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Coordinator/HR Office**

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CARLTON COUNTY MINNESOTA

County-wide newsletter brought to you by the County Coordinator's Office

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Employee Service Awards

Jon Laney - Sheriff's Office
10 Years

Joanne Erspamer - PHHS
20 Years

LeeAnn Purcell - Zoning
20 Years

Mandy Dols - PHHS
20 Years

Dave Hufford - Transportation
30 Years

Michelle Foster - Sheriff's Office
30 Years

Lynette Lehman - PHHS
40 Years

USDA Recognizes Carlton County WIC for Excellence in Breastfeeding Support

The United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (USDA-FNS) is awarding Carlton County WIC Program the PREMIERE level Breastfeeding Award of Excellence.

The Minnesota Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) prioritizes breastfeeding support for families, and Carlton County WIC is earning a top spot among clinics in Minnesota, and the nation, for its commitment to breastfeeding.

Carlton County WIC is one of three WIC agencies in the state of MN to receive this high-level award recognition from the USDA-FNS. It is through the dedication to the families we serve and the backing of national, state and local leadership that Carlton County WIC can provide excellence in breastfeeding support to our WIC families.

The Breastfeeding Award of Excellence recognizes local WIC agencies that support WIC moms' breastfeeding goals through exemplary breastfeeding promotion and support activities and serve as models for other local agencies to strengthen breastfeeding among WIC participants.

Breastfeeding is a priority in the WIC program. WIC helps participants breastfeed successfully by:

- Offering food benefits for breastfeeding participants to meet their unique nutrition needs.
- Providing nutrition education, breastfeeding counseling and breast pumps and other supplies.
- Providing peer breastfeeding support.
 - The Minnesota WIC Breastfeeding Peer Support Program features moms with personal experience breastfeeding their own children, who are recruited from the communities they serve, and trained to help WIC participants with common breastfeeding issues. WIC participants with a MN WIC peer counselor have significantly higher breastfeeding initiation and duration rates.

August was [National Breastfeeding Month](#) and MN WIC and local agencies take the time to promote the importance of breastfeeding and share the vital support WIC provides to families. USDA-FNS celebrates those who breastfeed, along with their partners, family members and friends who support them on their journey.

Learn more about the MN WIC program on the [Carlton County WIC](#) website.

Additional statistics

- The national breastfeeding initiation rate for WIC participants was 71.6% in 2020.
 - The [USDA WIC Data Tables](#) webpage has additional participant data.
- In 2023, 92.1% of Women participating in Carlton County WIC initiated breastfeeding their infant(s) at birth. The Carlton County WIC Peer Breastfeeding Support Program connects with WIC Participants during pregnancy to help them feel more prepared and empowered to breastfeed right from the start.
- The Minnesota breastfeeding initiation rate for WIC participants was 83.1% in 2023.
 - The [WIC Reports and Data](#) webpage provides interactive breastfeeding data and trends.
- Additional information and data: [Minnesota WIC Facts 2024 PDF](#).



2024 Carlton County Board of Commissioners



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*Board meetings are held at the Transportation Building on the 2nd Tuesday of every month at 8:30 a.m. and the 4th Monday of every month at 4:00 p.m.

Veteran's Corner - Did You Know

VA Makes Tele-emergency Care Available Nationwide, Offering Veterans More Virtual Care Options

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced that tele-emergency care (tele-EC) is now available nationwide, a step that increases timely access to virtual emergency care options for Veterans enrolled in VA health care. This expansion of care — piloted in recent months — has already shown promise for Veterans, helping more than 61,182 callers with a 59.4% case resolution rate (meaning Veterans' needs were resolved without having to travel from their homes to urgent care or an emergency department).

Tele-emergency care is a part of [VA Health Connect](#), a phone service that Veterans can call nationwide. Veterans who contact VA Health Connect will speak to a clinical triage nurse, who will connect them to tele-emergency care when clinically appropriate. Tele-EC providers will then evaluate the Veteran over the phone or on video and recommend treatment or follow-up, including if in-person care is needed. In life-threatening emergencies, the clinical triage nurse will call 911 and stay on the line until help arrives. It is important to note Veterans experiencing a life-threatening emergency should immediately contact 911, versus seeking support via tele-EC.

This expansion is a part of VA and the Biden-Harris Administration's efforts to expand access to timely, world-class care for Veterans. Veterans enrolled in VA health care can now access tele-EC nationwide by calling [VA Health Connect](#), and through the [VA Health Chat](#) app. Veterans can find their local VA Health Connect number by [searching for their facility](#).

"Veterans can now be evaluated for possible emergencies from the comfort of their home," said VA Under Secretary for Health Shereef Elnahal, M.D. "Sometimes, you're not sure whether what you're experiencing is a minor emergency or not — and tele-emergency care can help you resolve those questions. Veterans can get immediate, virtual triage with a VA medical provider who has direct access to their medical records. This avoids having to potentially drive to the nearest emergency department and wait to be evaluated, if appropriate."

