



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & WELFARE

DIRK KEMPTHORNE – Governor
KARL B. KURTZ – Director

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
450 West State Street, 10th Floor
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0036
PHONE 208-334-5625
FAX 208-334-5926

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 15, 2005

Ross Mason
(208) 334-0693

**ADA COUNTY BENEFITS FROM \$207 MILLION DOLLAR INVESTMENT
FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & WELFARE**

Last year, Ada County residents and businesses received \$207 million from Department of Health & Welfare programs that help people in need. The investment benefits every one of the county's 325,000 residents. Of Idaho's 44 counties, Ada County ranks number 33 in per capita outlay of Health & Welfare dollars.

The disbursement of state and federal tax dollars amounts to \$638 for every man, woman and child residing in Ada County. This includes citizens who may not receive a single direct service from the Department. The statewide average is \$839 per capita.

The Department distributed \$1.15 billion in Idaho communities in 2004. These funds came from Medicaid, additional payments to hospitals, Food Stamps, the Idaho Child Care Program, the Women, Infants and Children nutritional program, foster care and a variety of other assistance programs.

"This is an investment for all Ada County residents," says Health & Welfare Director Karl Kurtz. "These are tax dollars put to good use because they help people become healthy and productive. This money goes go to foster care for children in crisis, substance abuse treatment for adults and adolescents, improvements and operations at local hospitals, and dozens of other badly needed services."

"This is as much about sustaining communities as it is investing," adds Kurtz. "By providing programs that support people, we are helping communities and their residents build the endurance and strength they need to remain vital. Everyone profits from this investment, not just those who use Department programs. This isn't just me pounding my chest. That's what community leaders tell us."

Ada County Commission Chairman Rick Yzaguirre says, “Funding these vital programs has helped thousands of Ada County residents. It is an investment in our families, our infrastructure and our economy. This funding is critically important.”

In 2004, the Department’s Medicaid Division spent \$173 million on health care for residents of the county — a \$ 9 million increase over the previous year. Total Medicaid spending in the county was \$220 million because many people from other counties travel to Boise for medical care. A large share of the dollars go to drug stores like Floto Pharmacy in Boise. “Medicaid is about 40-50 percent of our business,” says Pharmacy Manager Shawn White. “It has benefited our clients and us by allowing our staff to grow and keep the business going.”

The story is much the same at St. Alphonsus Regional Medical Center. "The disproportionate share money received from Health & Welfare is an important piece of the total reimbursement for treating Medicaid and other public program patients,” says Chief Executive Officer Sandra Bruce.

Disproportionate Share money is an extra payment made to some hospitals which have a larger than average share of Medicaid patients. “St. Alphonsus’ treatment of Medicaid patients exceeded reimbursement by almost \$5 million. Without the extra payment, the loss would have been even larger.”

Last year, Ada County hospitals received \$2.8 million in Disproportionate Share. That money can be used for any hospital purpose, so it has the potential of providing service for any patient, not just Medicaid clients. The money is in addition to payment for regular services to Medicaid clients. Five hospitals in Ada County, including St. Luke’s and St. Alphonsus, received \$64 million for inpatient and outpatient care bringing the total Medicaid investment in Ada County hospitals to \$67 million.

Ada County residents received \$15.5 million in Food Stamps, spending \$13.9 million with grocers in the county to help feed their families. WinCo redeemed \$4.6 million of that. Mike Read, vice president for Public and Legal Affairs, says that amount is significant for the company.

“It is no surprise, however, that WinCo focuses on low-cost groceries more than anything else, and low pricing on nationally branded items to all customers,” he says. “Anybody on a budget, including those who receive Food Stamps and other benefits, looks at us as their primary shopping place. We are happy to serve them. They are an important part of our business.”

Department spending helps people, and it has an upside for business, according to Idaho economist John Church. “This is not lost money. The spending is an investment. It goes back into the economy. If an employer came to town and spent this much money we would be elated. People need to remember that a big chunk of this is federal money which is a huge return on our taxes. This comes back and helps stimulate the economy and it helps people.”

Kurtz says, “Not only is the Department money a human investment, but it creates jobs and maintains healthy businesses. These dollars recycle numerous times in each community and help us keep the high quality of life we enjoy in Idaho. This is a wise use of taxpayer dollars because the money spent in the community stays in the community. The dollars are spent again and again to help create jobs and an infrastructure that provides healthy and safe neighborhoods.”

###

(**Editors:** Interviews are available on request. Contact Ross Mason at 334-0693 or Regional Director Kathleen Allyn at 344-6747 for more information.)

**More information on Health & Welfare’s
investment in every Idaho County
can be found online at
<http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov>**