

# The Public Health Herald

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

April showers bring May flowers, right? That's the saying. The rain also feels bleak and dreary, to be honest. However, I have to notice that the grass is greening up. There are buds on the trees. The daffodils are popping. The days are getting longer. I notice this to say that even when things feel bleak and dreary, like it has this week with all the funding cuts across the federal public health agencies, there are still bright spots to focus on. First of all, this week, we're celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of National Public Health week. As a profession, we have added so much value and years of productive life to the average lifespan, and that needs to be celebrated.

This past week at the Public Health Conference of Iowa, I spoke to so many of our colleagues who are rightfully nervous and uncertain about what will come next, but also have an incredible amount of resolve in continuing the important work of public health. I felt like PIVOT (insert Friends image here) was my word during the pandemic, and that's what we'll do again. That is what we continue to do. Many of you have been in the field long enough to know that change is a certainty. As I tell new Directors in the State, give yourself a year to feel comfortable in your role. Then expect everything will change and we'll all be on the same page again.

With all of these changes comes opportunity, however. The preconference session I attended was all about civic engagement, and we'll have a speaker at our all staff retreat focused on advocacy as well. Advocacy is a muscle we'll all need to flex a little bit more. Okay, a lot more. As with any strength training exercise, there's a right and wrong way to do it, and doing it properly can lead to some soreness as the muscle breaks down and rebuilds. But then you're stronger. Lather, rinse, repeat. However, doing it improperly can cause some damage, hence, we want to make sure you get appropriate training.

But there are still bright spots and I want to take a moment to shine a light on them! Dr. Pete Wallace was honored at the Public Health Conference of Iowa as a Lifetime Achievement Awardee along with Dr. Ron Eckhoff and Dr. Louise Lex. Many of you know that Pete has been our Medical Director on the Johnson County Board of Health for 15 years, but he has also had an amazing career advocating for vaccines in DC. Pete is a current Board member for the Iowa Public Health Association and has spent his life and career advocating for health. Congratulations, Pete!!

Also, Laura Sneller was awarded the Iowa Environmental Health Associations Award for Rookie of the Year. This award is given to a new Environmental Health professional with less than three years' experience in food inspections who has made a big impact. Laura was nominated by Rob Thul. Laura, you are so very deserving of this award! Congratulations to you!!!

Susan Vileta has been named one of the Corridor Business Journal's Women of Influence! Susan was nominated by Sam Jarvis for all of her amazing work in the community. Susan, you are so deserving of this award! Congratulations!!

A few other highlights – PHAB documents were submitted three days before they were due! Big kudos to those who really stepped in to do this work! I appreciate you so much! Christine, Matt, Sam, Amelia, Nate, Jennifer, Sarah, Susan, Fatou, Brycen, Jamie – I know you were doing the heavy lifting in revamping documents – and I thank you for your work! Appreciate everyone's grace as I worked through this without our PIAC!

On that note, so happy to have Holly Cummings as our new PIAC! So much good work to do and I'm excited to have you jumping into this role.

In closing, at the conference everyone kept asking me "How are things in Johnson County?" Without fail, I answered that while things were clearly crazy, I'm blessed because I get to work with the very best team. You all are amazing. As Dr. Melanie Wellington said to me the other day, if you're going to be going through mess (I'm paraphrasing here), at least we're doing it with the best people by our side.

Couldn't be more true. I'm grateful for you. Thank you for everything you do for our community.

In Health,

*Danielle*



Someone's been having a little fun with AI. What accessories are missing for our Action Heroine to go along with her office supplies and screaming goat? Water bottle? Pedometer? Megaphone? Have you made one, send them to Sarah!

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## DIVISION UPDATES

### Environmental Health:

- Ethan attended the Service Area 5 Healthcare Coalition Tabletop Exercise March 4<sup>th</sup> @ JECC
- James worked with the OEC on social media posts for National Groundwater Awareness Week
- Watershed staff received training for a new DNR well tracking database, Iowa Wells Information System (IWIS)
- Ethan successfully passed and obtained the credential of Registered Environmental Health Specialist (REHS) through the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)
- Rob completed the FDA RE-Standardization Training.
  - The training is administered by our JCPH standardizing training officer Jesse and consisted of 4 shadowed inspections along with additional coursework.
  - The certification is valid for 5 years and is required for contract compliance with the Department of Inspections, Appeals, and Licensing (DIAL).

