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NEWS RELEASE

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**BOISE COUNTY BENEFITS FROM \$3.5 MILLION DOLLAR INVESTMENT
FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & WELFARE**

Last year, Boise County residents and businesses received \$3.5 million from Department of Health & Welfare programs that help people in need. The investment benefits every one of the county's 7,200 residents. Of Idaho's 44 counties, Boise County ranks number 42 in per capita outlay of Health & Welfare dollars.

The disbursement of state and federal tax dollars amounts to \$478 for every man, woman and child residing in Boise 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 2004 statewide in Idaho communities. 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 Boise 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. 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."

Boise County Commission Chairman Roger Jackson says, “This money is an investment. We had \$276,000 in Food Stamps and it keeps people up here working. There would be fewer businesses without it. If you really think about it, without child care people often couldn’t work.”

“Medicaid is important too,” adds Boise County Clerk Rora Canady. “Our medical indigent budget is \$187,000. If you take away the \$2.8 million in Medicaid we would have to make it up in our budget. We don’t have it.”

Last year, the Department’s Medicaid Division spent \$2.8 million on health care for residents of the county — a \$1 million increase over 2003. There are few health care providers in Boise County so residents usually travel to neighboring Ada County for medical needs.

Boise County residents received \$275,600 in Food Stamps to feed their families, spending \$204,300 with local grocers. Kalac Grocery in Horseshoe Bend redeemed \$39,200, just about half of its \$80,000 annual business.

Owner Dallis Kalac, who bought the former McDowell’s store along Highway 55 three years ago, says Food Stamp dollars are “very important.” And while the money doesn’t create new jobs, “It does allow us to keep our six part-time employees. It helps our business because we probably wouldn’t be able to have a store without it.”

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 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 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>