

# The Public Health Herald

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

Hey all. Happy March. Given what happened at the Iowa Capital yesterday (2/27/25 at the time of this writing), saying Happy March is a bit challenging. Not going to lie to you. So I was looking for something positive to start off this letter and I found this quote: "It's hard to beat a person who never gives up." ~Babe Ruth

True enough. There have been a lot of barriers put up in front of us, in front of our communities, and in front of the work we do – but that doesn't mean we give up. We might have to pivot, change our language a bit, our work may look a little different – but we don't give up. I understand that doesn't always feel good. It chafes me too, to be perfectly honest, but these are the waters we're swimming in. And when we're able to come up for air, I want to make sure we're still here serving our communities. Giselle brought a great speaker to a Lunch and Learn yesterday talking about burnout, and he mentioned perfectionism (raise your hand if that applies to you 😊 Hi, it's me, too). Many of us strive for perfect, we strive to be the best, to do the most good. He expressed that sometimes we have to settle for acceptable. I know, I KNOW. It's galling, right? But sometimes our job is reducing harm, when we'd rather make progress and move forward. But we can still make progress. We can still do good work and that is happening every single day.

But let's think about March. In March we celebrate Ramadan (Ramadan Mubarak to our Muslim colleagues!!), International Women's Day, the first day of Spring, National Nutrition Month, RDN Day, World TB Day, Groundwater Awareness Week, Transgender Day of Visibility and everyone gets to be Irish on St. Patrick's Day. We also get to "enjoy" the Spring Forward time change, a practice all parents would love to see relegated to the ash heap of history. And let's not forget, a little more sunshine each day. And maybe a garden center or two will open 😊.

So let's celebrate the work! First of all, to our Dieticians – Chuck, Amy, Kritzia, Susan, and Jessica - thank you for the wonderful work you do with our clients to provide information on nutrition and how to help them use their benefits. Nutrition is so critical to our health and your work is incredibly valuable. So thank you for your work. To our Disease Prevention Specialists – Jennifer, Rachel and Amelia – thank you for all the work you do to prevent the spread of TB in our community. The work you do to ensure they can access care is a heavy lift, and I appreciate how you navigate the challenging system on their behalf. I want to acknowledge our EHS staff working to protect our Groundwater – James, Ethan and Emma – thank you for the work you do to protect our water in Johnson County! I learned so much about the amazing work you do during the ordinance discussions with the BOH.

Lastly, to our colleagues who are transgender, or love someone who is, on Transgender Day of Visibility, please know that we see you. You are loved. You are valued. You belong. We will stand with you.

Not everything is great, friends, but we mustn't give up.

In Health,

*Danielle*

## DIVISION UPDATES

### Clinical Services:

- First, a HUGE shoutout to the Clinical Services team for navigating a whirlwind of challenges during the month of February—from managing cancellations due to snowy, frigid weather and clinic closures to accommodating rescheduled appointments and walk-ins, all while battling a wave of illnesses that took out most of the clinic staff. Beth, Brycen, Deb, Fatou, and Tammy were the only ones who made it through without catching one of the several bugs that were going around! It wasn't always pretty, but we kept going! Thank goodness we are on the other side of that mess!
- This past Month ITS was able to bring in a student of the College of Nursing to join us in our outreach clinics, as she has an interest in public health nursing and community based care settings. We additionally met with an addiction medicine fellow who is doing an intravenous drug use elective to discuss the harm reduction and integrated testing services provided here at Johnson County Public Health. Next month we look forward to joining Hianca at a roundtable discussion with MCAH students at the college of public health to teach them about our programming, as well as joining some student organizers of the University Queer House to discuss and assist the students in reviving previously sponsored campus events similar to the historic Mirage celebration.
- CS Dietitians welcomed an intern who will be working with them a couple of hours each day, Mon-Thurs until May. She will spend time with each of the dietitians and will shadow personnel from other programs to learn about all the services offered by the CS Division. She is also working on a project to create healthy dishes made with foods that are approved by the WIC program for clients to taste when attending appointments. We are looking forward to some lovely smells in the waiting room!
- February included a visit from our state WIC Consultant for an annual site visit. She visited our satellite clinic in Marengo this year and was quite impressed with our team. Details about her observations will be sent to us in the near future. Thank you to the lucky few who participated in clinic that day: Chuck, Amber, Beth, and Tammy!
- In 2024, ISAC awarded seven scholarships, for a total of \$22,500. The scholarships are awarded to high school seniors who are the children or dependents of county officials and employees. The scholarship recipients are recognized at a scholarship ceremony that takes place annually as part of the ISAC Spring Conference General Session. Amber's daughter, Jaylyn, was one of the recipients for 2024. Congratulations, Jaylyn!

