



2014 Annual Report  
Executive Summary  
Published: May 2015



Healthiest Safest Most Prosperous

# Making an Impact

To: Community Members  
Community Partners  
Marathon County Board of Supervisor  
Marathon County Board of Health  
Marathon County Administration  
Municipal Officers  
State Legislators

## **Talk. Sing. Read. Play. Every Child. Every Day**

These are four simple words, and four simple actions everyone can do to support the success of a child! It almost seems too simple. In 2014, our community learned that what happens in a child's first five years of life does matter in predicting their future. The release of the 2013-2015 LIFE Report set in motion a long-term call for action in our community, that is, "to ensure that every child in Marathon County gets off to a great start."

Why is this so important? During the first five years of child's life, 85% of a child's brain foundation is formed in terms of their intellect and personality. Key to a child's brain development is receiving love and attention from parents and other caregivers. Another key factor in a child's brain development is protecting children from adverse childhood experiences and trauma. Adverse childhood experiences are serious childhood traumas and can include emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect, family violence, household mental illness, parental separation or divorce, bullying, being homeless, and natural disasters. Experiences like these can result in toxic stress that can harm a child's brain and may prevent a child from learning and playing in a healthy way. Toxic stress can result in long-term social and health problems into adulthood and has been linked to teen pregnancy, substance abuse, mental illness, delinquency, incarceration, and chronic illness.

Getting through childhood without experiencing adverse life events can be difficult. To reduce the impact of adverse childhood experiences, parents, family and friends can provide a safe environment and teach children how to be resilient. Resiliency has a protective quality, by helping a child to have hope after bad things occur.

Everyone has a part in helping a child get off to a great start:

- As a parent, take the time to be present with your child, talk to them, play with them, and read to them. Listen and respond to your child in a supportive way.
- As an adult family member, support parents with young children by reading, playing, singing to them, taking them to the library, park, community events, and running errands.
- As a neighbor, get to know the neighborhood parents and their children.
- As an organization, look at what practices you are currently doing to support parents and identify one new practice you will do this year.

Community conversations have begun. More conversations are needed to understand the significance of talking, singing, reading, and playing with every child, every day in Marathon County.

Take the Time – Talk. Sing. Read. Play.

Joan Theurer, Health Officer

### **Vision:**

To be the healthiest and safest county in which to live, learn, work and play.

### **Mission:**

To advance a healthy Marathon County community by preventing disease, promoting health, and protecting the public from environmental hazards.

The Start Right program serves women who are pregnant, their children from birth through age 4, and their families with home visits and visits to the Family Resource Centers. The nurses and family visitors form meaningful relationships with families, supporting them in their parenting, connecting them to community resources, and encouraging their independence while giving them the level of support that they need to raise healthy, school ready children.

With *First Steps*, A public health nurse provides education and care coordination to women during their pregnancy, and to families with a newborn.

The *First Steps* program also offers a public health nurse visit to families upon the birth of their child, providing health teaching on infant care, recovery after childbirth, and information/referral on community resources. All families with newborns receive outreach by the Start Right program.

Through public health nurse outreach to families with newborns, parents who are experiencing life stressors and who could benefit from one-on-one parent education and support are linked to Start Right's *Step by Step* program.

*Stepping Stones* and *Stepping Out* Family Resource services provide information for families on parenting information and support through their libraries, educational programs, family events, and drop in playtime at various locations.

The Start Right Program connects parents to **Raise Great Kids** ([www.raisegreatkids.org](http://www.raisegreatkids.org)) linking parents and those who care for about young children to local resources to help children grow and learn. The Marathon County Early Years Coalition is a supporter of the website, having members contribute their advice, tips and ideas.

The logo for Start Right features the words "Start Right" in a casual, rounded font. The letter "R" is significantly larger than the other letters and has a red exclamation point integrated into its top curve.

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### Further Impacts

**First Breath** offers one-on-one cessation support to women during their pregnancy and up to 60 days after the birth of their baby as part of the First Steps program. All women in PNCC who report smoking receive cessation education and support services by a public health nurse to assist them in quitting or staying quit.

