

Update on Personal and Community Health

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step - Lao Tzu

Personal and Community Health was one of five priority areas identified for action in the 2012 Brown County 20/20 Visioning Conference. It's a complex subject that ranges from personal habits and behaviors to collective impacts in our community and around the globe. While much national attention has been paid to accessing health care and who pays the bill, there's been a growing awareness of the importance of a broader understanding of what truly influences health and well-being.

A hundred years ago, the main threats to our health came from diseases and a limited ability to deal with them. Since then, conditions like tuberculosis, polio, small pox, measles, whooping cough, tetanus, and diphtheria have largely been eliminated due to public health efforts. By most measures, including life expectancy and infant mortality, we are enjoying healthier lives today than ever before. On the other hand, we've seen the emergence of chronic disease as a leading cause of death and disability in the United States. Type II diabetes, historically a condition found in aging populations, is now being diagnosed in teenagers. Heart disease, stroke, respiratory ailments, obesity, and cancer also contribute to chronic poor health, threatening our quality of life and collective life expectancy.

Over 60% of medical costs are related to conditions that are impacted by personal behavior. Exercise, diet, sleep, stress, driving habits, tobacco use and alcohol consumption are all factors that directly lead to positive or negative outcomes. The challenge to everyone is to "live long and die fast." We're all going to die, but we can do a lot to take care of ourselves so we don't end with years of chronic ill health caused by our behavior.

The rest of this update highlights some steps that are being taken in the Greater Green Bay area to improve our health, as individuals and as a community, as well as some things you can do personally to create better outcomes. Thank you for taking this information to heart. May yours beat strong and long as you live a healthy life.

Overview of Brown County 20/20 Summit Goals in Personal and Community Health

The BACC Personal and Community Health issue group was convened in 2013 to monitor the progress of the *Brown County 20/20 Summit* goals. Our 2020 goal is to have a culture of health and wellness - in mind, body, and spirit - that minimizes reliance on the medical system and exceeds the experience of any comparable community in the Great Lakes region. Ten priority areas were identified to achieve this goal: families, schools, workplaces, community, physical activity, nutrition, alcohol abuse, mental health, shared measurement, and environmental health. Through this update, we will dive deeper on a handful of these priority areas.

Physical Activity and Community

Physical activity is increasingly engineered out of our daily lives. Children play outside less, families rely almost solely on cars for transportation, and communities are designed in ways that make it difficult to walk, bike or roll safely or connect with our neighbors. The City of Green Bay has a walk score of 40/100, indicating "car dependence" with most errands requiring a car, a transit score of 28/100, indicating the

city has only “a few” public transit options, and a bike score of 46/100, indicating bikers have access to “minimal bike infrastructure.”

In response, Live54218 convened the cross-sector Green Bay Active Communities Alliance in 2012 to make our community more active and connected, with a focus on walkability and bikeability. Support was secured from municipal governments for winter maintenance and year-round access to the Fox River Trail. Green Bay municipal code was revised to include all users of the road, the Traffic Commission was renamed the Traffic, Bicycle and Pedestrian Commission, and bicycle lanes have been included in reconstruction of significant arterial roads. Through representation from municipal leaders, Brown County, and interested advocates and groups, the geographic focus has broadened from the City of Green Bay limits at its inception to the Greater Green Bay Active Communities Alliance in early 2017, which seeks an active and connected community for all Brown County residents. Our work to increase physical activity locally by improving walkability and bikeability very much follows the national evidence-base. Recent [research](#) has even indicated bike lanes are perhaps the most cost-effective way to improve public health.

Factors that influence our overall health go beyond physical health though. The [Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index](#) measures both individual and population well-being in five domains:

- Purpose** –Liking what you do each day and being motivated to achieve your goals;
- Social** – Having supportive relationships and love in your life;
- Financial** – Managing your economic life to reduce stress and increase security;
- Community** – Liking where you live, feeling safe and having pride in your community; and
- Physical** – Having good health and enough energy to get things done daily.

