



2015 Annual Report

## Executive Summary

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Most Prosperous

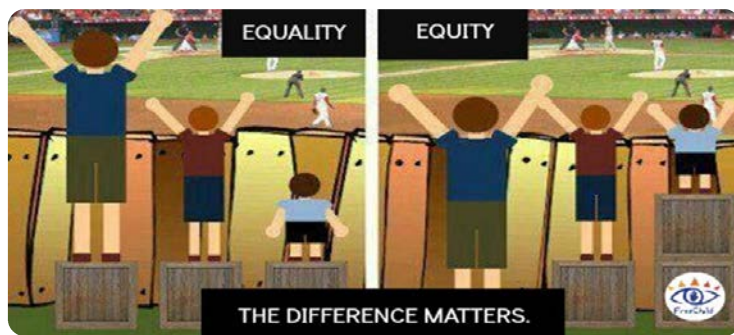
Healthiest

Safest



# Building for Health

## Health Equity = Building Up



Source: Google images

In 2015, a number of residents and community leaders sat around tables discussing the quality of life in Marathon County. Data was reviewed, looking at basic needs, education, economic vitality, health and wellness, environment and energy, and community safety. In sitting around the table, it was reinforced to me that “where you live matters.” So what contributes to the differences in one’s health that is present in our neighborhoods and communities?

Much of the difference is the result of opportunities and resources. The choices you have today are a result of opportunities and resources you were given at birth. Many of us carry out our day as if our neighbors and fellow Marathon County residents all started at the same place at birth as our selves. Would life look different for you if you were born to parents who did not finish high school, who worked three part-time low paying jobs, who abused alcohol and drugs, lived in housing that was dilapidated, in a neighborhood where crime was common, versus being raised by parents with a higher level of education, good paying jobs, and lived healthy lives in a nice home and safe neighborhood?

Not having everyone start at the same place at birth creates health disparities, meaning people because of their education, access to health care, income, and housing tend not to enjoy the same level of health. Health equity is building people up, so everyone has the opportunity to enjoy lifelong health and wellness. Health equity is about ensuring people get access to the same opportunities and resources, and can be achieved through building the healthiest, safest, and most prosperous county in Wisconsin.

Marathon County Health Department in partnership with health care organizations, community agencies, and other government entities serves to provide a “building up” approach. A “building up” approach is one in which we address conditions in which people are born, live, learn, work and play. Some examples of this work in 2015 include:

- Provided information to help neighborhoods take their communities back from drugs.
- Assisted parents living in older housing stock to protect their children from lead based paint.
- Promoted walking and biking trails.
- Connected local food producers to school district food service personnel and the general public through area farmers’ markets to increase access to locally grown food.
- Assisted landlords in adopting “smoke-free” policies for their rental units.
- Provided information to parents to help them establish a safe place for their baby to sleep.
- Administered childhood and adult immunizations.
- Promoted the importance of “Talk, Sing, Read, Play” Every Child Every Day message to parents and caregivers.

It is our collective “building up” approach that will provide the opportunities and resources to enjoy lifelong health and wellness. As you review the differences made in 2015, look for examples of “building up” and consider what you could do as an individual or organization to contribute to creating health equity in our communities.

In good health,

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.

# Building for Health

## Bicycle Friendly Community

In 2015 a new Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for the Wausau Metropolitan Planning Organization (greater Wausau metro area) was developed, with significant input from staff at Marathon County Health Department. The Wausau metro area was designated a Bronze-level Bicycle-Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists. This award designation is given to communities that demonstrate significant planning, infrastructure development, and environmental changes that support bicycle transportation.

In spring 2015, students at Wausau West high school built 10 bike racks, which were installed in the city of Wausau during the summer. Funding for the racks was provided by the City of Wausau Public Works Department. The bike racks added to the five student designed and built racks installed in the City during the previous year.

Also in the spring of 2015, the Central Wisconsin Off-road Cycling Coalition finalized the creation of new system of mountain bike trails at Nine Mile Forest Recreation area. The club closed and added new trails to make fewer intersections and random offshoots that confused the occasional rider. With a grant from the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA)/Competitive Cyclist, they created and installed new trail signs that are colored coordinated by skill level and difficulty, and also released a new trail map and trailhead map kiosk.



### Further Impacts

- Partnered with Wausau Area Safe Kids Coalition and the Parks & Recreation Summer School program for a bike rodeo at Thomas Jefferson Elementary School
- A bicycle safety booth was part of the First Thursday's event in July 2015 in downtown Wausau.
- A "Bike Fixtation" was installed at the intersection of CTH R and CTH NN in Rib Mountain; funded by the Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin.
- Assisted the Central Wisconsin Offroad Cycling Coalition (CWOCC) with grant writing for the Sylvan Hill Community Bike Park project
- Partnered with WSAW-TV and Channel 7 Productions to run an advertisement campaign for the bicycle route & signage system, and to produce two 15 second public service announcements, one targeted for motorists and one targeted for cyclists about sharrows.