**My Baby and Me** formally addresses alcohol use by pregnant women by individually supporting women in abstaining from alcohol during pregnancy. The public health nurses are also addressing alcohol use with all women in the prenatal and postpartum areas of Start Right.

The **Cribs for Kids** program works to ensure that every newborn has a safe place to sleep. Low-income families who are unable to afford a crib for their newborn are able to secure a portable crib at a nominal cost. Start Right public health nurses or family educators provide one-on-one education to parents on safe-sleep practices. Follow-up telephone calls assess and reinforce parents' safe-sleep practices.

The **Marathon County Early Years Coalition** launched the "Healthy Babies are Worth the Wait" campaign, with the goal of healthy babies by reducing early elective deliveries at Aspirus Wausau Hospital and Ministry Saint Clare's Hospital.

### Quality Improvement

Outreach in response to birth reports received was reviewed and an appropriate level of outreach was determined that provided the greatest engagement in home visiting. Outreach to the Hmong population was adjusted, and is done by a community health worker who acts as a cultural liaison. This change in outreach increased engagement in Start Right services.

### Find out more...

Marathon County Health Department: [www.marathoncountyhealthdepartment.org](http://www.marathoncountyhealthdepartment.org)

Start Right on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/StartRightFirstSteps](http://www.facebook.com/StartRightFirstSteps)

First Breath: [www.wwhf.org/programs/first-breath](http://www.wwhf.org/programs/first-breath)

My Baby and Me: [www.wwhf.org/programs/my-baby-me](http://www.wwhf.org/programs/my-baby-me)

# Making an Impact

## Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs

The Title V Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) Program provides services to people from birth through 21 years of age with a chronic condition that requires specialized health or educational services. These health conditions may be physical, emotional, developmental or behavioral. The Northern Regional Center is one of five regional centers in Wisconsin that provide free and confidential assistance to families and providers. The northern service region consists of the 15 counties of Ashland, Bayfield, Florence, Forest, Iron, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Portage, Price, Sawyer, Taylor, Vilas and Wood.

The work of the Northern Regional Center is directed by six National Performance Measures related to Access to Care, Medical Home/Quality of Health Care, Adequate Health Care Coverage, Early and Ongoing Screening, Family Leadership/Parent Support, and Youth Transition.

The Regional Center conducted five trainings for parents and providers covering topics on developmental screening, behavioral health resources and navigating the systems of care for children. The Regional Center participated in coalitions in counties for one of two focus areas – early childhood (under the age of 6) or transition age youth (over the age of 14).

### Further Impacts

The **Northern Regional Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs** partnered with the Marathon County Early Years Coalition to sponsor “Promoting Community of Care to Foster Young Children’s Social and Emotional Development” workshop in October 2014, resulting in 38 Marathon County providers having a greater understanding on how they can support young children’s social and emotional development.

In 2014, over 1,119 contacts were made with families, youth, professionals and partners through a variety of activities which included direct services to families, parent and physician trainings, partner meetings and coalition work.

### Quality Improvement

The **Northern Regional Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs** program enhanced the Center’s website in 2014 to educate and connect individuals to the information and supports they were seeking.



Northern Regional Center  
Children and Youth with  
Special Health Care Needs

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Find out more...

CYSHCN Northern Regional Center: [www.northernregionalcenter.org](http://www.northernregionalcenter.org)

Marathon County Early Years Coalition: [www.unitedwaymc.org/earlyyearscoalition.htm](http://www.unitedwaymc.org/earlyyearscoalition.htm)



In 2014, the Marathon County Alcohol & Other Drug (AOD) Partnership continued to strengthen its reputation and capacity to collectively impact the burden of substance abuse in the community to achieve their mission to eliminate the misuse of alcohol and other drugs in Marathon County. Along with its diverse membership, the Board of Directors and staff has been able to successfully develop community skills, coordinate mutually reinforcing activities, grow public support, strengthen evaluation competencies, advocate for best practice, garner recognition from a state and national partners, and mobilize diversified funding for various coalitions initiatives – such as the Pushback Against Drug Abuse, Faces of Recovery and Takeback Youth initiatives.



