

# 2023

# Impact Report

## LA CROSSE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT



**Audra Martine, Health Officer**



LA CROSSE COUNTY

# An Equitable Approach

## MESSAGE FROM THE HEALTH OFFICER



The La Crosse County Board in 2023 emphasized the need to consider how county services are equitably provided to the residents in our county. During the year, there have been surveys and opportunities in the community to discuss how that feels from a receiver perspective as well as many discussions among staff about where we do well or could improve. We've learned a lot and continue to strive to use that knowledge to bring ourselves to community members in ways that are authentic and open to conversation. At the same time, we focus on being a trusted source of valid information on a variety of topics that affect the health of the community. It is an honor to have this responsibility and our department takes very seriously the impact of our work on the daily lives of individuals, businesses, and the community as a whole. Individuals come into contact with Health Department staff for a variety of reasons – here are just a few:

- A new landowner may call to get a permit for drilling a well
- A community member calls to report being bitten by an animal to investigate rabies
- A business has questions about the difference in state and federal law regarding sale of tobacco products
- A new mother seeking affordable options for infant formula
- A child learning about safe ways to walk/bike to school
- A visitor calls to report illnesses by a number of people following a group meal
- A child receiving dental service while at school (Seal A Smile)
- Someone planning to travel abroad may call to get advice about vaccination
- A neighbor calls to report concern for human health hazards at a nearby home
- A community member may receive a call from us following a positive result from a sexually transmitted infection test
- A child may visit us with their parent to receive a blood lead test
- A home business or food truck service selling cooked food has questions about how to become licensed in our county
- A community event/festival is being planned that will include food services

In these examples, you can see a variety of ways the community trusts and expects our department to provide knowledgeable and needed service that will greatly impact their lives. Each opportunity is a chance for us to make a connection, understand the concerns and needs of an individual and help with an outcome that will bring improved safety and/or health. We look forward to continuing along the journey of improving how we provide these services for each person in ways that best fit their needs. Using the equity analysis has been both humbling and engaging – and a very good process for us to use in moving our work forward.

With appreciation,

Audra Martine, Health Officer,  
[amartine@lacrossecounty.org](mailto:amartine@lacrossecounty.org)

## DEPARTMENT MISSION AND VISION

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

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

**Values:** Advocacy, Collaboration, Equity.

# Inside the Health Department

## PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

- The **La Crosse Smiles** initiative is a new collaboration between the School District of La Crosse, the Health Department's Seal-A-Smile Program, and La Crosse area dentists. The goal of La Crosse Smiles is to assure that students with decay or other dental care needs are identified, and those problems are fixed before they become emergencies. Children are able to receive x-rays while onsite at school to develop treatment plans; a community dentist then follows up with care that has been pre-identified.
- Community outreach occurred through the year regarding the importance of **radon testing**. During the month of November, in recognition of Lung Cancer Awareness Month, the Health Department provided 263 short-term radon test kits to community members.



**Dr. Gundersen and crew were at Hamilton & SOTA | the last week of November creating healthier smiles for 40 students.**

### **Npaj Pub Niam Mis Rau Me Nyuam** (Getting Ready to Breastfeed)

**Maomoua Vue**  
Registered Dietitian/Nutritionist  
Certified Lactation Consultant/Designated Breastfeeding Expert  
La Crosse County Health Department



**GUNDERSEN**  
HEALTH SYSTEM.



- In 2023, a three-part **breastfeeding educational video** was created. This was led by Maomoua Vue, Dietitian and Breastfeeding Counselor with the Health Department in partnership with Gundersen Media Production and the State WIC program. The video training was presented in the Hmong language with English subtitles. It also has background music and images that highlight Hmong families and Hmong culture. The extra effort to create personalized videos

in the Hmong language will be a tool that can be easily shared in the future to provide education in a culturally welcoming way ([view the videos here](#)).

