

## Item 24-1186: 2023 Appleton Health Department Annual Report

### Board of Health

Wed, Sep 11, 2024 7:00AM

#### Cathy Spears (Board Chair) 01:00

Information items. 24-1186 the Appleton Health Department annual report. Deputy Director Sonja.

#### Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 01:10

Good morning.

#### Cathy Spears (Board Chair) 01:11

Good morning.

#### Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 01:11

Happy to present to you our annual report for 2023. There are just a few things that Director Sepers and I wanted to kind of highlight from this year. So, if you go first, let's see, this would be on page 12 under the foundational capabilities, our community health assessment. We started work in earnest on this in 2023. You can see a nice picture there of our community health assessment committee, and some of the activities that we did towards this in 2023 included the homelessness summit, the point in time count, and the age friendly survey. This is something that we're continuing to work on this year, and we'll be wrapping up before the end of 2024.

#### Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 02:06

And then on page 14, just some initiatives we have. I did talk a little bit when I was talking about the community health assessment, about the Age Friendly Appleton initiative. This was in collaboration with the AARP. We developed the survey with Age Friendly Appleton to better understand and prioritize the needs of older adults. The survey was conducted June through August of 2023 and it covered key topics such as accessible housing, transportation, healthcare, social engagement, and other factors that contribute to healthy aging.

#### Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 02:45

We go now to page 16 of the report under the internship and student engagement opportunities. We are happy that we continue to work with various educational institutions such as—I think in 2023 we worked with UW Green Bay, Lawrence University, and then Austin, one of our environmental employees, he was working on a—let's see, what was that?—a double master's degree from Texas Tech University and had an internship with our department in addition to his role. He focused his capstone project on the Wisconsin lead and water testing and remediation initiative. This was a \$15,000 grant that we were able to get. He educated local early child care centers about the free lead testing program. He collected samples, and we're happy to say that none of those samples were out of bounds, and we had a very high participation rate.

#### Cathy Spears (Board Chair) 03:46

Excellent.

#### Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 03:46

And we think this was largely due to the fact that many of the lead laterals in the city have been changed out. So.

**Cathy Spears (Board Chair) 03:58**

Good work.

**Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 03:59**

Yeah. That was great. That was something that he did in addition to his eight-hour workday. So, he'd do it before and after.

**Cathy Spears (Board Chair) 04:08**

Ah to be young.

**Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 04:11**

He worked very hard on that.

**Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 04:14**

Page 21 one of the QI projects that we had as a department in 2023 was to expand our social media presence. We have added, I think it is—we had Facebook, so we tried to expand that a little more with our audience, and then we also added Instagram and the other one—uh LinkedIn. So that has gone well, and that was a QI project from that year.

**Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 04:42**

On page 23 we do highlight some of our collaborations with community partners, and one key partner we'd like to highlight is the Building for Kids Children's museum. We collaborated with them during the Covid 19 pandemic by hosting pediatric vaccination clinics and we also looked ahead, I think it was end of 2023 but into 2024, we were an advisory partner for their Food to Grow initiative, and that aims to educate children and families about nutrition, food sourcing, and food equity through a new permanent exhibit.

**Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 05:23**

On page 26 one thing to note in the communicable disease cases, hospitalized influenza, we found this to be interesting, that there was a notable decrease in this in 2021. There may have been another respiratory virus going around at that time, but we think that many of the mitigations that were around for covid helped with other respiratory viruses, and that did hold true in our statistics as well.

**Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 05:57**

On page 31, a couple of the programs to highlight that we've been involved with. Child Passenger Safety, this program continued to expand in 2022 with the training of more Child Passenger Safety technicians. Also, our involvement with the overdose fatality teams in the area. One of our nurses, Julie Erickson, is a part of the overdose fatality review team for Outagamie and Winnebago counties, and they have the shared mission of preventing overdose deaths in the community. Julie, as part of this team, has also collaborated with the Appleton Area School District to provide counselors, nurses, and support staff with essential information about substance use disorder and the resources available through the We Heart You program, which we talk a little bit more about in here.

**Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 06:46**

One of our major accomplishments in 2023 on page 32 was the establishment of the Community Health Division in our department. So, on July 19, the Appleton Common Council approved a table of organization change establishing the new division of community health within the Appleton health department. So, this change included the creation of Community Health Supervisor position to lead the division, as well as the transition of the Coordinated Entry Specialist position from the Department of Community and Economic Development to

the newly formed Community Health Division. So, the structural change aims to strengthen our department's role as the community health strategist in the community. To further support the community too, we are part of the newly established basic needs team, which is a collaborative effort between the health and police departments, and this is focused on assisting individuals and families experiencing homelessness or lacking other basic needs. So that was a big accomplishment in 2023.

**Mayor Jake Woodford 07:55**  
Chair, if I may?

**Cathy Spears (Board Chair) 07:55**  
Yes, sure.

**Mayor Jake Woodford 07:57**  
Just on that point, this is something that since we've implemented it, we've been getting questions from other communities—how we're doing, what we're doing, and why. And it really started with first a collaboration between the Appleton police department and Outagamie County to embed a clinical therapist with the police department. And that really paved the way for us in thinking about how we can better respond to the needs of the community, and also to add resource to the folks who are oftentimes encountering people out the community who have these needs, which is our police department. So, by embedding another position with the police department, through this collaboration, we're able to better assess and address needs out in the community and we can also, rather than rely on a law enforcement response, really quickly pivot that response into the right parts of our organization and our community.

**Mayor Jake Woodford 09:04**  
So, I think this is a great innovation that our health department has been a leader on and very proud of it, and we're seeing great results. And so, look forward to seeing what can come as we continue to explore that, because for some time, the idea of a co-response model in law enforcement was a contentious and unfortunately became a political issue. What we see is, in this community, a great opportunity to actually more directly connect people with resources, make sure that we're responding with the right services and resources, because the right response is not always a clinical therapist response, but just the same it's not always law enforcement response either. And so, by deepening that partnership, we've created some great resources. And so, I just appreciate the department's leadership in this area, and I'd like to think we're setting an example for other communities who are thinking. About augmenting the way that they respond to meet needs in their communities. Thank you.

**Cathy Spears (Board Chair) 10:04**  
Thank you. And in that same respect, when someone is in crisis, they sometimes are more adaptable to receiving the help versus someone who's just going and seeing them not in crisis. So, I think this is just again showing your leadership, Mayor Woodford, to allow the silos to come down and partnerships to happen between the county and the city and inter departmental to do the best things we can for our citizens. So, thank you. Alderperson Wolff.

**Alderperson Nate Wolff (District 12) 10:40**  
Thank you, Chair. Yeah, on this specifically, I've heard about heard some really good stories of how well it's been working, and I hope that we can expand this as well. I think that it's worked so well that it's worth expanding it. So, I hope that we can do that in the future as well. I just wanted to put that out there. And thank you for your leadership on this.

**Cathy Spears (Board Chair) 11:02**

Anybody else before we move on? Okay? Thank you.

**Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 11:07**

Thank you. And we did add another position this year, not in the annual report, of course, for 2023 but we do continue to expand.

**Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 11:18**

Page 35 just wanted to mention, if you look at licensed establishments inspections by our environmental health team, you can see the increase from the preceding three years. In 2023 there are 501 retail food establishments that were inspected up from 190 the year before. So, we did add a new environmentalist position in 2023 and we met our routine inspection numbers for the first time in eight years. So, we are very happy about that.

**Mayor Jake Woodford 11:51**

Chair, if I may?

**Cathy Spears (Board Chair) 11:52**

Sure. Mayor Woodford.

**Mayor Jake Woodford 11:54**

Sorry, Sonja, don't mean to jump in, but—

**Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 11:57**

That's good.

**Mayor Jake Woodford 11:57**

Just, I think it's worth underscoring here that with new leadership in our health department been some new perspectives brought to the table. And one of the things that I had early discussions with Health Officer Sepers about was our inspection performance and how we can better meet the expectations that we have for ourselves and also give a better service to the community. And thanks to the support of the Common Council, we were able to increase staffing in this area and commit more resource.