### Western Marathon County Healthy Communities

*Healthy Kids, Healthy Families, Healthy Communities*

The Western Marathon County Healthy Communities (WMCHC) coalition was established to impact the use of alcohol and drugs in the rural areas of western Marathon County, including the seven municipalities of Abbotsford, Athens, Colby, Edgar, Marathon, Spencer and Stratford.

A community survey of local residents to aid in prioritizing health issues identified “abuse or misuse of alcohol” as the number one health related issue; more specifically “underage drinking in 12-18 year olds.” In the fall of 2014, a Community Readiness process was conducted to help determine the overall readiness for behavior change. Also, each school district has agreed to complete the Youth Risk Behavior Survey to collect information regarding youth use and perception of several risk factors. The data will be utilized in planning specific actions in 2015.

#### Further Impacts

The **AOD Partnership Council** Mentored Western Marathon County Healthy Communities’ growth as a new coalition.

The **Take Back Youth** website was launched [www.takebackyouth.org](http://www.takebackyouth.org) - the latest tool in the fight against drug abuse. This resource was created to link those who are looking for information to help their loved ones through addiction and support their recovery.

Two successful DEA Medication Take Back events were held, resulting in over 2 tons of unwanted or expired medications being collected.

Efforts also included support and promotion of local and regional Social Host ordinances, and the first Impaired Server ordinance in Central WI enacted during 2014.

#### Further Impacts

**Coalition-Building**—WMCHC hosted a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Town Hall Meeting on Tuesday, April 29 at Zion Lutheran Church in Stratford.

**Assessment**—In September 2014, the WMCHC coalition identified underage drinking in 12-18 year olds as the priority issue for the Community Readiness Model Survey, a tool designed to measure the degree to which a community is willing and prepared to take action on an issue.

**Community Change**—For the first time ever, all seven school districts in western Marathon County will complete the Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

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Find out more...

Alcohol & Other Drugs Partnership Council: [www.aodpartnership.org](http://www.aodpartnership.org)

Take Back Youth: [www.takebackyouth.org](http://www.takebackyouth.org)

Western Marathon County Healthy Communities: [www.wmchc.org](http://www.wmchc.org)

# Making an Impact

## Immunizations

Vaccines prevent disease in the people who receive them and provide indirect protection to individuals in the community who are not fully immunized by preventing and reducing the spread of disease; this is called “herd immunity.” Children under two years old are especially vulnerable to childhood diseases, making it critical that they be protected through immunization.

The Healthy People 2020 goal is that 80% of children are fully vaccinated through age two. Marathon County Health Department supports this goal by providing immunizations to eligible residents at a minimal cost and through public health nurse follow up of those children who are behind on their immunizations.

To further support this goal, area health care providers enter immunizations given into one of two electronic immunization registries, Registry for Effectively Communicating Immunization Needs (RECIN) and Wisconsin Immunization Registry (WIR).

As part of a county-wide protocol established with area health care providers, Marathon County Health Department has a recall and reminder system for immunizations. Public health nurses follow up on children in the county who are late on their vaccinations. They work with the family; educating them on vaccine preventable diseases and helping them gain access to a medical provider or with the health department, so that the child can get needed vaccinations.

Marathon County Health Department provides access to vaccines at immunization clinics held at the health department in Wausau as well as locations in outlying communities within the county. Immunizations are also available at clinics held at the Marathon County jail and at Aspirus Wausau Family Medicine in Wausau.

### Quality Improvement

#### Immunization Clinic

Several changes to the flow of immunization clinics provided greater levels of customer service and efficiency. A change of patient flow for our immunization clinics resulted in utilizing fewer nurses during each clinic. Reusable screening questionnaires were implemented to reduce the amount of paper used. Nurses began direct entry of vaccines provided, reducing risk of medication errors.

Clients are signing on an electronic signature pad and the signatures are directly uploaded in to the immunization registry. This reduces use of paper and improves efficiency of workflow.



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Find out more...