Through VA's tele-emergency care, Veterans now have increased and quicker access to timely emergency care from VA clinicians, helping them get the right care, at the right time, from the right place. While tele-EC does not replace the need for in-person emergency evaluation, for Veterans in rural areas or those with mobility and transportation challenges, in-person immediate care can be difficult to access. VA's tele-EC helps bridge this gap through quick, virtual triage assessments.

VA continues to increase Veterans' access to VA health care through initiatives like tele-EC, [access sprints](#), and by designing and implementing [more virtual care options](#). Since President Biden signed the PACT Act into law, VA is delivering more care to more Veterans than ever before. Nearly [740,000 Veterans have enrolled in VA health care](#) in the past two years.

Veterans' trust in VA is at an all-time high, with outpatient health care trust scores reaching 91.8% in the latest [VA Trust Report](#). For the second consecutive year, [VA outperformed non-VA hospitals](#) in a major independent, nationwide review of care quality, with the majority of VA facilities receiving 4- and 5-star ratings. At the same time, 79% of VA facilities received 4- or 5-star ratings for patient satisfaction — the ninth consecutive quarter in which VA facilities have outperformed non-VA counterparts in this independent review.

For more information about VA care, visit [VA's health care website](#). For more information about Veteran trust in VA, visit the [VA trust website](#). To enroll in VA care, visit <https://www.va.gov/health-care/how-to-apply/>.

*Article credit: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Public Health In Action

Using Data and Community Input to Address Priority Health Areas

By Emily Morrison, Public Health Educator,
Carlton County Public Health

Carlton County Public Health and Human Services conducts a Community Health Assessment (CHA) every five years to prioritize health topics within the county. The most recent assessment took place in 2023. After pulling together quantitative data and gathering input from community partners, we identified three health priorities for our county.

Public health priority areas:

- Mental Health & Wellbeing Promotion
- Substance Misuse Prevention
- Obesity Prevention

The data we collect in the CHA helps create a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) that outlines strategies to address each priority. Each priority has different activities to help Carlton County Public Health and partners achieve the goals of improving health in these areas.

Our work on the CHIP is already underway. We're reaching out to partners and community members to help shape activities for obesity prevention.

Obesity Prevention includes two separate strategies:

1. Create a culture of healthy behaviors.

We're hosting two Community Listening Sessions for Obesity Prevention to help us understand steps we can take to create a culture of healthy behaviors. The first will gather feedback from healthcare providers and the second will gather



Listening sessions give partners and community members the opportunity to help shape strategies for obesity prevention. (Canva stock photo)



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feedback from community members. The goal is to understand potential root causes of obesity within our community. We're also looking at strengths by asking what local communities are already doing well to support health in this area.

2. Support active transportation initiatives.

We'll be working to address how and why people use active transportation and identify ideas for improvement within the community.



Active transportation refers to human-powered travel, such as walking, biking, or using a wheelchair. (Canva stock photo)

These strategies will help guide specific activities that we can partner on with the community, to make health more accessible for everyone.

Other activities are already being led by Carlton County Public Health Staff, including the "Motherhood Walk & Talk." This weekly, one-hour event began in Spring 2023 to promote mental health and prevent obesity among parents with young children. Led by a Public Health Nurse, it's a time for parents to connect on common parenting joys and struggles while being active. In warmer months, it's held outdoors on the Munger Trail in Carlton; in colder months, it moves indoors to Northwoods Arena. Starting this fall, the first walk of the month will include extra time for socializing and a chance to get your parenting questions answered by a nurse. For more info, join the [Carlton County Family Home Visiting Events Facebook Group](#) or call Michelle at 218-391-0663.

Carlton County Public Health will continue to share ongoing CHIP-related work, and opportunities for community involvement. Stay tuned to learn more about strategies for addressing Mental Health & Wellbeing Promotion, and Substance Misuse Prevention. For more information, reach out to Joanne.Ersoamer@carltoncountymn.gov.

New Beacon Web Portal Allows the Public to Access Property Tax and Assessment Information

Carlton County's new Beacon web portal allows the public to access property tax and assessment information, interactive maps and other records. Residents can access copies of their property tax statements and look for other additional information about their property as well as retrieve limited property information, copies of tax statements and valuation notices on demand online from anywhere with an internet connected device. Finding and paying for property taxes online is expected to be more streamlined, especially for those with multiple parcels.

Beacon also offers a subscription-based service for real estate professionals allowing for convenient access to information such as: property record cards, sales information, lot sizes, and year built.

To access the Beacon portal, go to beacon.schneidercorp.com. From the drop-down menu, select "Minnesota," then "Carlton County, MN" or simply go to the Carlton County website and select the Pay Taxes-Parcel info link in the middle of the page.

Beacon will help with the ability to file for the Minnesota Property Tax refund (PTR). A Tax Refund link is provided on the Beacon site. All of the required information is accessible to file, except for an individual's personal income tax. With the individual's personal income tax information, the whole process to file should take less than 5 minutes to complete.