### Community Health:

- Jennifer attended the ICR workgroup meeting where ICR announced several changes to their programming amidst changes to funding. ICR supports new immigrant families and establishes a support network. The changes will have a significant impact.
- Rob's Strategy Plan Workgroup continues to meet to plan for the Public Health Showcase Day on April 11<sup>th</sup>. Susan and Sam have been coordinating information with students to attend the day and view 3 different program selections of their choice.
- Community Health has taken on several PHAB Re-Accreditation measures for review. Shout out to Susan, Jennifer, Amelia, and Nate for picking up the heavy lift!
- Nate continues to plan with the City of Iowa City and Neighborhood Center for resiliency hubs. The resiliency hub goal is to make community centers or other areas accessible to the public resilient against disasters and maintain operations during response for community members.
- Jamie and Susan IHHS' webinar on public health regionalization. The state provided a high-level overview of what they anticipate regionalization and a rough timeline, ballparking potential legislation changes in FY27.
- Karrey has had several successful onsite clinics for Vaccine for Adults and continues to plan offsite clinics with intern, Josie Dalton. Josie has supported several projects across the Division in the past year and was previously a PrepWise intern through the College of Public Health.
- HealthyJoCo published their health improvement plan! Check it out and see the community created and supported goals the team will be spearheading or supporting for the next several years. Great job to everyone on facilitating, convening, and keeping community partners and members informed throughout this rigorous process.
- Lisa, Giselle, and Jamie presented at the Public Health Conference of Iowa!
- Susan, Lisa, and Cole continue to work on the OD2A workplan. A recent goal was to complete the data assessment. This assessment will support and ensure actions are informed by data. The assessment covers dozens of state and federal data resources along with rich local resources from community agencies and partners. The team will continue to work with Abbe Community Mental Health affiliate of Unity Point to support the goal of academic detailing and peer recovery. Currently, staff at Abbe and Sam have attended the Academic Detailing and will support an incoming Academic Detailer to raise awareness on the best practices and literature.
- Jennifer, Amelia, and Rachel will be planning their student epi team table top exercise. The students have completed the majority of their workplan with the team which includes supporting immunization audits, outbreak response, and foodborne illness investigations. Throwback: Nate was a student epi team member prior to his current position.
- Sam is attending the Public Health Information Network's Informatics course. The course walks through the Software Development Life Cycle).
- Sam attended NACCHO's grant management workgroup. It's comprised of grant managers across the nation and the group is striving to create a grants management tool kit along with documenting other practices. Financial practices have been one of Community Health's workforce development goals and the hope is to align the future resources with this need.
- Management continues to work on Policy and Procedure updates. All current or draft policies are now in the named folder and 111 > Policy and Procedures has been retired. Other areas of improvement have been consolidating department forms and templates. All department forms and templates may be found in I:\Forms and Templates. Fun fact, when you open a new template in Microsoft, it saves the template in I:\Forms and Templates\Templates for Word\_Excel\_Powerpoint.

### Administration:

- Lonise will be leading the inventory management implementation and testing process for the Department.
- Christine reviewed our grant performance to ensure that the spend down of all grant funds is achieved annually.
- Alissa is working on the final testing phases for Workday Implementation in July.
  - She reviewed & communicated the budget performance on grants impacted by recent changes.
- Susan D. is taking on additional duties while we hire Holly's replacement. Thank you Susan!
- We are actively working to hire Holly's replacement in the EH Administrative Assistant role.

## CONGRATULATIONS!



Congratulations to Susan Vileta on being named a 2025 Women of Influence Honoree by the Corridor Business Journal. The Women of Influence awards recognizes 10 women who have made a difference in the Corridor as role models and leaders in their fields. Susan, we're incredibly proud to get to work with you everyday! This is a well deserved honor for all your hard work.