Marathon County Health Department: [www.co.marathon.wi.us](http://www.co.marathon.wi.us)  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

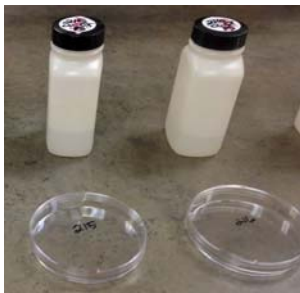
# Making an Impact

## Water Testing

The Marathon County Public Health Laboratory is involved in monitoring public and private drinking water systems in addition to recreational waters, such as swimming pools and beaches. The lab tests for several microbiological and chemical parameters. In addition, lab personnel interpret results for well owners and provide education concerning water safety issues.

Facilities are inspected annually or more frequently when water quality samples exceed bacteriological standards successively, when complaints are received, or violations during inspections indicate a need to monitor more closely. In 2014, 97% of the recreational water samples tested safe.

Lab staff coordinated arsenic testing with the State Lab of Hygiene for private wells having pump work, or as part of a real estate transfer under revised state sample testing requirements.



### Further Impacts

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) conducted an audit of the lab for compliance. Recommendations from the audit were used to ensure the lab provides high quality, reliable services.

### Quality Improvement

#### Water Testing Information Management System

The Health Department with the City-County IT Commission started the process of upgrading a database in 2014, and working towards conversion of manual processes to be more automated. The time saved will enable staff to provide more outreach to the public on the importance of testing private wells.

## Rabies Control

The rabies control program goal is to prevent humans from contracting rabies. This is accomplished through routine reporting of animal bites, investigation of bite incidents, consistent use of quarantine and laboratory testing of animals when appropriate. Because rabies is nearly always fatal, the goal for the rabies control program is to assure proper exposure follow up; to include quarantine or rabies testing and the need for prophylaxis due to an exposure.

The Paper Cities Kennel Club continues to provide a valuable educational program emphasizing safety around all animals for 2nd grade elementary school children. The program emphasizes safe behavior intended to reduce bite incidents as children often suffer greater bite injuries than adults because of their size, and not understanding animal behavior.

### Further Impacts

During the past year, the Department has enhanced animal bite follow up coordination with law enforcement as well as the Humane Society of Marathon County. This has resulted in better service to animal owners and the agencies involved.

### Quality Improvement

The **Rabies Prevention** program completed a Lean Process evaluation using Value Stream mapping. The intent was to establish a system for efficient and consistent animal bite follow-up. Benefits realized include increased customer service to the public as well as law enforcement, vet clinics, and health care providers.

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Find out more...

Marathon County: [www.co.marathon.wi.us](http://www.co.marathon.wi.us)

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources: [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov)

Drinking Water: [dnr.wi.gov/topic/DrinkingWater/](http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/DrinkingWater/)

# Making an Impact

## Human Health Hazards

The Human Health Hazards program responds to reports or concerns from the public or other agencies about potentially hazardous situations. Response to Human Health Hazards, which are defined in statute as “a substance, activity, or condition that is known to have the potential to cause acute or chronic illness, to endanger life, to generate or spread infectious diseases, or otherwise injuriously to affect the health of the public,” is a State-mandated activity for local public health departments.

Possible hazards include garbage, structurally unsafe housing, hoarding situations, environmental contamination, pest/rodent/insect issues, asbestos, mold, lead, blastomycosis, blue-green algae, pests, groundwater contamination, methamphetamine drugs, and animal manure affecting property or groundwater. Examples of housing issues include a lack of heat or water for drinking, cooking, and sanitation.

Several criteria are considered to determine whether a health hazard is present and include the duration of

exposure, quantity and means of exposure to a substance or condition, type and number of individuals exposed, and known or expected health risk.