*Find out More...*

Metropolitan Planning Organization (Greater Wausau Area): [www.co.marathon.wi.us](http://www.co.marathon.wi.us)

League of American Bicyclists: [www.bikeleague.org](http://www.bikeleague.org)





# Building for Health

## Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs

The program has increased “our reach” with families and partners. Staff were physically present in 14 of the 15 counties of the Northern Region. Partners include local health departments, human services, WIC, Birth to Three, special education and employment providers, adult long term care providers and health clinicians. The outreach and training efforts that targeted WIC and primary care clinicians realized an increase in referrals from each of these sources.

Mental health needs of children and adults continue to be a state priority. The Regional Center has been, and continues to be, involved in the promotion of the Department of Healthy Services pilot, the Child Psychiatry Consultation Program, by informing primary care providers, partners and family members of this collaborative model to support primary care providers’ treatment of mental health needs when child psychiatrists are not readily accessible.

## Early Years Coalition

The Planning Committee established a 2015 work plan to ensure Coalition priority efforts are sustained and that as many people as possible in our community are considering what role they can play to support children in their early years. The work of the Early Years Coalition is carried out through action teams.

The Healthy Babies action team planned for the development of online modules for Marathon County parents, focusing on three subjects including safe sleep, car seat safety, and shaken baby prevention. The modules will be on the Early Years Coalition website [RaiseGreatKids.org](http://RaiseGreatKids.org), and will provide an accessible form of education for Marathon County parents on three key prevention topics.

The Developmental Screening action team educated on the importance of screening, referral, and intervention at 9, 18, and 24 or 30 months (as suggested by the American Academy of Pediatrics). In response to the increased emphasis on adverse childhood experiences, the Developmental Screening action team made the decision in late 2015 to shift focus to social and emotional development for young children in Marathon County, specifically inventorying available community resources. Birth to Three and Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs have begun plans to work together in outreaching to Marathon County medical providers. The Quality Child Care Action Team continued to develop a child care provider network within Marathon County.



Northern Regional Center  
Children and Youth with  
Special Health Care Needs

### Further Impacts

The Center began to distribute two quarterly electronic newsletters – one focused on parents and one to partners. The quarterly newsletters received positive feedback.



**RaiseGreatKids.org**  
Talk • Sing • Read • Play  
Every Child. Every Day.

### Further Impacts

The Coalition was awarded \$129,925 from the State of WI Race to the Top Challenge grant. The purpose of this grant is to engage private sector businesses in the advancement of early childhood development; increase the connection of local parents to our early childhood systems of support; and grow community awareness about the early years as a critical time to invest.

The Parents as First Teachers Action Team launched Parent Power Hour sessions, with the desire to bring more local parents into opportunities of support and leadership. To-date, nine Marathon County parents have participated regularly in Parent Power Hour sessions.

*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)



# Building for Health

## Alcohol & Other Drugs

The AOD Partnership, with support of Marathon County Health Department staff, lead best practice prevention strategies in 2015. Work continued to keep the issue of substance abuse in the public by raising awareness on drugs trends, reduce the stigma of addiction, and build a community supportive of recovery through media contacts and news stories. Presentations to 35 community organizations reached over 1,200 people, including the *Drugs in the Community* sessions held in cooperation with Wausau Police Department, North Central Health Care, Wausau Comprehensive Treatment Center, AIDS Resource Center, Marathon County Crime Stoppers, and the Marathon County Sheriff's Department.

AOD Partnership enhanced community involvement by assisting in a sustained increase in drug-related tip calls to Marathon County Crime Stoppers by over 300% since 2013, and maintaining participation of 100% of pharmacies in Marathon County promoting the Medication Drop Box Program.

All schools (both public and private) participated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Spring School Networking Meeting to discuss current alcohol and drug trends, assess staff and student needs, and share local resources available to help address substance use amongst youth.

The Partnership completed work to advocate for policy change through initiating preliminary conversations to look at uniform prescribing policies with local health systems. Feedback was also provided to local policy makers on the needs of the community regarding the HOPE (Heroin and Opiate Prevention and Education) legislation to combat opiate abuse.



### Quality Improvement

The 2015 Annual Partner Survey revealed; 9 out of 10 respondents reported their involvement in the AOD Partnership met/exceeded expectations. The top benefits include receiving information, making community safer and networking, and 94% strongly agree or agree the Weekly Updates are useful.