The Awards will take place on April 30<sup>th</sup> at the Hotel Kirkwood in Cedar Rapids where they will be celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Women of Influence awards.

More information about the ceremony:  
<https://corridorbusiness.com/event/women-of-influence/>

## RETIREMENT



A special shout out to Honorary Public Healthier - Dave Philips who retired on Friday April 4<sup>th</sup>. We wish him well on his next adventure & thank him for his service to our department.



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## Clinical Services:

- Becky has been busy with presentations
  - Kirkwood Community College Dental Hygiene students discussing practicing Dental Hygiene in Public Health settings with special attention to access of care
  - Oral Health Info at Benton Community School
  - Cedar Rapids Community School District Nurses, training for care to students and producing certificates of dental screenings.
- Deb has been working hard to overcome language and policy barriers for childcare providers to assure they have health and safety education and information in their preferred language.
  - Recently, a childcare provider reported she was able to get a parent to bring an epi-pen and allergy action plan signed by a physician to daycare after Deb provided education and an allergy action plan form in Spanish for the parent. The parent had previously refused the childcare provider's request because they did not understand why it was needed.
- Hianca, Roberta, and Emily worked on a partnership with Social Services to obtain car seats for WIC clients.
  - Distribution will begin during the summer.
- Hianca hosted another "Family Advisory Council" meeting at Hoover Community School with HACAP.
- Deb has business partnership agreements are signed with 20 new providers and pre-registration inspection, health and safety consultation visits are offered.
  - Safe sleep information is also provided in their preferred language since safe sleep is the most common health and safety violation referred to the CCNC by HHS, and many immigrants did not learn about safe sleep practices prior to becoming a childcare provider.
- ITS program was able to sponsor and provide free testing services at the Mirage event.
  - Historically this event was a U of Iowa campus sponsored cultural event celebrating Queerness with drag and health education. ITS staff spent time in 2024 assisting the coordinating committee in organizing the annual event, until it was shut down by the university in a response to new rules and regulations.
    - We are very proud of the student organizers for finding a way and bringing this event back!
- Becky assisted in providing gap filling screenings for 9<sup>th</sup> grades students at 4 High Schools in the CSA during March.
- IMOM (Iowa Mission of Mercy) 2025 has been announced.
  - This year's 2 day free dental clinic will be held at the Hyatt Regency Coralville on Sept. 19-20, 2025 and is the first time it will be offered in the Iowa City/Coralville area.
- In a spirit of community support, Clinical Services has been able to allow Dr. Beth Pfohl, a dental provider at Free Med in Iowa City, to continue to see young children for dental care. She and her staff have operated in our treatment room while their office is undergoing a major construction process. This arrangement has been instrumental minimizing the time children have to wait for free restorative dental care.
- Deb attended the Child Passenger Safety Technician training March 17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> and has earned her certification.
  - She will be providing child seat safety checks and education at Saturday WIC clinics and for childcare programs that transport children.
  - Deb is also available to provide child seat safety checks for county employees by appointment.
- Clinical services nurses completed 78 lead tests in March. Shoutout to RN Abby K!
- Tammy F., Brycen M., and Deb V. attended the North Liberty Community Center's Spring Open House on April 2, 2025. They had a very good turn out and participants enjoyed the interactive activities.
- Various PH staff members from Clinical Services, Community Health, and Admin participated in a roundtable discussion with students from the College of Public Health with a focus on Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health on March 14<sup>th</sup>.
- So far in FY25, Deb has trained 20 new in-home childcare providers in CPR/First Aid as part of the 4Cs new provider training series.
- I-Smile@School retention checks have been submitted to state. Initial calculations find the IS@S teams, JCPH and HACAP combined, to have a long-term retention of 98.07% of sealants placed during the previous school year. Cheers to those teams! Quality and quantity!!
- Brycen M. & Fatou T. sat in on the Opiate Settlement fund presentation given by BOS staff to the JoCo BOS.
- On March 28, CS clerks, nurses, and dental staff attended an on-site training with a representative from CHAMP, the EHR system.
  - Thank you to Chuck and Kritzia for covering intake during this training to allow all clerical staff to participate.
    - They both shared that they have new found respect for the very difficult and busy job the clerks perform every day!