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## Clinical Services cont.:

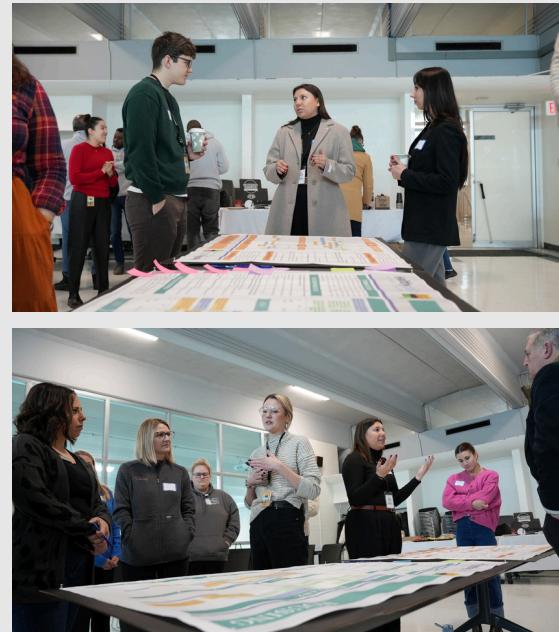
- The Give Kids a Smile Event was a success.
  - 55 children were seen by the Kimball & Beecher staff and \$42,362 worth of treatment was provided at no cost to the families. Becky not only hopes this will become an annual event at Kimball & Beecher, but also that other offices and dental providers are inspired by event and will partner with I-Smile for their own event.
  - Check out the video from KCRG: <https://www.kcrg.com/2025/02/21/free-kids-dental-clinic-helps-those-need/>
- Becky attended the Benton Co. Health Fair on Saturday March 1, to provide Care Coordination services to individuals without a dental home. Dental screenings were also offered at the event at no charge for children who needed to produce a Certificate of Dental Screening to their school.
  - Although there were not as many participants as we would have liked to serve, we hope to have planted many seeds that will later produce a significant result.

## Environmental Health:

- Ethan worked with Sarah to advertise Private Well Grant water services on Meta/Facebook. Over 14 days posts were viewed over 26K times, driving 338 persons to the PWG website. Ethan will use this data for future PWG advertising.
- Laura and James are updating environmental health Emergency Operation Procedure fact sheets.
- Emma reformatted and updated the JCPH environmental health watershed webpage. This will allow for a cleaner and easier experience for the viewer.
- Watershed staff were able to dispense nearly all of the \$50,505.00 Private Well Grant funds. The services include free water tests for homeowners on private wells, reimbursements for plugging old wells, disinfecting contaminated wells, and reconstruction of damaged wells. The watershed program has requested additional reallocation funds from Iowa HHS.
- Tim, Laura, and Ahmed presented to Dr Pentella's U of I CPH field experience class. This included a food inspection demonstration for the students at the Hillcrest dorm cafeteria.

## Community Health:

- HealthyJoCo hosted the whole health summit where each priority subcommittee was able to convene and discuss the new health improvement plan.
  - The team had over 40 community members attend and share ideas and updates to each priorities improvement plan.
  - The improvement plan will guide our work along with the community in improving health outcomes. (see pictures right)
- Nate's planning several table top exercises to be better prepared for disasters. Tabletop exercises are discussion based trainings for disasters to test your response plans.
  - The exercises are for the region and the newly established long term care consortium with the College of Nursing through Dr. Kim Bergen-Jackson.
- See the JoCo for several wellness events from Giselle and the Wellness Committee. For the second year in a row, our county Wellness Program is a finalist in the Healthiest State Initiative! Congratulations Giselle! And thanks for everyone participating and having fun!
- Karrey has been working with Josie, previous Prepwise Intern, on planning several offsite clinics as the weather warms up and there are more community events to attend. She also participated in last month's pregnancy club with Resurrection Church.
- Jamie has initiated several discussions with Polk County and IHHS to further explore health care access. Both counties are interested in improving primary care access.
- Sam attended DELPH training in the Washington DC area. Throughout the course of the week, worked with professional coaches, peers, and the ASTHO team on skill building and discussing how the current political climate impacts public health. During the trip, the group also toured the National Museum of African American History and Culture and it is a must see: <https://www.si.edu/museums/african-american-museum>



## EXTRA EXTRA, READ ALL ABOUT IT!

Susan in the news educating on tobacco tax. Raising taxes on tobacco products has been a clear evidence-based action that reduces use. <https://dailyiowan.com/2025/02/23/anti-smoking-organization-urges-iowa-to-increase-taxes-on-tobacco-products/>

Jennifer in the news promoting flu vaccine. It's never too late to get your flu shot! <https://www.thegazette.com/health-care-medicine/flu-surge-hitting-linn-and-johnson-counties/>

## Administration:

- Catalina
  - Completed two courses in providing exceptional service to our clients and promoting an efficient workplace.
- Lo & Christine
  - Working with Allison and other workday implementation teams on testing and implementation tasks for the multi year project.
- Alissa
  - Working on the final testing phases for Workday implementation in July.



