



AN ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH TRACKING STORY

PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE: NEARLY DOUBLING COOLING CENTERS FOR HEAT RELIEF

Lincoln County, Wisconsin

THE PROBLEM

When analyzing their [County Environmental Health Profile](#), Lincoln County Health Department (LCHD) staff realized heat-related emergency room visits in Lincoln County (26 per 100,000 people) were well above the Wisconsin average (17 per 100,000 people). Lincoln County, a rural county of about 29,000 people, has many risk factors for heat-related injury, including a high percentage of older adults, homes without air conditioning, and lower income families.

WHAT LINCOLN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT DID

LCHD staff recognized the need for more cooling centers—spaces where people can cool off during extreme heat—to address heat-related injury. They identified businesses as a good place to start due to their established commitment to the community.

In lieu of emails or cold calls, LCHD staff opted to take an individualized approach by visiting businesses in person. Staff encouraged businesses to sign on as a cooling center by highlighting it as an easy way to help their community. The motto “people helping people” resonated with businesses, and the response was overwhelmingly supportive. Through the campaign, LCHD increased the number of community cooling centers from five to nine.

THE PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACT

LCHD staff posted signs at each cooling center, notified partner agencies of cooling center locations, and spread the word through flyers, articles, social media, and the health department website. When heat waves hit, Lincoln County residents now have even more community spaces where they can cool down, socialize, and enjoy local venues. By serving as a cooling center, businesses can show support to a local initiative and demonstrate their value in the community.



We aim to serve the public and this falls into place seamlessly. We would be happy to do whatever we can to help.

LOCAL BUSINESS OWNER AND
COOLING CENTER HOST

WISCONSIN ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH TRACKING PROGRAM
Bureau of Environmental and Occupational Health

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