

## **Waukesha County Nutrition Coalition Minutes**

**August 26, 2025**

**Location: Lake Area Free Clinic**

**Attendance:** Michael Egly- Food Pantry of Waukesha County; Audra O'Connell- Lake Area Free Clinic; Eva Platte- Waukesha Head Start; Soraya Bericoto- ProHealth Care; Shanna Krause- La Casa de Esperanza Early Head Start; Jill Herz- UW-Madison Extension; Lisa Topp- Waukesha County WIC; Paula Mason- Waukesha Public Library; Jackie Valdez- Eras Senior Network.

### **Coalition Updates- Michael Egly:**

No Food Recovery updates this month. We will visit Sussex Outreach Services for our October meeting.

### **Agency Updates:**

**Eras Senior Network- Jackie Valdez:** Eras Senior network continues with same services for older adults. Jackie is the new program coordinator for a couple of months; has been intern since January and graduated in May.

**Extension Waukesha County, FoodWise program- Jill Herz:** FoodWise is undergoing many unfortunate changes. The reconciliation bill that passed congress on July 4 eliminated federal SNAP-Ed funding, which is the majority of FoodWise's nutrition education funding statewide. This has caused catastrophic loss of staff and programming. Most of FoodWise's 90+ employees statewide are being laid off by fall of 2025. Starting October 1, FoodWise will still have a nutrition education presence, but much smaller capacity. Programs that were funded by SNAP-Ed will not continue, such as programs for young children, senior citizens, and general adult audiences. FoodWise still receives EFNEP (Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program) federal funds in Waukesha, Dane, Rock, Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha counties. EFNEP focuses on nutrition education for parents and youth, especially youth that are middle school age and older. What this means for Waukesha FoodWise is reduced capacity (losing 2 out of 4 educators), discontinuation of SNAP-Ed programs for youth, adults, and seniors, and Jill's role as administrator will become a regional role for multiple counties—Waukesha, Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha. We anticipate that Waukesha will still maintain EFNEP-funded nutrition education outreach for parents and youth.

**Waukesha County WIC- Lisa Topp:** WIC has also had SNAP-Ed funding cut, which funded the Fit Families program. Fit Families funding was not renewed as part of the reconciliation bill that was signed July 4, and therefore the grant activity will cease at the end of August. WIC and Peer funding has been stable, with increases for 2025. Enrollment has been steady. Attended La Casa Health fair on August 9, performing lead and hemoglobin testing. A breastfeeding peer counselor is resigning; anticipate recruiting for another peer counselor. It is Breastfeeding Awareness Month; we have been running special awareness posts, giveaways, etc. on Facebook. There will be an Annual Breastfeeding Awareness Month celebration at the Waukesha Public Library on August 28, 10-11 AM. The theme for National Breastfeeding Month is "Forward Together." This theme focuses on "unity, solidarity and hope" and recognizes the strength of different organizations pushing to change the access provided for human milk. Waukesha County WIC received the USDA GOLD Standard Award of WIC Breastfeeding Excellence. *"The WIC Breastfeeding Award of Excellence is designed to acknowledge local WIC agencies that excel in promoting and supporting breastfeeding. The award aims to provide models for other agencies to strengthen their breastfeeding initiatives, ultimately increasing rates among WIC participants. The award recognizes local WIC agencies for exemplary breastfeeding promotion and support activities, aiming to enhance breastfeeding initiation and duration rates among participants."*

**Waukesha Head Start- Eva Platte:** Starting up on September 2; there are openings left. (Distributed flyers about Early Head Start, Head Start Preschool and 4K programs). If families qualify for SNAP, they qualify for Head Start.

**La Casa de Esperanza Early Head Start- Shanna Krause:** Currently enrolling, working with lower income families. 5 slots available right now. Just had La Casa Community Health Fair, which went really well. Handed out backpacks and had many attendees. Hoping to do it again next year.

**ProHealth Care - Soraya Bericoto:** Soraya is coordinator for Well Women program in Waukesha and Jefferson counties. Providing prenatal classes in Spanish- will start at Waukesha Memorial Hospital Oct 3. Have received a grant for dementia programming; doing lots of community programs including memory screening for ages 65+. Contact the Hispanic Health Resource Center to make an appointment (flyers distributed).

**Waukesha Public Library- Paula Mason:** Summer is one of the busiest times at the Library. There has been high participation in reading programs. Anyone interested can come to Library and get a copy of The Seed Keeper by Diane Wilson (Waukesha Reads title), about indigenous Dakota family from Minnesota. Book is about family history, food, modern American farming, food culture and discovering more about her own heritage. Watch for announcements for upcoming food programs related to the book. Starting next Tuesday, have English Language Learning partnership with literary services. For 5 weeks, every Tuesday in September from 11:30-12:30, library is hosting this program which includes childcare. For learners of all levels. Literary services offers tons of classes if that time doesn't work. Offered last year twice and it has gone really well.

**Emailed updates: Waukesha Free Clinic- Rosa Zibell:** No major clinic updates. Waukesha Free Clinic is looking for bilingual staff.

### **Presentation and Tour: Audra O'Connell, Executive Director, Lake Area Free Clinic**

In 1999 at Oconomowoc Memorial, they saw 1900 uninsured people through the ER. They formed a task force, which decided there should be a free clinic, opening in 2001. The clinic serves individuals up to 250% of the federal poverty level, ages 16+. Care includes 15 specialties that are on site, including nephrology, cardiology, etc. If medical services are not on site, the clinic works with Aurora to do referrals through their financial assistance program. ProHealth provides free MRIs and imaging free of charge. The clinic pays for transportation and meds for all clients. Most patients reside in city of Waukesha. Also decided through a task force that a dental clinic was needed (next door). The dental clinic operates in a completely different model. On the medical side, there are 240 volunteers, most not paid. There are 4 paid nurses, a paid physician, a paid NP, and all others are volunteers. On the dental side, everyone is paid (3 paid dentists + dental staff). The dental clinic serves uninsured up to 250% FPL, or patients with Medicaid. Almost all staff for medical and dental are bilingual. Seeing 1600 patients per year dental, 800 patients per year medical. 80% of patients are Spanish-speaking. State funded, and everything else is local philanthropic dollars. They are worried about Medicaid and what will happen if they need to suddenly increase capacity. Seeing people with chronic issues is typical. Now see pregnant women with dental. Piloted Harvest for Health, utilizing ProHealth's garden and others to donate produce. Working with Waukesha Community Garden and Oconomowoc Community Garden to teach them how to grow their own food. College interns and nutritionists from MATC showed people how to prepare the produce. 400 lbs of produce was donated to patients. Sometimes refer between clinics such as 16<sup>th</sup> St and Waukesha Free Clinic; for instance, someone with chronic issues who needs long term support may be referred, to allow for this person to be followed consistently with services that are all in-house. Lake Area Free Clinic has In-house mental health services as well.

**Next Meeting: October 28, 2025 at 9AM**

**Topic and Location: Sussex Outreach Services Presentation and Tour**

**N64 W23760 Main St, Sussex, WI 53089**