

# The Public Health Herald

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

I have been to many Public Health Days on the Hill over the course of my 10 years working in local public health, but this was my first one since pre-COVID. It was also the first time PHDOH was held during funnel week. Note to IPHA: we should never hold our Day on the Hill during funnel week. It is insanely busy.

My goal is always to meet with our legislators and share information about JCPH and about the importance of Public Health in Iowa, but 2023 was not a regular session. We started the day with a meeting of IPHA members to strategize, and Lina Tucker Reinders, Director of IPHA, was very straightforward in sharing that our goal for this session was to focus on harm reduction. There are a number of bad bills that will make it to the Governor's desk, and our goal is to make them less bad.

There were a number of bills proposed that are harmful to the LGBTQ community, bills bringing up raw milk AGAIN, bills trying to strip public health authority during disaster and communicable disease response, and bills proposing means testing for SNAP benefits. These will obviously have a negative impact on public health – and citizens – in Iowa. So we are doing what we can to promote solutions to make them less harmful and keep fighting another day.

It's defeating, but there are still people in the legislature proposing bills that will help our communities, and as they said "if we're underwater, we might as well keep swimming." I'm grateful to IPHA and the Advocacy Committee that put so much effort into making this day a reality.

*Danielle*

Danielle pictured with Sen. Janice Weiner (top), Rep. Adam Zabnor and CPH Student, Allie (bottom)



by Sarah Noll Wilson

We're back with highlights in Chapter 3 of Sarah Noll Wilson's "Don't Feed the Elephants." Remember, if you are interested in reading her book on overcoming avoidance & how to build powerful partnerships, please let your manager know.

This is all in effort to undertake professional development all year long & build an even stronger JCPH team.

### Naming your Elephant (pg. 65)

- You can see the giant footprints all over the floor. The conference room feels like a swirling mess of misunderstanding and peanut shells. Something on your team is going very wrong, but you don't know what to fix because you're not sure exactly what's causing the problem.
- We can't change something we don't notice & acknowledge, so the first step to freeing an elephant is admitting you have one. The next step is working to see if clearly.

**The Avoidephant:** In the presence of a Avoidephant, we literally avoid conversations, opting to internalize our thoughts, feelings, & insights. Sometimes we even avoid the conversation with ourselves. The Avoidephant feeds on the fears of a team & the desire for safety & harmony. When an Avoidephant is allowed to stay in a room, it grows rapidly.

### **What you might hear if the Avoidephant is in the Room?**

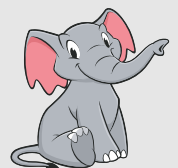
The language around the Avoidephant tends to be minimizing. To correctly identify the Avoidephant, listen for phrases like:

- "I know they're a good person..."
- "It's not that big of a deal anyway."
- "I don't want to make them feel bad."
- "I'm not going to give them feedback because they'll get defensive & take it out on me."

### **Questions to Ask if you or someone else may be feeding the Avoidephant**

- What's holding me back from having a transformative conversation?
- What am I afraid of when I imagine the conversation? Retaliation, exclusion, loss of harmony, hurt feelings, or something else?
- What confirms this fear?
- What disconfirms this fear?

In the case of the Avoidephant, remember, you may need to find allies who are willing to support you in speaking up. There is greater safety in numbers, but sometimes we have to be willing to speak & stand with courage alone.



continued on pg 3...

# The Public Health Herald

## Community Health Updates

Susan attended the 15 Year Anniversary for the Smoke Free Air Act in Des Moines. You can read more about SFIA here. (pictured at the celebration)

### Heart Healthy JoCo

Haley is supporting Johnson County Ambulance Service with a customer service survey and will redirect folks who are interested in learning more about CPR, AEDs and Pulsepoint.

### Community Health Assessment

Jamie and Ari are collecting information for medical and clinical sites to map access by geography, insurance, and other pertinent information. The information will be part of the community health assessment.

### HealthyJoCo & Social Vulnerability

HealthyJoCo has incorporated the CDC's Social Vulnerability Index into the county's property information viewer. You can check it out here: <https://gis.johnsoncountyiowa.gov/hjc/> - If you'd like to learn more about social vulnerability, you can find the CDC's fact sheet here.