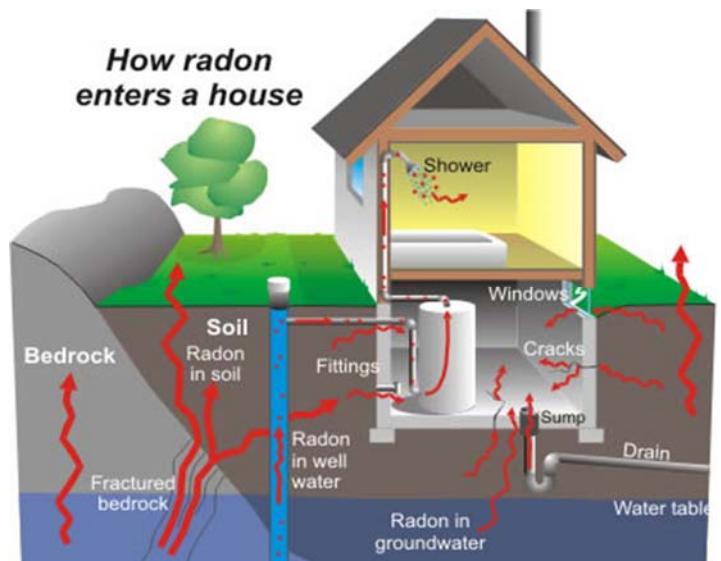
Often, the concerns identified do not reach the threshold necessary to be considered a human health hazard, and investigation is needed at times. Initial efforts seeking voluntary compliance by sharing information and options are often successful. If voluntary compliance cannot be achieved or when required under regulations, a written order becomes necessary to address the hazard.

Often, the concerns identified do not reach the threshold necessary to be considered a human health hazard and information is provided to resolve a condition. Success in this work often includes involving local and state agencies. Program outcomes include reducing exposure to substances, activities, or conditions that can negatively impact health and minimizing health impacts of such exposures.

### Further Impacts

The Board of Health approved the Human Health Hazard Regulation which provides guidance for protecting the health and safety of individuals and communities in Marathon County from environmental exposures that may contribute to communicable disease, acute or chronic illness, or endanger life.

The Housing and Hoarding Workgroup consisting of multiple county, city, and village agencies who have a role in housing and hoarding response focuses on better understanding and coordination of services of the agencies participating. The purpose is to promote safe and healthy living environments by coordinating resources and services to address housing and hoarding-related concerns on behalf of Marathon County residents.



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Find out more...

Marathon County Health Department: [www.co.marathon.wi.us](http://www.co.marathon.wi.us)



# Making an Impact

## Licensing and Food Safety

The Marathon County Health Department is an agent of the State of Wisconsin to provide health inspections and licensing for a variety of establishments. Agent contracts require a minimum of one routine inspection, pre-inspections for compliance prior to issuing a permit, necessary follow up inspections such as complaints and re-inspections to ensure proper compliance, and consultations by phone or on site.

The Health Department works to identify and respond to health problems related to food safety including outbreak investigations. Limiting the spread of a communicable disease and providing clear guidance to facilities during and after an investigation to prevent future illnesses are key goals in the program. In addition to illness investigations, the food safety program provides on-site informal education of food service employees; inspection of food service facilities; food sampling; investigating food borne outbreaks; and responding to product recalls and consumer complaints.

The Health Department tracks six Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Risk Factors identified as violations most often responsible for the majority of food borne outbreaks, individually or in combination. The data provides a method for the analysis of our food safety program, including targeting certain types of violations and ensuring uniformity of inspections. Improper Holding Temperatures (refrigeration or heating holding temperatures) and Other CDC Factors remain generally the highest violation category and are consistent with statewide data.

Restaurant violation categories showed a decrease in Risk Factors involving Improper Holding Temperatures and Cross Contamination while other Risk Factors and those for Retail Food facilities were relatively consistent.

### Quality Improvement

#### Pre-Inspection Customer Satisfaction Survey

In 2014, a customer satisfaction survey was provided to each facility operator who was opening a new facility or was purchasing an existing facility, asking if the inspector provided clear information, provided responses to questions in a timely manner, and if the inspector arrived on time for scheduled appointments.

An open ended questions portion asked "How did you know you needed to contact the Health Department prior to opening? Who referred you to the Health Department?" These questions help inspectors understand how those opening a business learn that the Health Department needs to be contacted for licensing and consultation.

Lastly the survey asked who performed the pre-inspection which would allow individual feedback and if there were any suggestions for how the pre-inspection process could be improved.