**Mayor Jake Woodford 12:35**

What's interesting about this is that we're delivering a better service by increasing staffing. We're delivering a better service, but we're also capturing more of the cost of delivering these services. So, the net impact to the city budget with respect to taxpayer subsidy for these kinds of activities has been dramatically reduced, if not already eliminated. And I just think this is something that we need to keep in mind when we talk about how we deliver services for the community, because these are services that that are really consumer protection services. They protect people in the community. And by focusing on delivering quality service and coming up with ways of supporting that activity, getting out of a mindset of scarcity that we can't we can't afford to do this. We actually we can, and we must, and we've had, we've had great reception overall from the community as a result. And this data just bears that out that we're better equipped to get to these inspections and provide that critical service to the community. So again, just thanks to Health Officer Sepers, Deputy Director Jensen, for the great work on helping get us on the right track on this front.

**Cathy Spears (Board Chair) 13:57**

Excellent. Any other questions before we move on? I just have one. I noticed that we're—we have lodging facilities up to 81. Is—are we inspecting Airbnbs now? Is that why we got the extra—the bump up from 11 to 81?

**Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 14:17**

Yes, that was something that we did before, and of course, through this time too. This is all like people self-reporting that they need to get a license, and then they do go out and do the pre inspection, and then an annual inspection every year of any tourist rooming house.

**Cathy Spears (Board Chair) 14:32**

Excellent, and that's so important, because when people come into our community as guests, we want to make sure that we are maintaining the same requirements as we do of our hotels. So, this is excellent news. Thank you.

**Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 14:49**

Related to that, on page 36 we can also see with the reinspections that number has increased dramatically for the same reasons that we talked about, up to 90 in 2023.

**Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 15:03**

We also wanted to mention—not sure this was captured in the annual report, but in 2023 we worked closely with the Appleton Police Department to streamline the bite reporting for rabies prevention. It was another QI project between environmental health division and the police department, so we have an assigned environmentalist now, and we have a smooth, streamlined approach to that for follow up and rabies prevention after bites.

**Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 15:37**

On Page 41 under the access and linkage to care, we did want to mention a little bit—and this is another mention of our community partner, the Building for Kids Children's Museum—that in addition to our vaccines for children program and vaccines for adults for immunization, we partnered with the Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin, the Building for Kids Children's Museum—we also had Mosaic Family Health Center to provide sensory friendly vaccination clinics in March, May, October, and November of 2023. This was very well received, and we are offering those again this year and into 2025 after receiving a grant. So, this has been something that we are working with the city partners to provide the service to the community. Great environment for the kids; it really decreases any kind of fear that they have.

**Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 16:31**

Also to mention on the same page that we remain an active member of the Appleton Refugee Resettlement Team which is now led by World Relief Fox Valley, and that we assist refugee families in connecting with healthcare resources essential for their successful transition into our community.

**Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 16:52**

Moving on to consumer protection on page 42. A couple things to mention here. In 2023 we did successfully expand by adding the Village of Greenville to our consortium, and we did set the stage for a budget neutral 2025 for our Weights and Measures Program. Also in 2023 Todd Schmidt, one of our weights and measures staff members, was the president of the Wisconsin Weights and Measures Association.

**Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 17:29**

And just a couple things if we look in the appendix B on page 51 this kind of just a few things in trends for total deaths, all causes. The intentional self-harm or suicide, we did see an increase in this in 2023 from the prior year. It's up from 12 to 10. There are coalitions in the community that we are working with and the county is to work on this to help prevent suicide. Also on a more positive note, covid 19, it was the 12th leading cause of death. That is down from four in 2022, so moving in the right direction there.

**Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 18:15**

And just the last thing to mention here, if you look at page 52 where it talks about some of our budget in 2022 compared to 2023 one thing to notice down on the bottom the total levy impact. So, talking about trying to be more budget neutral, and this also includes some of the grants that we have, there's a difference in total levy impact, a reduction of over \$390,000 from 2022 to 2023 despite increasing services.

