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Northcentral Wisconsin counties rank poorly in UW health report

WAUSAU DAILY HERALD • NOVEMBER 19, 2008

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Three central Wisconsin counties rank in the top quarter in the state for premature death and quality of health, according to a new report.

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Marathon, Portage and Wood counties ranked in the top 20 overall, according to the University of Wisconsin's Population Health Institute in Madison. Lincoln County ranked No. 41.

Researchers looked at rates of death before 75 and the percentage of people reporting their health status as fair or poor in a large national health study to determine the health rank.

In general, northern, southern, eastern Wisconsin and the "central sands region" were among the least healthy areas, said Dr. Patrick Remington, director of the University of Wisconsin's Public Health Institute, which produced the report.

The intention is to highlight the disparities between places throughout the state and help communities to assess and improve health, Remington said.

"These reports can be used as a call to action," said Dr. Robert Golden, dean of the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health in Madison, noting more must be done to improve people's health behaviors and the physical environment to support good health.

Though helpful, the findings are only one tool, said Susan Kunferman, Wood County's health officer.

"We don't put all our eggs in the county health ranking basket," Kunferman said. The findings have prompted Wood County to talk with other counties about their efforts to bolster health in areas where Wood County has lagged.

Read the full story in tomorrow's print and online editions.

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11/19/2008 4:41:42 PM

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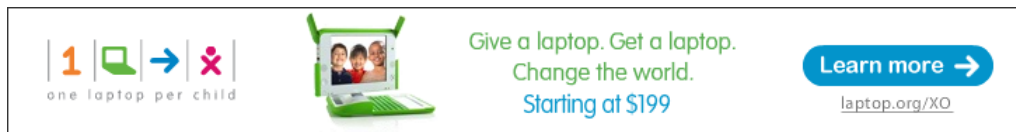
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