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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 15, 2005

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**JEFFERSON COUNTY BENEFITS FROM \$13.5 MILLION DOLLAR INVESTMENT
FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & WELFARE**

Last year, Jefferson County residents and businesses received nearly \$13.5 million from Department of Health & Welfare programs that help people in need. The investment benefits every one of the county's 20,000 residents. Of Idaho's 44 counties, Jefferson County ranks number 31 in per capita outlay of Health & Welfare dollars.

The investment of state and federal tax dollars amounts to \$668 for every man, woman and child residing in Jefferson 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 Jefferson County residents," says Health & Welfare Director Karl Kurtz. "These are tax dollars put to good use because they are used to help people become healthy and productive and less reliant on government assistance. This money goes to foster care for children in crisis, substance abuse treatment, child care so parents can work to support their family, 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."

Jefferson County Commissioner Ron Baxter says, “Jefferson County is grateful for the funds that come from Medicaid, Food Stamps, the child care program and home energy. Losing any Health & Welfare funding would be devastating to us. Medicaid plays a big part in helping individuals in our county with pharmaceutical needs.”

Last year, the Department’s Medicaid Division spent \$11.6 million on health care for residents of the county — \$1.9 million more than in 2003. A large share of the dollars go to drug stores like Idaho Drug in Rigby. “These are very important dollars. It’s probably about a third of our business,” says Shane Permann, co-owner of the pharmacy. “We have several mental health clients and nursing home residents. We work with nurses a lot and assist them where we can. Medicaid is very important to us. We would hate to lose it.”

Jefferson County residents received \$786,000 in Food Stamps to help feed their families. Local grocers redeemed \$826, 800, including Food Stamps issued in other counties. ADL Food & Drug in Terreton redeemed \$92,000.

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 adds, “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 often stays in the community. The dollars are spent again and again to help create jobs and an infrastructure that provides healthy and safe neighborhoods.”

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(**Editors:** Interviews are available on request. Contact Ross Mason at 334-0693 or Regional Director Tracey Sessions at 528-5791 for more information.)

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