HEALTH 11/16/2016 Z. BARES

Both Pierce and St. Croix counties have stayed consistently in the Top Ten of health rankings in Wisconsin. A lot of factors play into being one of the top counties in the state. Zach Bares (BARR-ish) has the story.

MP3 RUNS: 1:30 O/C: STD.

ZACH BARES: THIS YEAR PIERCE COUNTY IS RANKED FOURTH WHILE ST. CROIX COUNTY IS THIRD. U-W-R-F DIRECTOR OF COUNSELING AND HEALTH SERVICES ALICE REILLY-MYKLEBUST SAYS THAT HERE ON CAMPUS THEY USE DATA AND CREATE AN ACTION PLAN TAILORED FOR STUDENT NEEDS. THEY DRAW THEIR STATEGIES FROM FOUR KEY GROUPS.

A. REILLY-MYKLEBUST: “SO THERE’S THE CHANCELLORS ADVISORY COUNCIL ON ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND OTHER DRUGS, THERE’S A SEXUAL ASSAULT COALITION, AND WE ALSO HAVE A PHYSICAL ACTIVITY WORKING GROUP, AND AN INTEGRATION WORKING GROUP.”

ZACH BARES: THE BIGGEST CAUSE FOR CONCERN ACROSS THE BOARD IN BOTH COUNTIES IS MENTAL HEALTH. MORE SPECIFICALLY, ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH CARE ALONG WITH OBESITY AND ALCOHOL ABUSE. PIERCE COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DIRECTOR SUE GALOFF SAYS THE TWO COUNTIES ALONG WITH U-W-R-F WORK VERY CLOSELY TO WORK TOWARD IMPROVEMENT.

SUE GALOFF: “WE’RE JUST RENEWING OUR COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESMENT WITH THE ST. CROIX COUNTY, PIERCE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT AND THEN THE FOUR HOSPITALS IN THE TWO COUNTIES. AND MENTAL HEALTH, ALCOHOL AND OBESITY ARE OUR TOP PRIORITIES THAT WE’LL BE DEVELOPING ACTION PLANS.”

ZACH BARES: HEATHER LOGELIN IS THE DIRECTOR OF THE FOUNDATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOR THE RIVER FALLS AREA HOSPITAL. SHE SAYS THAT THERE ARE SOME FACTORS THAT ALWAYS ARE IN FAVOR OF BOTH COUNTIES IN THE RANKINGS.

HEATHER LOGELIN: “OUR QUALITY OF LIFE IS REALLY HIGH, OUR PREMATURE DEATH RATE IS REALLY LOW. WE KNOW THAT THINGS LIKE SMOKING IS HIGHLY CORRELATED TO EDUCATIONAL STATUS. AND SO WE HAVE A REALLY HIGHLY EDUCATED POPULATION, WE HAVE A REALLY RELATIVELY LOW SMOKING RATE.”

ZACH BARES: LOGELIN AND GALOFF BOTH STRESSED THAT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND NUTRITION ARE ALWAYS AT THE TOP OF THE LIST AS WELL. FOR THE FALCON NEWS SERVICE, I’M ZACH BARES.

The national County Health Rankings and Roadmaps program is run by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. The rankings for all counties in Wisconsin can be found at county health rankings dot org.

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