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## **NEW U.S. COUNTY HEALTH RANKINGS RELEASED**

Lancaster County ranked 18<sup>th</sup> in the state, Chester County ranked 33<sup>rd</sup>

**MARCH 30, 2017 -- LANCASTER, SC** -- Which counties in South Carolina are the healthiest? The annual *County Health Rankings* report, released today by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), attempts to answer that question. *County Health Rankings* ranks Lancaster County as the 18<sup>th</sup> healthiest among South Carolina's 46 counties. Chester County ranks 33<sup>rd</sup>. These ranks are higher than 2016 marks for the two counties (#21 and #34, respectively).

The annual *County Health Rankings* include community statistics designed to measure trends across America. The report looks at community health in a holistic manner, including not only clinical measures, but also population-level indicators in areas such as education, employment, nutrition, and housing. The J. Marion Sims Foundation is working with community organizations to examine community indicators in both Chester and Lancaster counties, with an eye toward using data to inform and strengthen the overall health and well-being of communities and residents in Lancaster County, Fort Lawn, and Great Falls, SC.

"Though we are pleased to see our rankings improve, the data points to areas that need our attention," says Susan DeVenny, President & CEO of the J. Marion Sims Foundation. "We are working with our grantees and partners in Lancaster and Chester counties to support and build a healthy community."

This year's *County Health Rankings* report introduces a new measure, *Disconnected Youth*, focused on young people age 16 to 24 who are not in school or working, and finds that approximately 21% of Lancaster County and 26% of Chester County young people fall into this category. Rates of youth disconnection are higher in rural counties in South Carolina than in urban ones. This new measure can help communities identify and address youth disconnection by bringing partners around the table to examine data, discuss strengths and opportunities needed to improve.

"The county rankings support what the Foundation heard in terms of community needs expressed by our youth," states Robert Folks, Chair of the J. Marion Sims Foundation Board of Trustees. "It's critical for our community to create work or education opportunities and implement evidence-based programs that help youth successfully transition to adulthood. We want to empower our youth to become leaders, achieve their own goals, and have a strong desire to stay in this community."

According to the 2017 RWJF report, the five healthiest counties in South Carolina are Beaufort, Dorchester, York County, Greenville, and Charleston. The five counties in the poorest health, according to the report, are Marion, Dillon, Marlboro, Lee, and Allendale.

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About the County Health Rankings: Funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, *County Health Rankings* provides an easy-to-use snapshot which shows that where you live influences how well and how long you live. The data provided in the report can help guide counties as they develop initiatives to better the health and well-being of their communities. For more information, visit [www.countyhealthrankings.org](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org).

About the J. Marion Sims Foundation: The J. Marion Sims Foundation is entering its third decade of service to the community, with a focus on transforming the health and wellness of Lancaster, Fort Lawn, and Great Falls, SC. For information about the Foundation, please visit [www.jmsims.org](http://www.jmsims.org) or contact the Foundation at (803) 286-8772.