### Disease Investigation

Rachel and Amelia have been investigating a variety of outbreaks and diseases, both small and large, rare and not so rare. From Hepatitis A to E, Q Fever, Malaria, and others.

### Congratulations!

Rebecca was awarded the NACCHO MRC Operational Readiness Award where she, Lisa, and Karrey have planned to develop a MRC mission set for cardiovascular health. The action to pursue was approved at the November Board of Health meeting.

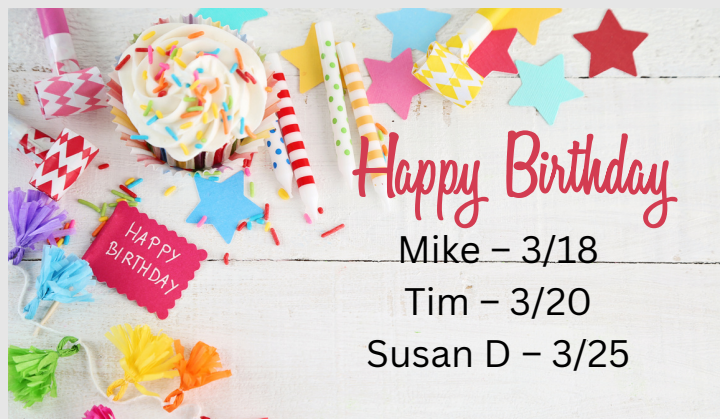
## Environmental Health Updates

### February

- **Food**
  - Food program working with Sarah to post super bowl food safety tips
  - Tim & Ahmed attending DIA virtual New Inspector Training Course
  - Food program receiving \$3357.74 for year 1 FDA NEHA grant funds Standards SA VA.
  - 2/7 Jesse jointly worked with DIA food inspector at NL Fiesta to investigate a food borne illness outbreak.
    - Parties involved DPS AS, EHS II, DIA inspector, DIA RRC, IHHS Epi. Jesse completed the routine and illness complaint. DIA completed the NEARS EA
      - The Fiesta outbreak cases are now a part of a cluster of 19 total cases across 9 states. This will be considered a multi-state outbreak.
  - 2/21 Jesse jointly worked with DIA food inspector at IC DC's to investigate a suspected food borne illness outbreak. Parties involved DPS, EHS II, DIA inspector, DIA RRC, IHHS Epi. Jesse completed the routine and illness complaint. DIA completed the NEARS EA
- **Water**
  - Jasmine completed edits and updates to the EH pool program field inspection form
  - Jasmine & Ethan. Watershed program working with the town of Swisher to conduct PFAS private well water testing.
  - James presenting to a U of I Collage of PH class on the JC watershed program. Professor Mikulski 2/21/2023

## Clinical Services Updates

We have a new Public Health Nurse starting on Monday! Her name is Abby Steils & we look forward to working with her. Please stop by & introduce yourselves when you see her in the hall.





# The Public Health Herald

## Don't Feed the Elephants

continued from pg 1...

**The Imagiphant:** These might be the hardest elephants to free because doing so requires us to consider that we could be wrong & may have to view someone we've struggled with in a different light. We have a desire for understanding & certainty even when things are complex, so when we don't have all the data, our mind fills in the gaps. In the absence of information, we create our own stories.

### What you might hear if the Imagiphant is in the Room?

The language around an Imagiphant signals anti-curiosity & tends to be resigned to the situation. To correctly identify an Imagiphant, listen for phrases like:

- "No, I know that's what they meant."
- "Oh, that's just who they are."
- "I don't need to ask. I just know."
- "They will never be open to that."

### Questions to Ask if you or someone else may be feeding an Imagiphant

- What do I know to be true?
- What role am I playing in this?
- What assumptions am I holding?
- What makes sense to the other person?

In the case of the Imagiphant, remember, you may need to brainstorm with another person to come up with other possible intentions behind the situation that has troubled you. Healthy flocking in action! It's also important to note that sometimes, your assumption may be correct.