**Cathy Spears (Board Chair) 18:50**

That's always welcome news.

**Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 18:52**

That's what we thought. That's what we're aiming for. So, yeah, a lot of other good information in here about what our health department team did in 2023, and if anybody has any questions now or later, please let me know.

**Cathy Spears (Board Chair) 19:05**

Okay. Alderperson Wolff.

**Alderperson Nate Wolff (District 12) 19:07**

Thank you, Chair. As I was looking through this later this week, I noticed in the birth rates that there was an unknown in there for a couple sections, and I'm just curious as to how that happens. I don't—like so I was looking at it, and I was like, why? Why does it say unknown? Like, why is there one unknown?

**Mayor Jake Woodford 19:32**

Do you have a page reference?

**Alderperson Nate Wolff (District 12) 19:34**

Let me find the page.

**Cathy Spears (Board Chair) 19:36**

Page 45? I think it's marital status of the mother. Is that what you're talking about?

**Alderperson Nate Wolff (District 12) 19:49**

Or, like, you know, prematurity, birth count, unknown, one. What is that, like, what does that mean?

**Cathy Spears (Board Chair) 19:56**

What page?

**Alderperson Nate Wolff (District 12) 19:58**

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**Cathy Spears (Board Chair) 19:59**  
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**Alderson Nate Wolff (District 12) 20:00**

49. But it's a couple different pages, right? So, like, infant, transferred, and ICU. On page 49 it says, "No, 1000," "Yes, 60" and then "Unknown, 1". I'm just curious as to like—

**Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 20:15**  
Oh, sure

**Alderson Nate Wolff (District 12) 20:16**  
—why? That, you know, it's a weird question.

**Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department) 20:20**

No, no, that's a very good question for that. So, these are all based on what people are filling out for birth data. So, it can just mean that on a form somebody forgot to check something, forgot to enter it. It's more just a data entry.

**Alderson Nate Wolff (District 12) 20:37**  
Okay, all right. Thank you.

**Cathy Spears (Board Chair) 20:40**

Okay, any other questions? Great job, fantastic leadership throughout the whole city. So, thank you, Mayor Woodford, for allowing people to excel.

**Mayor Jake Woodford 20:57**

They do it. We have a great department, and very proud of the work that they do every day, and I especially appreciate that this is a department and a group of people who are deeply passionate about the work that they do, and they're not standing still. And I think that this annual report clearly illustrates that. Just incredible movement on so many fronts at a time that's very challenging in public health. There has been—there was an influx of resources to address issues related to the pandemic. Those resources are drying up and going away, and there are many communities and many health departments that are really struggling right now to figure out, what are we going to do? How are we going to keep going? And I would say the Appleton Health Department is not one of those departments. The Appleton Health Department is saying, "All right, we've got all this great programming that's been built on a strong foundation. How are we going to grow? How are we going to continue to meet needs of the community."

**Mayor Jake Woodford 22:01**

And on top of that, this is a department that continues to reduce its impact on the levy and yet continue to deliver good service and improve service, meaning that there's less taxpayer subsidy for specific, especially consumer protection related, activity, and that means we have additional resources across the city government to provide services to people in the community. So, there's just a lot to be proud of, and I'm very grateful for the leadership of our health officer and also the deputy director of the department. Just great work. And look forward to seeing what comes in '24 and beyond. So, thank you.

**Cathy Spears (Board Chair) 22:44**

And I'd also like to recognize Megan, who I assume did all the graphics and laid everything out. So, thank you, Megan, for being totally—making this very easy to read and very easy to flow through. So good job again.

**Mayor Jake Woodford** 22:59

Thank you.

**Deputy Director Sonja Jensen (Health Department)** 23:00

Couldn't do it without Megan.

**Cathy Spears (Board Chair)** 23:03

She is the right hand.

**Cathy Spears (Board Chair)** 23:07

Okay, let's move on to 24—unless anyone else has any other comments? I don't want to leave anybody out.