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Heart Disease Risk in Valley Generally Lower Than Other Parts of County or State
Findings from HARC Survey Offer Encouragement to Public Health Officials

(PALM DESERT, CA) – When it comes to heart disease, adults living in the Coachella Valley have several risk factors that are lower than their counterparts in Riverside and California. While a larger proportion of Coachella Valley adults report high cholesterol, smaller proportions report binge drinking, tobacco use, and being overweight or obese. Palm Desert’s Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC) released the data in conjunction with American Heart Month, which is being observed throughout February.

Comparing the risk factors in the table below, over half (56.6%) of area adults are obese or overweight; this is similar to the proportion in California (56.3%), but less than adults in Riverside County (64.1%). Comparative data from HARC, as well as the 2009 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) can be found in the chart that follows:

RISK FACTORS	Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC) Coachella Valley 2010	California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) /Riverside 2009	California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) /California 2009
Obese or Overweight	56.6%	64.1%	56.3%
High Cholesterol	27.1%	23.8 (2005)	22.1% (2005)
Alcohol Consumption/Binge Drinking*	23.3%	29.7%	31.3%
Tobacco Use	12.6%	17.0%	15.2%
Diabetes	9.0%	8.5%	8.5%

* Binge drinking is defined as males consuming 5 or more drinks on one occasion, and females consuming 4 drinks on one occasion.

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HARC Board President Glen Grayman, M.D., said, “Given the Coachella Valley’s much-publicized challenges with issues like obesity and other factors that contribute to a higher heart disease risk profile, it’s interesting to find that – as a region – we are faring relatively better than other places in California. One can only hope that the numbers across our state and nation will continue to improve, because the threat is ever-present.”

Heart disease looms as one of the biggest – and most expensive -- challenges facing America’s medical profession. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), coronary heart disease in 2010 was projected to cost the United States \$108.9 billion, a total which includes the cost of health care services, medications and lost productivity.

The CDC reported that over 616,000 people died of heart disease in 2008. The condition caused nearly 25% of all deaths—almost one in every four—in the United States, and remains the leading cause of death for both men and women. In fact, more than half of deaths due to heart disease in 2008 claimed the lives of men.

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About HARC

Formed in 2006 by a consortium of more than 35 public and private healthcare agencies, the Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC) conducts a confidential community health status assessment in eastern Riverside County every 3 years to identify major health and quality of life issues. The nonprofit 501 (c) (3) organization is funded in part by contributions from community partners, as well as entities that contract with the agency for customized public health research. More information can be obtained by calling HARC at (760) 404-1945, or visiting the organization’s website at www.harcddata.org.