.....

**The Blamephant:** There are, of course, situation when the person with formal authority absolutely needs to be the one to take action. However, this does not mean they hold sole responsibility for every team issue. Sometimes we're waiting for our leaders to be superheroes that swoom & save the day, but we should remember that leadership is not a role; it's an act. It is a skill we can cultivate in ourselves. When we make a leader the scapegoat for team inaction, we not only stunt our own potential, but we also hold back our team from success.

### What you might hear if a Blamephant is in the Room?

The language we hear around a Blamephant abdicates our responsibility. If there's a Blamephant in the room, you might hear (or catch yourself saying):

- "Can you believe they did that?"
- "I don't know why they made that decision."
- "It's not what I would do, but..."
- "I really hope (insert manager name here) talks to that person. She never... or He always..."

### Questions to Ask if you or someone else may be feeding a Blamephant

- What would success look like in this situation?
- What haven't I tried yet?
- What steps could I take to help resolve this situation?
- What do I gain when I feed the Blamephant?

In the case of the Blamephant, remember, it is easier & less risky to blame that it is to own. Owning your role might not require you to speak up, but it will require you to stop speaking around.

.....

**The Nudgephant:** It's important to note that nudging is not always a destructive behavior. Nudging can also be a safe way for people to engage with a situation. Sometime, a well-executed nudge allows a team member to spur action without creating resentment or to create an opening to discuss a difficult situation. A nudge can turn on the heat on just enough for change. If you nudge & it works, it's fine. Nudging behavior only creates a Nudgephant when it becomes clear that a nudge is not enough to improve the situation, but we keep doing it anyway.

### What you might hear if a Nudgephant is in the Room?

When a Nudgephant is in the room, you'll hear a lot of passive language that is delivered in a roundabout way. To correctly identify a Nudgephant, listen for phrases like:

- "I tried to have the conversation, but..."
- "You might want to consider..."
- "Maybe we could..."
- "Do you think it might make sense to..."

### Questions to Ask if you or someone else may be feeding a Nudgephant

- What is the impact I want my message to make on the situation?
- How can I confirm that they understand the message I've attempted to convey?
- How else could I say this message so it could be more easily understood?
- What would it look like to be direct & kind?

In the case of the Nudgephant, remember that while the understanding of the message lies with the listener, your delivery will set them up for success.

.....

**The Deflectephant:** Allowing a Deflectephant in the room can waste time, hurt psychological safety, & shut down team members.

The Deflectephant aids diversion. When someone is unwilling to be vulnerable, they may attempt to minimize or hide their own discomfort by creating discomfort in other people or creating distraction

It can be extremely hard to work with the person creating the Deflectephant. Someone feeding a Deflectephant might want to change the subject or quickly move to resolution without properly exploring the problem. They might have a hard time taking things seriously when a situation gets uncomfortable, possibly resorting to disruption & sarcasm, hiding in the image of being a jokester or "class clown." If another team member raises an issue with this behavior, it's common for the person feeding the Deflectephant to claim that the other person "can't take a joke," even though the manipulative, critical behavior they're exhibiting is not actually humor but passive-aggressive avoidance.

### What you might hear if a Deflectephant is in the Room?

The language we hear when a Deflectephant is in the room can act like a joke but has as undercurrent that is cutting and aggressive or dismisses the seriousness of the concern. To correctly identify a Deflectephant, listen for phrases like:

- "I don't think it's that big of an issue"
- "Let's just agree to disagree (without meaningful conversation)."
- "It was a joke. You just can't handle sarcasm."
- "You're too sensitive."

### Questions to Ask if you or someone else may be feeding a Deflectephant

- What is being avoided in favor of deflecting?
- When are we moving on too quickly without exploring or resolving?
- How might this humor be inhibiting honest conversation?
- Are these jokes targeting a team member's vulnerability or our team's psychological safety?

In the case of the Deflectephant, remember that often the goal is to dismiss or distract. A powerful way to navigate these is to acknowledge or restate the importance of the conversation at hand. Sometimes it takes another person to speak up & reiterate the importance.