Deb at her Carseat Certification Training. We're so excited to offer this new service for our clients & county employees.



Brycen, Tammy, & Deb at the North Liberty Community Center as well as some eager participants learning about oral health.





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## IPHA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Many of our staff headed to Des Moines for the annual IPHA conference March 31-April 2. Thank you to everyone who presented & helped to educate our PH leaders from across the state as well as brought back to JoCo valuable insights & ideas!





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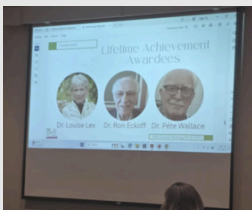
## IPHA SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS



Congratulations to Laura Sneller on winning the Iowa Environmental Health Association's "Rookie of the Year." The award winner represents a person with no more than 3 years of experience and who has distinguished themselves by meritorious services to their agency and the EH field. Thank you for your dedication to JCPH & EH in JoCo.



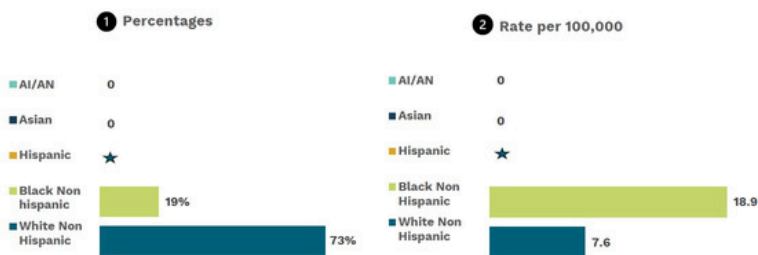
Congratulations to Dr. Pete Wallace as he was honored at the IPHA Conference with a Lifetime Achievement Award for his service to public health. He's been a member of our Board of Health for 15 years as well as an IPHA Board Member and Affiliate Representative to the Governing Council. Dr. Wallace is an active member of multiple boards and continues to give his time and talents to ensuring improved health outcomes. Thank you Pete for your service & congratulations!



## HEALTH EQUITY: OVERDOSES IN JOCO

### Demographic Data for Unintentional drug overdose Deaths in Johnson County, IA : 2020-2022 ( Excludes 2023)

#### Who died of a drug overdose : Race and ethnicity



★(The Star means that the data is less than 6 and has been suppressed.)

This Section highlights how overdose deaths differed between Race and Ethnicities in Johnson County.

- 1 Displays the percentages of overdose deaths for White Non-Hispanic and Black Non-Hispanic populations. White non-Hispanic population made up more deaths in total.
- 2 Displays the Crude Rates per 100,000 population for each Race and ethnicity. Black Non-Hispanic population is more likely to die from an overdose adjusting for the population size.

Sam, Susan, Lisa, and Cole, along with UnityPoint Health – Abbe Center for Community Mental Health, are working on an IHHS grant through CDC and US HHS called Overdose Data to Action in States (OD2A-S). The grant effort assists states with the expansion of their surveillance efforts to track fatal and nonfatal drug overdoses and associated risk factors, and to improve biosurveillance and data linkage. OD2A-S focuses on closing gaps in access to care through reducing harms related to drug use, linkage to care through peer recovery coaches, support programs, public safety collaborations, and community outreach and education.

According to the [State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System \(SUDORS\)](#), from 2020-2023 there were 43 unintentional drug overdose deaths in Johnson County. Statewide there were 1,486 deaths recorded during that time. The bar graph on the left shows the highest number of deaths among people who are non-Hispanic white. However, the graph on the right demonstrates the non-Hispanic Black population is disproportionately affected by overdose despite being a much smaller percentage of the population compared to non-Hispanic white people. This means Non-Hispanic Black people are more likely to die from an overdose. Data often displays an incomplete picture unless it is broken down into smaller more detailed categories or subgroups. Reviewing this data, along with other sources, CH staff determined the main population of focus for their grant as the non-Hispanic Black population due to being disproportionately impacted by drug overdose.