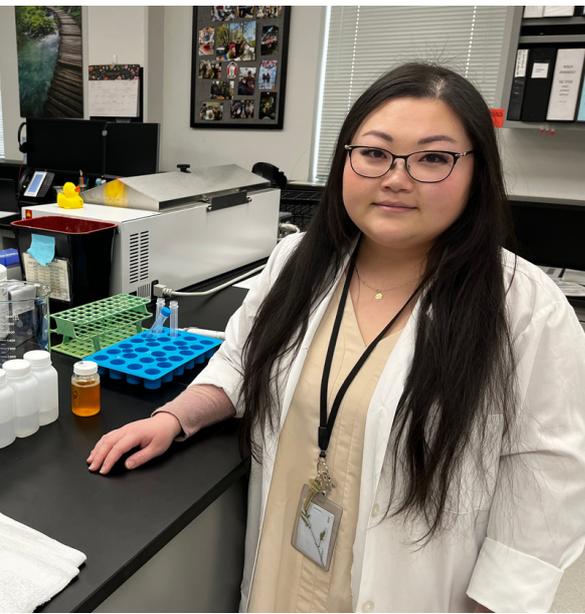
- Outreach was done to a variety of businesses to educate them on the difference between federal and state law in Wisconsin regarding the legal age for purchase of **tobacco products**. Wisconsin has seen a 140% increase in underage purchases since 2019, making up 13.6% of nicotine sales in the state. The department also advocates for clarity/consistency in laws to support compliance. One of the news pieces regarding this can be found [at this link](#).
- A great amount of collaboration occurred this year to realign the **Alliance to Heal** (Halting Effects of Addiction Locally) collaborative to improve focus on the challenges currently facing our community related to substance use. Teams made up of a variety of community partners work now in three broad focus areas: Prevention/Education, Harm Reduction and Treatment/Recovery.
- In 2023, 45 community partners and volunteers came together to practice running a **Volunteer Reception Center**; this practice allows us to prepare for activating volunteers in the event of a significant emergency/disaster event.

# 2023 Highlights

1. In spring of 2023, our **laboratory space** was renovated; in fall of 2023, we updated some of our clinical equipment.
2. Our Health Department was **one of five** in the state chosen to have a staff trained in Healthcare-Associated Infections Prevention.
3. A significant **technology update** occurred that will assist staff and the public in managing wells and septic service.
4. A new **newsletter** was created named RISE (Resources, Information, Services, and Education); it focuses on school age health education.
5. The department submitted evidence of work and is currently being reviewed for national reaccreditation through the **Public Health Accreditation Board**.

## Looking Ahead

- There are many things the Health Department will be working on in the upcoming year. One of those is to continue our collaboration with the State and other counties to find a sustainable and focused future for the work of public health in Wisconsin. Challenges that will face the department in the upcoming year will be the continued work being done within the State of Wisconsin to clarify the system of local public health departments. Recent federal funds received by the state have allowed for study of the system as well as proposed models and capacities to be reviewed. We continue to participate in this important work that could create an updated and improved system of public health within the state.
- A significant goal of the department is to use data to guide our advocacy in keeping the community aware of and able to plan for issues that arise that affect health outcomes. One example would be the ability of our community to adapt to the changing needs of an aging population as baby boomers are retiring and using community services in different ways. Others might be to better understand what factors lead to substance use by local youth or to determine what support helps a family increase stability in housing.
- Locally, we will begin a new community health assessment in 2024 that will help us realign toward what services we can provide to best assist our community. There will be new technology in place that will help the public interact with the department coming in the year. More work will be done to clarify our ordinances related to animal welfare and rabies protection. Also, continued work will occur to protect the safety of the Mount Simon Aquifer, thus enabling access to safe drinking water.