How has Wisconsin fared in the five domains of well-being? Below is the year-over-year composite rank for each well-being element and for the state overall compared to all 50 states. Ranks range from 1 - 50 with lower ranks indicating better performance in a given area.

Year-over-Year Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index Comparisons: Wisconsin

Well-Being Element	2014	2015	2016
Purpose Rank	26	31	39
Social Rank	34	31	39
Financial Rank	10	7	7
Community Rank	14	20	15
Physical Rank	30	19	31
Overall Rank of WI	18	13	28

Figure 1. Wisconsin’s composite rank (1-50) as measured by the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index between 2014 - 2016. The **lower** the score, the **better** a state is doing in regards to well-being.

Wisconsin has seen a decline in its overall well-being since 2014 from 18th to 28th out of 50 states. Purpose and social well-being continue to be areas of opportunity and financial well-being an area of strength.

The Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index also drills down to examine well-being at a community level through their community well-being rankings. Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) around the country are given a well-being index score out of a possible 100 points and a rank among all MSAs in each of the

well-being element categories. The Green Bay MSA well-being index score increased slightly from 63.0 out of 100 in 2015 to 63.2 out of 100 in 2016. However, larger increases in MSAs around the country caused Greater Green Bay to fall in overall rank from 28th out of 190 communities (top 15th percentile) in 2015 to 42nd out of 189 communities (top 25th percentile) in 2016. Below is a chart showing the Green Bay MSA overall and well-being element rankings for 2015 and 2016.

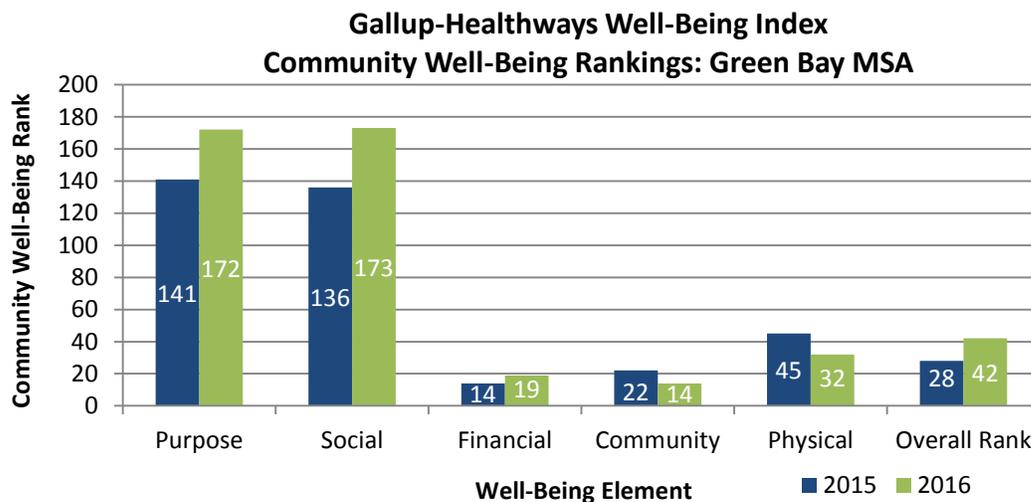


Figure 2. Green Bay MSA community well-being ranking as measured by Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index in 2015 and 2016. Note: In 2015, 190 communities were evaluated and in 2016, 189 communities were evaluated. The **lower** the score, the **better** a community is doing in regards to well-being.

The Green Bay MSA mirrors the state of Wisconsin overall with our greatest strengths in the areas of financial, community and physical well-being. Purpose and social well-being continue to be the greatest areas of opportunity for our community as we dropped from being in the lowest 25% in 2015 to being one of the bottom 10% of communities surveyed in 2016.

