Audra Martine, Health Officer
Resilience. If there is one word I could choose to epitomize my thoughts about the past few years, it would be resilience. We have experienced so much change in a short period of time, from the impact of the pandemic to the use of new online communication tools. I am proud of how the Health Department has adapted to these changes and how we’ve worked to become nimble and more strategic.

This report offers a glimpse at some of the many highlights from our work in 2022. Our staff of 58 delivers services that can be divided into four broad areas - Access to Care/Communicable Disease, Family Health, Chronic Disease/Injury Prevention and Environmental Health/Laboratory services.

Our staff who work on Access to Care/Communicable Disease perform critical clinical education, connections and interventions that sustain or improve health outcomes. Family Health staff provide the WIC (Women, Infants and Children) nutritional program and use life course expertise to promote healthy lifestyles. Chronic Disease/Injury Prevention work focuses on increasing rates of healthy and active lifestyles, lessening risky behaviors, and educating the public on awareness of healthy practices. Finally, our Environmental Health/Laboratory services include a variety of efforts to provide planning, testing, inspections and oversight to protect food, recreation sites, and drinking water; manage liquid and solid waste streams safely and identify other public health hazards related to environmental factors in accordance with federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

In all areas, we strive to be fiscally responsible and intentional in using resources efficiently. In 2023, we will use the large amount of data our work generates to update and re-establish performance metrics. These indicators will show when and how we meet our goals and highlight areas of concern.

The department is confidently moving forward with a renewed passion for service and commitment to engagement. As we strive to provide the best public health service to the La Crosse County community, I welcome your feedback, questions, and partnerships.

With appreciation,

Audra Martine, Health Officer,
amartine@lacrossecounty.org

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Health Department Mission/Vision

**Mission:** Collaboratively promoting a healthful community for all people.

**Vision:** Holistically healthy people in a thriving community.

**Values:** Advocacy, Collaboration, Equity.
### 2022 Finances

**Revenue & Expenses**

#### Revenue
- Donation: $29,229
- State & Federal Funding: $1,952,003
- In-Kind Revenue: $95,940
- Grants: $35,683
- Licenses: $734,111
- Sales, Screenings, Other: $118,097
- Property Taxes: $2,195,303
- Total: $5,160,366

#### Expenses
- Contracted Services: $242,767
- COVID Staffing/Expenses: $528,792
- Donation Expense: $25,985
- Equipment: $40,409
- Indirect & In-Kind Expenses: $112,939
- Operating: $978,031
- Personnel: $2,916,021
- Total: $4,844,944

**Notes**
- Wells were tested by the Health Department in 2022
- Environmental health complaints were received and responded to in 2022
- Restaurants and 91 grocery stores were inspected by County Health Department Sanitarians in 2022
2022: Five Things to Know

1. Our Wisconsin Dental Pain Protocol Project received 817 calls in 2022 and was able to make 714 referrals for follow up dental service.
2. A total of 350 Households (983 individuals) received gifts coordinated through the 2022 Holiday For Goodness Sake Project.
4. The Health Department received a Commendation from Governor Tony Evers for work completed to improve public health through the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. The addition of a second social worker within the Health Department has improved our ability to provide assistance to individuals affected by condemnation and/or evictions; this has led to development of a trauma informed, supportive approach to assist individuals as they deal with a highly stressful time.

Spotlight: Health Services

- **Communicable disease investigation** is one of the most effective efforts to decrease the spread of disease. In 2022, the Health Department received 20,859 reportable disease submissions (including 33 different disease types); most of these cases required some form of follow up by contacting a facility or the client directly, depending on the disease.

- **Immunization services** are a vital part of public health providing protection against several types of communicable diseases. The Health Department provided immunizations at locations throughout La Crosse County in 2022, in addition to regular availability within the clinic. Community locations included schools, community housing, Boys and Girls Clubs, churches, jail, the REACH Center, as well as in-home visits for homebound individuals. This year 2,103 doses of vaccine were administered by the health department, which included 24 different types of vaccine.

PROFILE: RACHEL KING

Rachel is in a role that is relatively new for the Health Department – Epidemiologist. Her work is pivotal in keeping us data informed and evidence based.

"The best part of my job is when I get to spend time building relationships," Rachel said. "That dedicated time leads to a better-connected community where we are all working together to improve health for our residents."
WIC Program - 2022 Highlights

- The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is an evidence-based national nutrition program for families that began in 1972.
- WIC focuses on preventing nutrition-related health problems and improving the health status of low-income, at-risk pregnant and post-partum women and children up to 5 years of age.
- In 2022, the La Crosse County WIC Program served 2,346 individuals. This total includes 162 pregnant women and 446 infants. While WIC does assist families with the cost of infant formula, breastfeeding is supported as the norm for infant feeding.
- Formula recalls and supply chain issues created challenges for families in 2022. At the same time, due to the pandemic, some enhancements to WIC allowed improved access to nutrition as well as pausing the face-to-face appointment requirement. Both of these accommodations improved options for families.
- We support current efforts to “modernize” WIC service in ways that will continue ease of access for families.

Spotlight: Safe Routes to School

- Safe Routes to School collaborated in 2022 with Gundersen Health System’s Safe Kids Coalition to promote the “Show Up Safe” youth safety initiative.
- Throughout the summer, police officers, firefighters, and conservation officers handed out coupons to youth who “showed up safe” to outdoor recreation activities; this included wearing helmets while biking.
- Safe Routes to School staff provided a bicycle helmet fit training to the La Crosse police and gave them helmets to distribute to kids who may not have one.
- The “Show Up Safe” initiative was an opportunity for law enforcement, firefighters and conservation officers to have a positive interaction with youth while also encouraging them to keep safety in mind while enjoying various summer activities like biking and boating.
The 2022 Community Health Improvement Plan sets our priorities for the next three years. Results from community input provided three priorities related to public health concerns. These were: Behavioral Health, Access to Care, and Healthy Environments. Interestingly, feedback related to the Behavioral Health focus was to build a community that prioritizes protective childhood experiences and resilient communities. Support to work on early interventions that strengthen families was clearly noted.

Our second focus area is Access to Care. Strategic issues that will guide our work in this area include partnering with residents to best identify their needs, providing care to underserved individuals where they live/learn/work/play, and to improve health literacy and system navigation. Using a healthy equity lens, our work will focus on building authentic and mutually beneficial relationships to reach the community in a meaningful way.

Our final of the three goal areas is Healthy Environments. The vision statement for this topic is to “collaborate for solutions that build healthier and more accessible neighborhoods where people are connected to what they need where they live”. This goal has created increased focus for us to create impact related to safe housing, access to healthy foods, and physical activity.

Lab Remodel Completion in Spring of 2023

Formal end of the federally declared public health emergency, specific date to be determined.

Health Department is completing the re-accreditation process this year.

Opportunities and Challenges

Nationally and locally, health departments are redesigning how best to serve our communities given the current world events. Significant staff turnover in the field, historic funding challenges and changing system structures are the most significant challenges we face as we work to modernize. In Wisconsin, this re-setting is referred to as “Public Health Forward”.