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County Department of Community Health and the Environment Announces Major New Web Site

Goal is to Inform, Educate and Serve as a Community Resource

St. Charles County — The St. Charles County Department of Community Health and Environment has announced a major new site on the World Wide Web at www.scchealth.org. The site, which has successfully undergone a two-month testing program, has been designed to meet three needs:

- To inform the public about the department and its services, locations, and hours of operation while allowing citizens to request information and assistance online
- To serve as a convenient and reliable resource for students at all levels who are looking for information on public and community health, environmental quality and pet related topics
- To serve as a convenient, consolidated information and advanced research resource for health and environmental professionals and the general public.

The concept behind the new site is to *Make the Invisible Visible*. "Public health is often invisible to the community" stated Gil Copley, the Director of the County's Department of

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Community Health and the Environment. "When we do our job of health protection and disease prevention well, people tend to not think of us. When they do they often think of health care for the poor." But public health is mostly not about direct health care," Copley continued. "It is more about monitoring the community and working diligently to keep our citizens and visitors healthy and the environment in which we live healthful."

These invisible services involve things like making sure restaurants are safe, that potential outbreaks of communicable disease are detected and stopped before they affect a large number of people, and making sure that adequate numbers of children are immunized so that outbreaks of formerly devastating childhood illnesses cannot strike again. Public health involves controlling mosquitoes to prevent encephalitis and picking up stray dogs to prevent injury and potential cases of rabies. It involves consultation with residents about radon gas in the home and the safety of a private water supply.

Public health also involves providing prevention oriented services including:

- Nutrition services for women, infants and children
- Family planning services
- Enforcement services relating to the regulation of solid waste companies
- Undertaking monitoring efforts to protect water and air in order to ensure a clean and healthful environment.

The new web site is designed to let citizens know exactly what their public health department does, what services are available, and where and when they are available. For example, printable applications for Missouri birth and death certificates for anywhere in the State are available online.

A person can access the application 24 hours a day, complete the information, and mail it in with the required fee. The completed application can also be brought to the Division of Public Health Office during the regular hours of operation. The average wait for a certified copy is less than 15 minutes in most cases.

The site also features up to date information on breaking public health stories and a monthly public health and a quarterly environmental services newsletter. There is an "Ask The Vet" feature in the Pet Adoption Center area of the site. There are hundreds of links to other sources of information worldwide including major research resources at the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control. The site provides special links in many areas to "kids sites." Such links create a potentially large educational resource for everyone from the elementary school student to the working professional.

The Department of Community Health and the Environment web site will be continually updated and expanded. User feedback from the public will be a major part of the update process and will help to guide future site development. The web site can be found at www.scchealth.org. For further information on the services provided by the St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment, call 636-949-7400.