### Further Impacts

AOD Partnership worked together with the Village of Marathon to establish a sixth permanent medication drop box location. This is the second outside of the Wausau Metro area.

All Marathon County schools completed the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YBRS) in 2015. Community partners are investing in the printing of a summary report to share with the community and the data will be used to plan for the future.

Expertise was provided to the community by educating partners on the benefits of the distribution and over the counter sale of Naloxone (Narcan) to reduce the unintended overdose of heroin.

*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)



# Building for Health

## Start Right

In 2015, as a result of Start Right Program, over 1,200 parents and families received either health teaching, parent education, or care coordination and support. The Start Right Program serves women who are pregnant, their children from birth through age four, and their families through home visits, visits to the Family Resource Centers, and participation in parent education classes in eight communities across Marathon County. Start Right Program goals are:

- Children will experience nurturing relationships with their parents
- Children will be healthy
- Children will be safe in their homes
- Children will be 'school ready' when they begin school

The Start Right program continues to work closely with Marathon County Department of Social Services, Birth to 3, Women Infant Children (WIC), health care providers, schools and nonprofit community organizations that serve families to ensure coordination of services.



### Further Impacts

Public health nurses, in collaboration with a social worker from social services, held classes the Marathon County jail for interested inmates. Classes were provided on Hepatitis B and C, reproductive life planning, abusive head trauma (shaken baby) prevention, and safe sleep. The inmates who attended the classes were engaged and informed.

Start Right—First Steps experienced increased efficiencies due to process improvements and technology. An example, is utilizing portable technology such as tablet computers for direct entry of client notes and interviews at the time of service. This practice saves time and increases accuracy.

In an effort to meet people where they are at, some education has been moved out in to the community. With support from the Foundation of Ministry St. Clare's, safe sleep classes were offered in the community. Classes were offered at the Neighbor's Place, Hope Life Center, and at the Stratford Family Resource Center. These classes provided important education regarding safe sleep, and a crib (Pack 'N Play) at a reduced cost to families in the community. In addition, referrals to the Start Right program were done for interested families.

# Start Right!

*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)



# Building for Health

## Communicable Diseases

As part of our communicable disease investigation, the Health Department assures individuals receive appropriate treatment and provides health teaching on ways to prevent further spread of these diseases.

In order to be able to identify patterns and trends of communicable disease occurrences, Marathon County tracks the type and number of reportable diseases, as well as reports received from area health care providers, laboratories, schools, and day care centers. On a weekly basis, infection control practitioners from area hospitals and clinics receive a report of communicable disease occurrences in Marathon County.

A quality improvement process occurred in 2015 for the Rabies Control Program, with the intent to clarify the specific steps in performing case follow up, and determine time involved for each step. The effort resulted in improved clarity for work flow, less time coordinating case management, and improved customer service to animal owners and the Humane Society, as well as medical, veterinary, and law enforcement offices.

## Water Testing Laboratory

The Marathon County Health Department Water Testing Laboratory continued to provide water testing services to the citizens of Marathon County. With the goal of safer drinking water, the lab is involved in monitoring public and private drinking water systems. In addition, recreational waters, such as swimming pools are monitored, testing for several microbiological and chemical parameters. Lab personnel interpret results for well owners and provide education concerning water safety issues.

In 2015, the Health Department, along with the City-County IT Commission continued the process of upgrading a 16 year old database, to attain greater accuracy and greater efficiencies in reporting and billing. A request for proposal was issued, and a contract was secured with Accelerated Technology Laboratories, Inc. The content experts on the project team have been working to ensure the software is configured properly to maintain the high level of service that our customers expect.

### Quality Improvement

The department implemented video visits for client monitoring and staff supervision. Visits done in this way have saved time, mileage, and are less intrusive for clients.

Streamlining of the processes for perinatal Hepatitis -B prevention activities has improved accuracy, saved time, and ensured more newborns are protected from disease.

The staff involved in the LEAN process evaluation for the Rabies Control Program identified a number of actions to improve consistency and efficiency. These included template fax cover sheets and letters; law enforcement notification; a comprehensive inventory of medial, veterinary, and law enforcement offices with contact information; and clarity on animal scratch follow-up procedures.

### Further Impacts

After implementation of the new database, several processes that are currently manual will be converted to automated processes, reducing the chance of error, and saving time. The time savings will enable the Lab Technicians to enhance outreach and education efforts to the public on the importance of testing private wells. The new database is expected to be implemented as of July 1, 2016.

