



Charlie Crist  
Governor

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State Surgeon General

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**Statement by Escambia County Health Department Director  
Dr. John J. Lanza  
on the University of Wisconsin 2010 County Health Rankings Report**

The University of Wisconsin report underscores the importance of continuing to involve community leaders, residents, healthcare organizations, government agencies and non-profit organizations in improving Escambia County's health. While this information is not new to us, we hope it stimulates the interest of residents and leaders who want to make Escambia a healthier place to live and raise a family. Community organizations, agencies and businesses can review this report, find an area in which they can make a difference, and take action for a healthier Escambia.

Fortunately, Escambia County has an infrastructure in place to help us respond to concerns like those highlighted in this report. UniteEscambia was formed in 2006 as a collaboration between the United Way of Escambia County, the Partnership for a Healthy Community, and the Escambia County Health Department in order to conduct a comprehensive community assessment that would help define the vision for a strong, healthy Escambia County. UniteEscambia developed a (solutions) team-based approach to community problem solving and set the areas of Education, Environment, Health, Housing and Poverty as the top priorities needing to be addressed. The programs of each solutions team, either directly or indirectly, affect the health of the citizens of Escambia County. The Health Solutions Team, which was started in 2007, involves many sectors of Escambia in improving the health of our county. The charge of the Health Solutions Team is to better leverage and promote healthy living initiatives underway in the school district, local government, healthcare organizations, and public health. Led by Robin Herr, this Team promotes a number of initiatives on healthy living including school gardens at O.J. Semmes Elementary and other schools, safe routes to schools for children who bike and walk, and fun, but educational, programs on nutrition and physical activity for school-age children.

Although the health department does not have a direct influence over most of the factors used to compile this ranking, we nonetheless monitor similar indicators throughout the year and advocate for healthy lifestyles. We use data from the Florida CHARTS system which community leaders and residents can also use by visiting [www.FloridaCHARTS.com](http://www.FloridaCHARTS.com). Information at Florida CHARTS includes leading causes of death, percentage of low birth weight babies, disease reports, and reports of healthy behaviors such as disease screenings, physical activity and nutrition.

We strongly encourage community organizations, agencies, and leaders to review this report and find their role in initiating change. Improvements in community health and social outcomes require long term effort, and may take one or two generations (20-30 years) to see positive



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results. We encourage all citizens to join the work of UniteEscambia's Solutions Teams by going to their website at [www.UniteEscambia.com](http://www.UniteEscambia.com), or email [info@UniteEscambia.com](mailto:info@UniteEscambia.com).

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