a Mason County trending in the right direction. The *Health Factors* ranking-which predicts the health of a county in the future- improved from 37th in 2015 to 32nd in 2016. As the County continues its strides forward, it leaves one to ask, can these positive changes be attributed to anything specific?

Health is dynamic and complex. The *County Health Rankings* emphasize the many factors in population health that, if improved, can help make communities healthier places to live, learn, work and play. *Health Factors*, for example, consist of many characteristics. These characteristics impact *Health Factors* at different rates: The Physical Environment (10%), Clinical Care (20%), Health Behaviors (30%), and Social and Economic Factors (40%). There are evidence-based policies and programs that a community can implement to improve *Health Factors* and, ultimately, improve its *Health Outcomes*. Smoking

for example, along with diet, exercise, alcohol use, and sexual activity make up *Health Behaviors*. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention indicates that currently there are as many as 480,000 deaths per year linked to smoking. In Mason County, the percent of adults reporting to be smokers fell to 16% - a 9% improvement when compared to a previous five year average of 25%. Because of its implications on smoking-related issues such as cancer and heart disease, declining smoking rates may continue to improve the County's *Rankings*. In addition, social and economic factors such as unemployment rates fell to 8.4% compared to 9.7% in 2015. This marks the lowest unemployment rate since the *Rankings* began in 2010. Children in poverty also fell an additional 4% from the year before to 24% overall. Other social influences possibly contributing to an improved rank are within the percent of children that graduate in four years. This number improved to 73% in 2016, and with this rate hovering at 67% over the past three years, a 6% improvement may shed some light on positive things happening in Mason County.

Currently, a collective impact approach in which groups and organizations are encouraged to work with a common agenda, utilize continuous communication, and mutually reinforce a plan of action is a strategy being utilized to address health disparities. Collective impact efforts such as the Mason County United Way, Mason County Early Learning Coalition, the Student Success Consortium, and Shelton Graduation Matters are utilizing this collective impact approach. Moving Mason Forward is another example of an all-inclusive community endeavor dedicated to community improvement which can continue to help move Mason County forward.

The environment we live in, our social support system, the diet and exercise choices we make, socioeconomic status, and access to health care all play a role in our state of health. Each of these factors influences the overall health of a community and its residing citizens. Combined efforts from Mason County Public Health and Human Services, public policy improvements, public leadership, as well as community involvement can continue to help Mason County move forward in its overall *County Health Ranking*.

For additional information, you can visit the County Health Rankings online available at: <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/> or you may also contact Mason County Public Health and Human Services at 360-427-9670 ext. 410 and can also visit us online at www.healthymasoncounty.org

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