*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)

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/)





# Building for Health

## Licensing and Food Safety

Starting in September of 2015, online food safety inspections report summaries for restaurants, grocery, and convenience stores became accessible and resulted in 600 inquiries. Businesses and the public were made aware of online inspection report availability having local media assist with promotion. Interest in the online inspection reports likely contributed to additional website activity hits to other links.

As part of the Licensing Program, the Marathon County Health Department responded to health problems related to food safety including outbreak investigations.

In addition to illness investigations, the food safety program provided on-site informal education of food service employees; inspection of food service facilities including 55 schools in the Federal School Lunch/Breakfast Program; food sampling; investigating food borne outbreaks; and responded to product recalls and consumer complaints.

The Food Safety section of the Health Department's website was significantly revised, adding informational links and making the site easier to navigate. New links were added to provide food safety information for regulated businesses. A "Food Safety for Consumers" section was also added, focusing on the home environment.

### Quality Improvement

Each facility is required by the state of Wisconsin to have an employee health program to educate staff about symptoms and diagnosed diseases that needs to be reported to management. A questionnaire was developed to learn whether food facilities have an employee health program and how often the program is reviewed with staff.

The Employee Health Program Survey highlighted the importance of employee health to prevent the spread of foodborne illness. The survey reflected that many food establishments have an employee health program, yet only half review the program with staff after the start of employment. As a result of the survey findings, Environmental Health Sanitarians will emphasize the employee health program and the value of reviewing the program with staff every year during food facility inspections.



*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)





# Building for Health

## Western Marathon County Healthy Communities

In 2015, Marathon County Health Department staff organized and facilitated 12 meetings of the Western Marathon County Healthy Communities Coalition, rotating between each of the seven municipalities including Abbotsford, Athens, Colby, Edgar, Marathon, Spencer and Stratford. The meeting attendance averages 12 per meeting with a total of 49 unique individuals attending this year. In February and March, Health Department staff facilitated a “root cause analysis” to help the group further define the problem of underage drinking in western Marathon County. A plan outlining goals, strategies and specific activities was created to guide the coalition’s focused work.

For the first time, all seven school districts in western Marathon County completed the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YBRS). An aggregate data set for western Marathon County schools was created through a partnership with the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point in the 2015 spring semester with students from the School of Health Care Professions. A partnership agreement was created between each school district, UW-Stevens Point, and the Marathon County Health Department to analyze the data for use in future reports and presentations. In the fall, presentations of community readiness assessment scores and the aggregate YBRS data were shared with the Village Boards of Athens, Edgar, Marathon City, Stratford, and Spencer.



### Western Marathon County Healthy Communities

*Healthy Kids, Healthy Families, Healthy Communities*



### Quality Improvement

A Partner Survey was conducted of the coalition’s membership. The responses revealed:

- Substance abuse, mental health, and bullying were the top three priority areas selected for WMCHC to focus on in 2016.
- 87% said that their experience with WMCHC has met or exceeded their expectations. 13% said they were too new to tell.
- 95% said that having paid staff coordinate WMCHC is “very valuable.”

As a result of the responses, Marathon County Health Department staff are now creating and sending a “Weekly Update” on substance use/abuse issues and community updates to the membership.

### Further Impacts

The Chronic Disease Prevention team facilitated the work of many others toward a common goal. Facilitating is more than filling a room with interested people. It is listening for common meanings and using group processing techniques to help all members align around a shared purpose. Health Educators are called upon to use their facilitation skills to help groups process their planning in a more efficient manner.

The Chronic Disease Prevention team has created or contributed to several assessments and plans including the Local Indicators for Excellence (LIFE) report, the Wausau Area Bike and Pedestrian Plan, and the Marathon County Comprehensive Plan. In addition, a work plan including multiple agencies has been created for obesity prevention efforts; including work with farmers markets, farm to school, and the Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Coalition.

