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Making Washington the Healthiest State in the Nation!

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Washington Health Foundation Releases 2008 Healthiest State Report Card!

- **State Cracks Top 10 For First Time Since 1999**
- **Washington Jumps Four Spots From 2006 Ranking**
- **Steady Climb Continues Since WHF Launched Healthiest State Campaign**

Seattle – After spending nine years on the outside looking in – Washington state is back among the Top 10 Healthiest States in the Nation! Washington ranks #10 in an extensive new *Healthiest State Report Card* just released by the Washington Health Foundation (WHF).

“This has been a long time coming,” said Greg Vigdor, WHF President & CEO, “and we are thrilled with the progress Washington is making in many key health areas.”

Washington meets or exceeds the national average in 13 of the 17 health measures and outcomes used as benchmarks in the Report Card. Among our state’s strengths were *Smoking Rates* (#5), *Injury & Violence Prevention* (#5), *Years of Life Lost – deaths before age 75* (#7) and *Physical Activity* (#9).

“We are making strides,” said Don Sloma, WHF Policy Director. “But there is still much work to be done particularly in several key areas.” Washington failed to meet the national average in *Limits on Normal Living* (#30.5), *Use of Proven Preventive Care* (#32.5), *High School Graduation Rates* (#32) and *Medical Care Quality* (#33).

New England dominates the Healthiest State rankings holding down four of the top five spots. Vermont is number one followed by Connecticut, Minnesota, New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Utah, Hawaii, Iowa, Wisconsin and Washington round out the Top 10.

The story surrounding this year’s healthiest state is one from which Washington should take heart: In 1990, Vermont was 16th in state health rankings; by 2001, the state had moved up to 8th; today, Vermont is #1. Vermont’s story illustrates that it takes time to improve a state’s health—but that it can be done. Washington was in a similar position several years ago.

In 2004, the idea for the Washington Health Foundation’s (WHF) Healthiest State in the Nation Campaign was born from the fact that Washington had plummeted from #7 in the state health rankings. Shortly thereafter, WHF kicked off its Healthiest State in the Nation Campaign to call attention to areas in which Washington needed to improve. Today, the Healthiest State Campaign is the largest civic engagement project for health in state history, now involving more than 35,000 individuals, 1,000 organizations and nearly 400 schools.

Washington is not yet number one, but our plan is clearly working. Last year, Washington took a huge leap forward—moving up three spots, from 15th to 12th in the United Health Foundation’s annual state health rankings. Additionally, Washington was singled out as one of the five “Most Improved” states overall.

This year, witnessed another big jump from 12th to 10th, but Vigdor cautions that moving into the top five or six states will take a monumental effort in both personal responsibility (e.g., *Physical Activity*) and collective action (e.g., *Public Health System Investment*).

“Those top tier states exceed the national average in nearly every area,” Vigdor explained, “and they are ranked in the Top Ten in at least eight of the 17 measures and outcomes. That is what it will take to move Washington to the next level—a commitment to better health and a belief that together we truly can make Washington the Healthiest State in the Nation!”

2008 Healthiest State Rankings

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| 1. Vermont | 26. Wyoming |
| 2. Connecticut | 27. Pennsylvania |
| 3. Minnesota | 28. Illinois |
| 4. New Hampshire | 29. Ohio |
| 5. Massachusetts | 30. Michigan |
| 6. Utah | 31. Arizona |
| 7. Hawaii | 32. Delaware |
| 8. Iowa | 33. Alaska |
| 9. Wisconsin | 34. New Mexico |
| 10. Washington | 35. Indiana |
| 11. Nebraska | 36. Texas |
| 12. Rhode Island | 37. Florida |
| 13. North Dakota | 38. North Carolina |
| 14. Colorado | 39. Missouri |
| 15. Maine | 40. Georgia |
| 16. New Jersey | 41. West Virginia |
| 17. Idaho | 42. Tennessee |
| 18. Maryland | 43. Nevada |
| 19. Virginia | 44. Alabama |
| 20. California | 45. Kentucky |
| 21. Oregon | 46. Oklahoma |
| 22. South Dakota | 47. South Carolina |
| 23. Montana | 48. Arkansas |
| 24. New York | 49. Louisiana |
| 25. Kansas | 50. Mississippi |