Reflecting on local findings from the 2016 Brown County LIFE study, as well as a drop in overall Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Rank in Wisconsin and the Green Bay MSA, there is a growing consensus that the time is now to invest in improving community-wide well-being. Local health systems have increasingly broadened their business models to incorporate a more comprehensive definition of health and well-being, and the development of Live54218 in recent years has created a collaborative space to advance our collective efforts to improve community well-being.

Nutrition

Healthy foods provide us with the essential nutrients to live, work, play, and grow. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey, in 2015 only 1 out of 6 Wisconsin adults met the recommended consumption of five or more fruits and vegetables per day. When we don't get the nutrients essential for good health, we increase our risk of chronic disease, being overweight or obese, and premature death.

In addition to eating the right foods to fuel our bodies, our community also needs a healthy food system that ensures we have enough healthy food to meet current and future food demands while minimizing negative environmental impacts. In Brown County, a rich tradition of agriculture contributes to our local economy and food system, providing a greater sense of connection from farm to fork. It is important to

continue encouraging local production and distribution to ensure that healthy, affordable food is available and accessible to everyone. Additionally, perhaps even most importantly, moving toward a culture where more meals are shared with loved ones will support student academic success, increase the mental well-being of our workforce, and help develop healthy, lifelong eating habits. Some of our community's efforts around nutrition are highlighted below.

Community partnerships have mobilized around low-income residents' access to local fruits and vegetables by providing the infrastructure necessary to accept FoodShare dollars at area Farmers' Markets. Four area markets now accept FoodShare dollars. Generous support from Hospital Sisters Health System (HSBS) allows individuals to "double their bucks" – up to \$10 – to purchase fruits and vegetables at four Greater Green Bay markets. This has resulted in over \$110,000 in FoodShare and Double Your Bucks dollars spent at markets in the past four years to stimulate the local farming economy and decrease food insecurity.

The majority of daily calories consumed by low-income children are provided through school district food services, making them a powerful force in shaping the nutritional habits of our community's next generation. Since 2013, Live54218 has partnered with eight Brown County school districts to implement Farm to School, reaching over 42,000 K-12 public school students in the Greater Green Bay Area. Nearly 13,000 local food samples were taste tested by students to increase their exposure to and knowledge of healthy, local foods. Over 200 students in ten classrooms participated in farm field trips providing an experiential learning opportunity to reinforce Farm to School concepts taught in the classroom. More than 4,100 Farm to School lessons were taught to more than 12,200 students in grades K-5 with over 5,000 students participating in monthly Farm to School lessons. In October 2016, food service employees from seven Brown County school districts joined forces for a day to bulk process locally grown produce. In total, 2,045 pounds of local orange carrots and 815 pounds of local onions were procured, cleaned, prepared, processed and stored for use in school lunch vegetable and chicken noodle soup recipes. This collaborative effort was recently highlighted by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in their monthly Farm to School [eNewsletter](#) garnering national attention to the Greater Green Bay area.

Mental Health

Research indicates 18% of the U.S. population experiences some type of mental illness during the course of their lifetimes. Mental health affects not only the individuals and their families, but also the community and workplace. Employers incur an estimated \$100 billion per year in indirect costs nationally due to reduced attendance, loss of productivity, turnover, and health insurance costs. Brown County area employers have long recognized the need to provide the necessary resources for their employees to cope with mental health issues. One of the leading strategies has been the use of an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) which provides a defined consulting benefit for employees and their immediate family members outside of traditional health insurance plans. EAPs are one way employers help employees integrate work/life balance practices and receive training on practices that support a positive workplace culture.

Work is also underway to launch community level change in the area of mental well-being. [Connections for Mental Wellness](#) was formed in 2016 to transform the mental health of our community through collaboration, education, and enhanced systems of care. The initiative currently consists of 14 local agencies including nonprofits, government, education, and health systems. Connections for Mental Wellness is built on a foundation of convening community stakeholders to build consensus, develop a

shared community vision and evidence-based outcomes, and facilitate community efforts around mental well-being. Current initiatives focus on school based mental health services, workplace mental wellness, roles and educational development of non-mental health professionals and overall mental health care capacity. The initiative will continue to pursue improved access and better mental healthcare services in the Greater Green Bay area in order to support and foster the improved mental health of individuals of all ages.