### Further Impacts

The HealthSpace electronic licensing and inspection system enhances customer service by providing a standardized, clear inspection report to facility operators and timely distribution of license renewals. It reduces manual paperwork, improves the quality of inspection reports, and enables web-based access to all inspection records.



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Find out more...

Marathon County Health Department: [www.co.marathon.wi.us](http://www.co.marathon.wi.us)

Wisconsin Department of Health Services: [dhs.wisconsin.gov](http://dhs.wisconsin.gov)

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: [datcp.wisconsin.gov](http://datcp.wisconsin.gov)

# Making an Impact

## Rural Health Initiative

The Rural Health Initiative is a nonprofit organization serving farm and agribusiness families in Marathon, Shawano, Waupaca and Outagamie Counties. In 2014, an Outreach Health Coordinator was hired to serve families in Marathon County. Two local residents chair the Marathon County Steering Committee. Marathon County Health Department served on the committee to assist with outreach and networking between the Rural Health Initiative and multiple agencies that offer services to Marathon County residents.

In addition, the Health Department also assisted with grant writing to obtain funds for Rural Health Initiative staff person to allow for continued infrastructure development of the organization, and the relationship building between Rural Health Initiative and agencies who share the mission of “improving and sustaining the health and safety of farm families.”

The Marathon County Rural Health Initiative Steering Committee hosted a Kick-Off Event in Stratford. Approximately 60 stakeholders and supporters celebrated and now can spread the news about this program.

### Further Impacts

The Marathon County **Rural Health Initiative** (RHI) Steering Committee planned and facilitated an RHI Kick Off Event at the Country Aire in Stratford. The event was attended by 60+ stakeholders and supporters helping celebrate and spread the news about this new program.

The Marathon County RHI received an \$84,946 Rural Health Network Development Planning Grant from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration. A coordinator will be hired to develop a Marathon County Rural Health Network to create common ground in the county among competing health systems and formalize the organization's infrastructure.

RHI held a meeting with large dairy farm owners and managers and separate meetings with Hispanic employees to determine major issues and provide resources.



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Find out more...

Rural Health Initiative: [www.wiruralhealth.org](http://www.wiruralhealth.org)

The Transform WI program focused on three priority areas: food systems, active communities, and tobacco prevention. This initiative was integrated into other existing and ongoing work.

### Food Systems

The focus of this work is on implementing the **Farm To School** program. The Health Department works with school district personal and local producers to increase access to fresh local food, and decrease the barriers to transportation, storage and preparation of those foods. Our staff assisted schools with the development of school gardens, classroom education/curriculum, buying local food, and “Lunch Line Redesign” analysis.

### Active Schools

In 2014, Four elementary schools implemented “energy breaks” into the school day; 2-3 minute brain breaks that allow children to move for a short period of time. Research

suggests that these breaks improve concentration and learning among children. Staff facilitated engaging three area schools to participate in gathering data on activity levels among children.

The Health Department continued to support the implementation of the Safe Routes to School Program. One elementary school continued their Walking School Bus on Walking Wednesdays. The intention is to normalize walking and biking as part of daily activity and transportation.

### Tobacco Prevention

The “Clear Gains” initiative is aimed at reducing the exposure of second hand smoke among people who live in multi-unit housing with low to moderate income. Interested landlords receive assistance with designing smoke free policies for their properties and with educating tenants regarding the policy change. The TWI grant also provided resources to purchase signage for properties designating smoking areas.

### Further Impacts

#### Food Systems

Thomas Jefferson Elementary School’s garden has gained recognition across the state and is featured as a successful Farm to School model. Students get to experience the garden and their Full Option Science System (FOSS) science lessons are tied to garden. Food grown is consumed by students and their families.

#### Active Schools

Nine elementary schools (1,100 students) participated in the 2014 Bike to School Day Event in May. Eight schools (700 students) participated in the 2014 Walk to School Day Event in October.

#### Tobacco Prevention

In 2014, 12 rental buildings in Marathon County implemented a smoke-free policy that includes designated smoking areas; impacting 176 subsidized units with the new policy.



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Find out more...

Marathon County Health Department: [www.co.marathon.wi.us](http://www.co.marathon.wi.us)



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