



America's Health Rankings  
*A Call to Action for People & Their Communities*

## Washington's Healthiest State Campaign

Did you know Washington's *not* the Healthiest State in the Nation? The question surprises many Washingtonians – we like to think of ourselves as outdoorsy, knowledgeable, and generally in good health. Yet, in 2005, Washington ranked just 14<sup>th</sup> in the United Health Foundation's state health rankings.

The Washington Health Foundation (WHF), established in 1992 to improve Washington's health, was surprised and disappointed to see the state's rank slip from number 7 in 1998 to a low of 11<sup>th</sup> in 2003.

In 2003, WHF turned its energy to leading major health change in Washington state. It began by holding Community Roundtables in every county, gathering public and private leaders, organizations, businesses, advocacy groups and individuals to discuss their common health values.

The results were distilled by the University of Washington and were presented at a Leadership Summit in October 2003 where more than 400 attendees agreed on nine values to lead health change. Almost more significantly, they decided to add a 10<sup>th</sup> value: to educate and engage the people of Washington state on these issues.

Subsequently, participants at the summit, including Washington Gov. Gary Locke, Democratic and Republican state legislators, King County Executive Ron Sims and more than 250 other prominent key leaders, signed a Resolution agreeing to put aside special interests and partisan differences and work to achieve those collective health goals.

It was from the need to educate and engage the people of Washington state that the Healthiest State in the Nation Campaign was born. United Health Foundation's rankings served as a guide for the measures and outcomes around which WHF began developing its campaign. Key to the development and messaging of the campaign was the notion that both Healthy Living and Healthy Systems are needed for Washington to reach number one. Six action areas were developed, each action area holding two measures of health.

The strategic intent of the campaign is to stimulate actions in these areas by organizations and the public toward making Washington the Healthiest State.

Washington Gov. Gary Locke helped kick-off the Healthiest State in the Nation Campaign on Sept. 18, 2004, which he proclaimed "Washington Health Day." Washington's entire Congressional Delegation was the first official endorsers of the campaign. And, in 2004, Washington moved up to rank number 15 in United Health Foundation's state health rankings.

In 2005, WHF developed a web data system to help engage individuals, organizations and schools. This system became the backbone for civic engagement in the first ever Governor's Community

Health Bowl in autumn 2005, sponsored by WHF and led by Washington's new Governor, Chris Gregoire, elected in 2004.

During the five-week long Health Bowl, Washington's new Gov. Chris Gregoire, challenged the people of Washington state to earn One Million Miles of health. More than 17,000 individuals, 300 organizations and 115 schools participated by logging miles of physical activity at [www.HealthiestState.org](http://www.HealthiestState.org). Additionally, individuals could earn points by answering questions about health systems in Washington – many of which were based on United Health Foundation's measures and outcomes. A highlight of 2005 was when Washington moved up one notch to number 14 in *America's Health Rankings*.

In 2005, WHF also launched a quarterly magazine, *thrive!*, with articles on Healthy Living and Healthy Systems, including policies that can or will help Washington move up in state health rankings. Distributed through the state's Health Care Authority, the magazine can be found in public libraries, universities, schools and hospitals. Cover stories on local celebrities and health have broadened its appeal – recent features included Washingtonian Suzy Preston, a winner on season two of NBC's *The Biggest Loser*, and Seattle Seahawk Shaun Alexander. *thrive!* has a circulation of 150,000 statewide.

WHF broadened the scope of its work in 2006, developing a Healthiest State policy priority list (2006 priorities included health disparities, early learning and public health funding), and working with the Washington State Legislature to implement laws and policies to improve health in Washington. One important tool to help guide action was the development of WHF's *2006 Report Card on Washington's Health*, featuring Washington's rank in 18 health measures and outcomes, the bulk of which are derived from United Health Foundation's *America's State Health Rankings*.

These measures are the core of the messages and health questions used during the second annual Governor's Community Health Bowl. The 2006 Health Bowl included a 2.5 Million Mile challenge from Gov. Gregoire and ran six weeks. It featured the first ever Healthiest Business Challenge, sponsored by the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce and the Spokane Chamber of Commerce. While the 2006 Health Bowl again included a strong emphasis on logging miles of physical activity, it also emphasized the systemic changes that will help Washington reach number one – and what each organization, business and individual can do.

Today, WHF's Healthiest State in the Nation Campaign is the largest civic engagement campaign for health in state history, so far involving more than 25,000 individuals, more than 600 organizations and over 200 schools. Our experience in initiating a statewide program of health enhancement based upon data such as contained in *America's Health Rankings* may be useful to other communities as a call to action to increase their collective health. To learn more about the Washington Health Foundation's Healthiest State in the Nation Campaign, please visit [www.HealthiestState.org](http://www.HealthiestState.org) or call (206) 577-1823.

**Table 39. Outcomes and Action Items**

| Outcomes                  | Action Items                   |                                   |                                     |                                       |                        |                            |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| · Premature death rate    | Promoting Community            | Investing in Prevention           | Increasing Value in Health Services | Protecting Against Injury and Disease | Avoiding Addictions    | Engaging in Healthy Habits |
| · Select mortality rates  | · Economic well-being          | · Insuring for prevention         | · Health home                       | · Receipt of proven preventive care   | · Smoking bans         | · Physical activity        |
| · Limited activity days   | · High School graduation rates | · Public health system investment | · Medical care quality              | · Seat belt use                       | · Binge drinking rates | · Proper Nutrition         |
| · Emotional well-being    |                                |                                   |                                     |                                       |                        |                            |
| · Infectious disease rate |                                |                                   |                                     |                                       |                        |                            |
| · Health disparities      |                                |                                   |                                     |                                       |                        |                            |