Environmental Health

Environmental health is an essential component of community and personal health and well-being. Two environmental factors emerged as focal points for our community: water quality and the effects of climate change.

Brown County is situated amongst vast fresh water networks. Clean water is an essential component of sustaining life and an asset to our community. Brown County has sought to maintain this essential resource by addressing our aging water infrastructure throughout the past several years. NEW Water, a branding initiative of the Green Bay Metropolitan Sewerage District, seeks to educate and engage the community around protecting our water resources. Its Resources Recovery and Electrical Energy (R2E2) project applies innovation and technology to the replacement of aging wastewater treatment infrastructure to convert waste products into a resource stream for energy production and increase capacity by reducing the volume of residual solids.

The Green Bay water utility has prioritized the removal of remaining public lead pipe water lines and was the first in Wisconsin to offer homeowners assistance to remove privately owned lead service lines under the new Wisconsin DNR Safe Drinking Water Loan Program.

[Clean Bay Backers](#), the Citizen Advisory Committee to the Wisconsin DNR for the Lower Green Bay and Fox River, is made up of a diverse group of public-private members dedicated to improve water quality and educate elected officials, community leaders, and the public on the progress of water clean-up and challenges that remain. In the fall of 2017 two Brown County farms will be visited to learn more about how farming conservation practices can significantly reduce phosphorous levels and agricultural runoff into the river and bay.

Climate change and its effects continue to be topics of discussion due to their impact on health and our economy. Locally, toxic algae blooms affect Brown County's recreation industries when anglers are unable to fish in their favorite streams or boaters and swimmers are unable to enjoy the waters because of potentially harmful contaminants. Here in Brown County, we have witnessed the effects of flooding, soil erosion and threats of Lyme disease and West Nile virus as ticks and mosquitoes spread north.

What Can We Do?

Improving health and well-being for ourselves and our community requires the concerted effort of many. Individually, we can adopt small changes in how we eat, move, connect with one another, and interact with our environment. This can include taking care of our physical health by finding an enjoyable activity to stay active, utilizing our community's many amenities including the Fox River Trail and parks system, finding new recipes to incorporate nutritious foods into our diets, eating on smaller dinner plates, shopping at farmers' markets to stock-up on local, nutritious foods, finding healthy ways to handle stress, engaging in our favorite hobbies, visiting with friends, walking, and practicing

meditation or yoga to support our mental well-being. Forming quality, supportive relationships and getting involved in our community can help increase self-confidence and overall happiness, while reducing the risk of developing addictive behaviors.

To achieve better health and well-being, we can also engage in opportunities to create improvements in our daily environments – at work, school, or in our neighborhoods – that make healthy choices easier. This includes designing our community in ways that make it easy for people to be active, implementing workplace policies that encourage employees to engage in healthy behaviors, providing all individuals in our community with access to healthy, nutritious food, and remaining conscious of how our policies at a local, state, and national level impact our health. Together, we can all have a hand in creating a Greater Green Bay with improved health and well-being.

Looking Ahead

Communities truly thrive and improve their well-being when everyone comes together around shared goals. We thank you for your support and passion in helping achieve the progress we have made since the *Brown County 20/20 Summit* and hope to count you as a partner as we continue to elevate our impact.

To download this report as a PDF, please visit the Resources section of the [Bay Area Community Council](#) website.

We would like to extend a “*Thank you*” to all the partners that contributed to this report and the countless organizations engaging in this work for the benefit of our community. A special thank you is extended to the BACC Personal and Community Health work-group for their leadership on this focus area.

If interested in learning more about the health of our community, please feel free to visit the following websites.

[Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index](#)

[County Health Rankings](#)

[Brown County Public Health Department](#)

[Wisconsin Department of Health Services](#)

[Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)