



SHMUEL THALER/SENTINEL PHOTOS

ABOVE: Denise Wargin, left, and Brittany Hart keep fit during Michelle Bean's Optimal Health and Fitness Boot Camp at Anna Jean Cummings Park in Soquel on Wednesday. BOTTOM: Christine Loeffler, Monica Karst and Tiffany Harmon get their heart rates up at boot camp.

# County drops to 13th healthiest in the state

*Health* *3 to 2013*  
**COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT:** Ranking slips from 10th a year ago

By JONDI GUMZ

jgumz@santacruzsentinel.com

SANTA CRUZ — Santa Cruz County slipped again this year, ranking the 13th healthiest county in California after being 10th last year and seventh the previous year.

The fourth annual county health rankings, issued Wednesday, are based on data collected nationally and analyzed by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. One rank is for health outcomes, the other for health factors.

"We can compare and see how we're doing compared to others in the state," said Dr. Lisa Hernandez,

who started work Feb. 4 as the Santa Cruz County health officer. "Health factors are where we can influence the numbers."

She described Santa Cruz as static while other counties were "able to move the needle better."

Marin was the healthiest county in California for the fourth straight year. Placer moved up to second, Yolo fifth and El Dorado sixth.

San Luis Obispo, Colusa and Sonoma jumped ahead of Santa Cruz.

Outcome rankings are based equally on mortality and morbidity statistics.

Santa Cruz saw fewer deaths of people under age 75

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Christine Loeffler, Monica Karst and Tiffany Harmon get their heart rates up during a boot camp session Wednesday.



# HEALTH

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but did not improve in measures of morbidity, such as premature babies weighing less than 5½ pounds. People reported more poor mental health days and poor physical health days in last year's phone survey, which for the first time included those with cellphones.

**HERNANDEZ**

Health factors give the most weight, 40 percent, to social and economic factors such as violent crime and unemployment, 30 percent to behaviors such as smoking and teen birth rate, 20 percent to clinical care such as primary care physicians and diabetic screenings, and 10 percent to physical environment, such as access to recreational facilities.

Santa Cruz had a lower rate of teen births, fatal car crashes and unemployment, but a higher rate of sexually transmitted infections including chlamydia and HIV.

There are fewer primary care physicians, with a rate of one per 1,047 people vs. 923 a year ago. A county report this year said 4.5 more primary care doctors are needed.

Hernandez presented the rankings report to 25 community leaders at a breakfast Wednesday at Chaminade sponsored by United Way of Santa Cruz County with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Hernandez said chlamydia is up for 15- to 24-year-olds and noted federal health officials have a campaign aimed at young people called "Get Yourself Tested" because sexually transmitted diseases often have no symptoms.

"Social isolation is one of the drivers of poor mental health," said Mary Lou Goeke of United Way, who sees faith communities, family resource centers and neighbors playing a part.

She said Positive Parenting Program classes, sponsored by First 5 Santa

HEALTH RANKINGS		
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY BY THE NUMBERS		
MEASURE	COUNTY 2013	COUNTY 2012
Health Outcomes Ranking	13	10
Mortality	10	10
Death before age 75	5,109	5,293
Morbidity	20	13
In poor health	18%	17%
Poor physical health days	3.4	3.1
Poor mental health days	3.8	3.7
Low birth-weight babies	5.8%	5.7%
Health Factors Ranking	10	10
Health Behaviors Ranking	4	3
Smoking	10%	10%
Adult obesity	20%	20%
Motor vehicle crash death rate	9%	11%
Sexually transmitted infections	301	255
Teen birth rate	27	31
Clinical Care Ranking	12	13
Uninsured adults	18%	18%
Primary care providers	1,047:1	923:1
Diabetic screening	83%	82%
Social/Economic Factors Ranking	21	23
High school graduation	86%	77%
Some college	64%	64%
Unemployment	12.1%	12.7%
Children in poverty	19%	19%
Single parent households	28%	28%
Violent crime rate	494	494
Physical Environment Ranking	5	10
Air pollution, particulate matter days	NA	0
Air pollution, ozone days	NA	0
Access to recreational facilities	16	16

SOURCE: [www.countyhealthrankings.org](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org)

Cruz County, help parents under stress and build healthier families.

Hernandez said the county is changing the way mental health services are provided, with behavioral health practitioners offering office hours at primary care clinics to be more convenient for patients, such as someone with diabetes and depression.

The statistic on violent crime was based on 2010 FBI data because 2011 data was not posted in time.

Goeke said she learned Wednesday about miscoding that boosted violent crime numbers in Capitola and is

being corrected. She also cited a task force to prevent juvenile violence, formed last year, working on a five-year action plan.

"If people feel safer, they will feel safe riding bikes and being in parks," she said.

Dominican Hospital eliminated "early elective deliveries" of babies last year but that was not reflected in the low birth-weight statistic, which came from a national 2010 database.

The county is working with health care providers to educate pregnant women about nutrition.