*Find out more...*

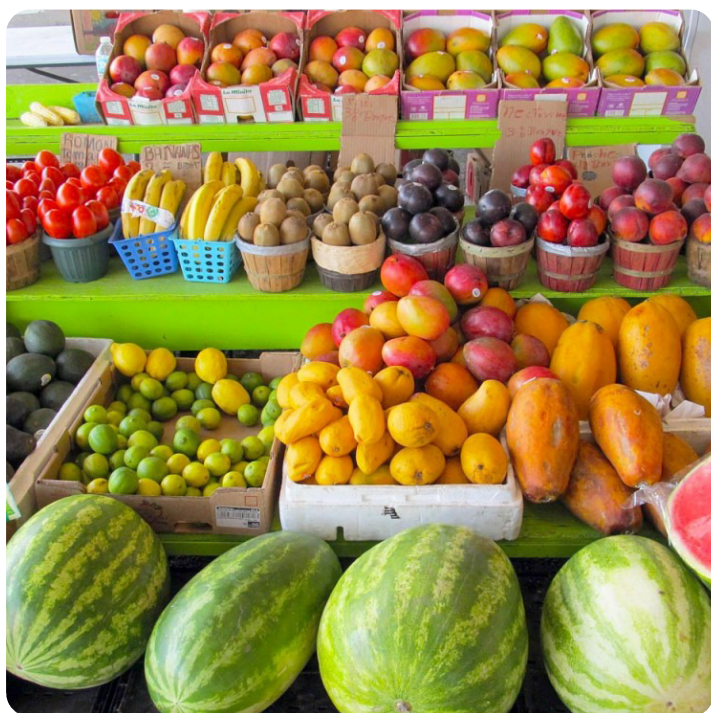
Western Marathon County Healthy Communities: [www.wmchc.org](http://www.wmchc.org)



# Building for Health Food Systems

In October 2015, a Marathon County Local Food website [www.marathoncountylocalfood.org](http://www.marathoncountylocalfood.org) was launched. The purpose of this site is to create one place where residents and visitors can go to learn more about; where and when farmers markets are open; how to purchase local foods; what schools are incorporating Farm to School programs; and feature pages called “Who’s Your Farmer?” to help patrons get to know their food producers.

Farmers markets continued to expand in Marathon County. The Village of Athens offered a farmers market for the first time in 2015. The market ran from May-October. In addition, the Wausau Winter Market extended its season until April 25<sup>th</sup> (originally scheduled to end April 8<sup>th</sup>) and the Wausau Area Farmers Market moved their opening date to May 2<sup>nd</sup> (originally scheduled for May 9<sup>th</sup>). This resulted in no gap between farmers markets for customers. Stratford Farmers Market also expanded their market season, with their last market occurring on September 30<sup>th</sup> (originally scheduled to end September 16<sup>th</sup>). Two farmers markets, Aspirus and Stratford, offered Electronic Benefits Transfers or FoodShare (EBT) for the first time in 2015.



## Further Impacts

- Who’s Your Farmer? Eleven farmers interviewed and posted to local food website each week
- The Marathon County Hunger Coalition and UW-Extension teamed up to provide 28 sessions of Nutrition and Budgeting Lessons (AKA Cooking Classes ) to 252 participants in 2015.
- The Hunger Coalition’s Share the Harvest Booth received donations of over 3,300 pounds of fresh produce to deliver to area pantries in 2015.
- Eight garden/wellness classes were held, with an average of 12 participants per class.
- Three cooking demonstrations at the Wausau Farmers Market were conducted with the Marathon County Hunger Coalition.

*Find out more...*

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

Marathon County Local Foods: [www.marathoncountylocalfoods.org](http://www.marathoncountylocalfoods.org)



In 2015, efforts to increase awareness of the health risk associated with e-cigarettes occurred with the general public and policy makers, resulting in the Marathon County Board of Health and Board of Supervisors adopting a “Resolution Supporting Regulation of E-Cigarettes”. The resolution was 1 of 18 county resolutions adopted in Wisconsin, demonstrating support and encouragement for local communities to include e-cigarettes into their smoke free ordinances to protect the health of their citizens and opposing any state legislation that preempts local governments from doing so.

During 2015, 70 compliance checks were conducted by The Wisconsin WINS program throughout the County and 66 (94%) did not sell to minors. The Wisconsin WINS program is a retail compliance program conducted in cooperation with local law enforcement and youth volunteers. The goal of the program is to identify retail locations that will sell tobacco products to minors.

### Further Impacts

In 2015, staff met individually with eight property managers to discuss why and how to make the change to smoke free multi-unit housing, addressing secondhand smoke exposure among lower income populations. Three educational presentations were given to groups of landlords and property managers encouraging them to consider modifying their policies.

The Tobacco Free Coalition of Central Wisconsin worked to educate the community on emerging tobacco trends and e-cigarettes through 23 community presentations, and completing 15 environmental scans. The scans gather snapshots of tobacco products, displays and marketing in the community. More than 450 community members received information through the presentations provided.



*Find out more...*

Central Wisconsin Tobacco Free Coalition: [www.centralwitobaccofree.org](http://www.centralwitobaccofree.org)

Wisconsin WINS: [www.wisconsinwins.com](http://www.wisconsinwins.com)

Clear Gains—Wisconsin’s Smoke Free Housing Initiative: [www.wismokefreehousing.com](http://www.wismokefreehousing.com)







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