Climate Adaptation Strategies That You Can Use to Improve the Health and Resilience of Your Woodland

Several climate adaptation strategies can improve the health and resilience of your woodland, whether you care for 1 acre or 200 acres. The Extension Forestry program Climate-Ready Woodlands includes a robust toolbox of regionally-specific lists of native trees and plants that are predicted to be climate-resilient and provide benefits to small critters (pollinators, birds, small mammals, and other insects).

By providing diverse climate adaptation options, Extension Forestry hopes that Minnesota's woodland stewards will feel empowered to adapt their woods to a changing climate in a way that fits their goals and values.

Regional UMN Extension Educator Anna Stockstad gave a presentation in Lake County on climate ready woodlands. Click the link to view the presentation. [Climate-ready woodlands: Promoting the resilience of your backyard woods](#)



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Employee Assistance Program

No-Cost Access to Qualified Counselors

The MCIT Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a risk management tool designed to help employees and officials of MCIT members identify and resolve challenges that may affect their personal life or performance at work. It is a voluntary program that can assist employees, their spouse and dependents with difficult personal concerns through no-cost access to qualified counselors.

This voluntary program provides short-term, no-cost counseling services for: relationships, work-related concerns, family issues, stress, depression, anxiety, financial concerns, loss and grief, substance use, career concerns and other personal concerns.

Call 1.800.550.6248 to connect with an Employee Assistance Program counselor.

Carlton County Committee's

Building Committee -
2nd Wednesday of the month at 1:00 p.m.
(Government Services Building -GSB)

Committee of the Whole -
1st Tuesday of the month at 4:00 p.m.
(TB)

Diversity Committee -
4th Tuesday of the month at 9:00 a.m.
(PH&HS)

Finance Committee -
1st Tuesday of the month at 2:30 p.m.
(TB)

Policy Committee -
3rd Monday of the month at 2:00 p.m.
(Law Enforcement Center - LEC)

Management Team -
1st Tuesday of the month at 8:30 a.m.
(GSB)

Wellness Committee -
2nd Wednesday of the month at 8:30 a.m. (Varies)

Let's Get Acquainted With the Carlton County Economic Development Director



Hi Everyone! My name is Ryan Pervenanze and I am the new Economic Development Director for Carlton County. First, I just want to thank everyone for the warm welcome I have received since beginning my position at the end August. Prior to beginning my role with the County, spent time working for the City of Duluth and also the City of Buhl.

Those roles which included work that ranged from major housing developments to city infrastructure projects have provided me with a unique perspective when it comes to economic development. The obvious areas of focus will include housing, childcare, and business development. In addition to those it is also important to

recognize the importance of supporting our small business, and finding ways for our cities and townships to address their basic needs. I feel it is very important to recognize that if our cities and townships can get to a point where they solve their basic needs, then more time and resources can be put towards growth and development in a way that makes sense for them.

Outside of work, my wife (Amelia) and I have been foster parents for the past 3 years and have enjoyed the challenges and rewards from that experience. We live up in Buhl with our Golden Retriever (Mika) and rescue cat (Niko). We enjoy spending time up at the lake in the summer, traveling, and anything that will get us outside. I hope everyone has a great holiday season!

Minimize Holiday Family Stress

Holiday celebrations often evoke childhood memories of family gatherings, eating special foods and receiving gifts. But for adults and parents with financial worries and difficult family relationships, holidays often cause extra stress.

Intentions to honor a holiday with solemn ceremonies or by refraining from ordinary business can be lost in the commercial expectations to indulge in pricey celebrations. Here are some tips for reducing the commercial pressures associated with holidays.

- Volunteer as a family at a food shelf, food bank or another community organization. Read Volunteering: A learning opportunity for ideas (also in Spanish).
- If you are planning a get-together, consider making time to share family memories, play games together or read stories aloud.
- If gifts are part of the holiday celebration, don't let the pressure to give gifts exceed your ability to pay for them! Consider exchanging hand-made gifts like breads, jams, children's hand-drawn pictures or family photographs. See Holiday spending for tips on keeping your spending in check.
- If a loved one has passed away, create a ritual to honor that person's memory and place in the family. Or talk with a trusted friend or counselor and plan for an alternative way to celebrate the holiday.
- If your family has experienced a recent divorce, separation or custody change, give yourself the freedom and patience to explore new traditions with your new family structure. If you are in a new relationship or newly married, see New families and traditions for ideas on merging and developing new traditions.
- If a holiday tradition causes you a lot of stress every year, consider dropping it! Some long-held traditions might cause more stress than they are worth. Other traditions might be appreciated more if they occur every other year.

Remember, there are ways to honor special holidays that cut stress and need little or no spending. Discuss upcoming holidays with your loved ones. Make needed changes to help reduce stress and truly celebrate the occasions with your loved ones.

This article is brought to you from the University of Minnesota Extension. To view more University of Minnesota Extension articles, [sign up](#) to receive their newsletter.

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Are you interested in submitting an article in the next Carlton County Newsletter? Email or mail your articles and pictures by the March 21, 2025 deadline to:

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*Please note that all submissions are subject to editing, as needed.

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