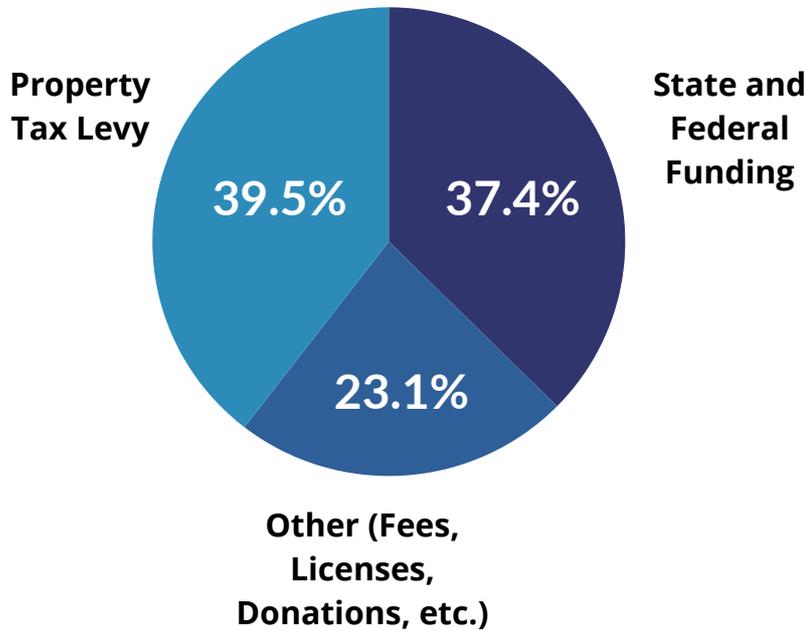


### PROFILE: PA XIONG

Pa Xiong has worked as a Laboratory Technician at the Health Department for a little over a year. "We do a lot of water testing, especially during the summer season, when people are utilizing the beaches and streams," she said. "We also test the public pools at the hotels, we work with Justice Support Services to do drug testing and we do a lot of private testing for bacteria, arsenic, lead, and nitrates." Many people may not be aware the Health Department's lab is open to the public. "We recommend people with private wells test annually," Pa noted. She enjoys the variety in her job at the lab. "The county is a great place to work," Pa said. "I feel very supported by my peers and management."

# 2024 Budget

## REVENUE & EXPENSES

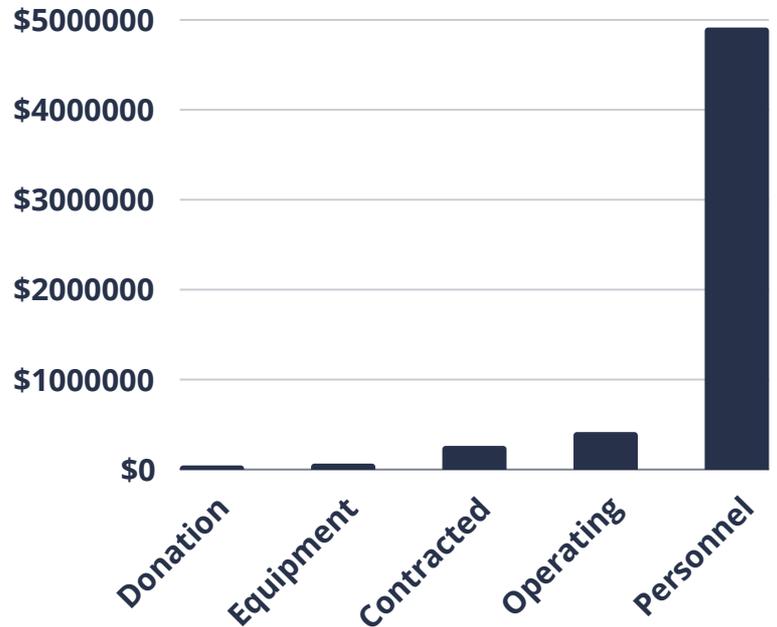


### REVENUE

- Donation: \$45,250
- Grants: \$112,331
- Fund Balance: \$145,346
- Sales, Screenings, Other: \$248,793
- Licenses: \$768,548
- State & Federal Funding: \$2,141,114
- Property Taxes: \$2,263,906
- **Total: \$5,725,288**

### EXPENSES

- Donation Expense: \$45,250
- Equipment: \$65,711
- Contracted Funded: \$262,589
- Operating: \$416,448
- Personnel: \$4,935,290
- **Total: \$5,725,288**



# 2153

2153 pounds of sharps were collected from the community sharps boxes.

# 1666

WIC has grown in the past year from 1472 participants to 1666.

# 640

640 walks to school occurred in our county using the Walking School Bus model in 2023.



# LA CROSSE COUNTY

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