## STAFF SHOUT OUT!

From Catalina: I want to express genuine appreciation to Alli for stepping up and helping a client by routing them to the correct clinic. She used the translator service and helped the client without me asking, she just did it, out of kindness of her heart. This was a Friday where the clinic is closed until 1pm and she just took the initiative.

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## AND THE AWARD GOES TO...

Award season is here, and the spotlight is on YOU! The Mission, Vision, Values Award survey is now live and ready for your nominations. Share your feedback and celebrate the individuals who embody our guiding principles. Don't miss your chance to shine—responses for the first quarter will be collected until MARCH 31st!

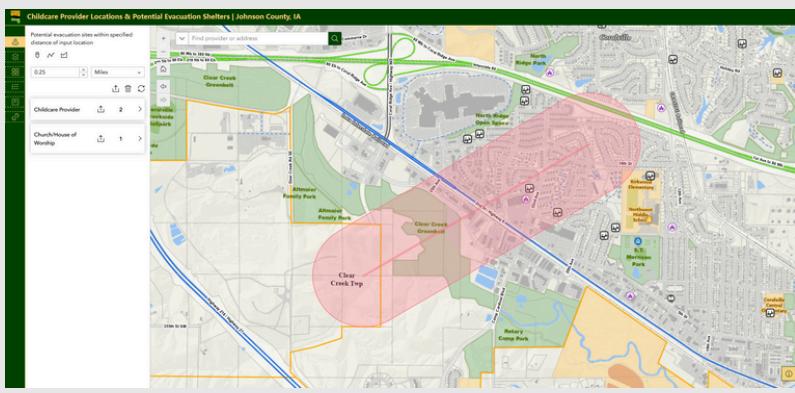
Submit your input here:

[https://johnsoncountyiowa.iad1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_esreM yudhosOWPQ](https://johnsoncountyiowa.iad1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_esreM yudhosOWPQ)

## SPOTLIGHT ON HEALTH EQUITY: AMISH OUTREACH

With the risk of H5N1 avian influenza impacting dairy farm workers, IHHS provided additional funding to disseminate seasonal influenza vaccines and information to dairy farm workers across the State. Given that the list of dairy farms in Johnson County were right on the Johnson-Washington County line, and were predominantly Amish, we decided to partner with Washington County Public Health (WCPH) as well as Henry County Public Health with their high number of poultry farms to share information to our impacted communities. Washington County Public Health has a long history of providing childhood vaccines to the Amish population, and we determined they would be a trusted partner. We created letters and flyers using images previously shared in an educational video that was done with Dr. Melanie Wellington that made it easy to understand how preventing seasonal flu could prevent an H5N1 pandemic. The information was vetted by a WCPH staff member who is a former member of the Amish Community to ensure it was culturally appropriate.

Additionally, we worked with Dr. Minyon Ritgers-Easton to put her name and likeness on the flyer. Dr. Ritgers-Easton is a trusted local physician who has long served the Amish. While we haven't yet seen the return of our work, it was valuable to partner with others who were familiar with our target audience and share resources to get the message out. Our goal is to ensure equity in health education, access to care, as well as ready staff to support off-site clinics collectively with Washington and Henry County through our Community Health Nurse and our Medical Reserve Corps.



### Are you a SUPER USER?!

What is a super user? Someone who knows how to use a specific software really well, they love a challenge, they're open minded to change, they love to learn and they're patient when teaching others.

You are?! Well you're in luck! JCPH has purchased a "scribe" account where recorded tutorials and trainings can be made by you! Are you interested in creating your own tutorials, instructions, SOPs?!? Give a like and hit the link below to sign up!

[SIGN UP HERE](#)

### How could Bird Flu affect your farm?

Bird Flu (Highly Pathogenic Avian Flu) is spreading in **dairy** herds across Iowa.

Influenza (the flu) is very good at making copies of itself and spreading from person to person.

When the flu virus gets into a cell, it breaks into pieces and copies each part. If bird flu enters the same cell, it also makes copies. Sometimes, the pieces from both viruses mix together to create a new virus. This could make it easier for people to spread it to each other.

If a new virus forms, it could be very dangerous because no one would be immune.

The best way to protect yourself, your family, and your farm is to get a flu shot every year and stop the spread of the flu.

**Questions?**  
Talk to your doctor including  
Dr. Minyon Ritgers-Easton



## CHECK IT OUT! CHILDCARE DISASTER RESOURCE LAUNCHED

Johnson County Public Health has just released the Johnson County Childcare Disaster Resources website. This interactive map displays the location of childcare providers in Johnson County, IA, along with schools, libraries, churches, and recreation centers that could potentially serve as an evacuation site. The site includes links and forms to assist childcare programs with disaster planning, response and recovery. Check it out at <https://gis.johnsoncountyiowa.gov/childcare-evac/>

Image left: Screenshot of GIS platform showing Johnson County Childcare Disaster Resources



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## SNOW DAY

We had a snow day on February 12th & our staff, their families, & pets had so much fun playing in the fresh snow!

