



The Heart of New Ulm (HONU) aims to improve the health, well-being and quality of life of all New Ulm-area residents through education, available resources, initiatives and partnerships that empower people of all ages to take responsibility for their own health in a supportive environment.

Working off its three-year action plan for 2023-25 (available at www.heartofnewulm.com), HONU in 2023 continued its focus on four key areas: 1) healthy lifestyles, 2) mental health, 3) addiction and risky use of substances, and 4) health equity. Thank you to the many community volunteers who served on the HONU leadership and action teams in 2022!

Downtown Action Team

- Added a variety of other activities for both kids and adults to the **Saturday farmers market in German Park**, bringing more foot traffic to downtown businesses.
- Installed **two new public parklets** at Lakes on 1st and Sweethaven Tonics, encouraging people to stay and enjoy the downtown area.
- Began discussions with the City of New Ulm about **possible improvements to the Minnesota and Center Street intersection** in order to enhance vitality and promote active transportation.
- Continued discussions to **educate community leaders and engage them** in the work to strengthen and revitalize New Ulm.

Food Environment Action Team

- Partnered with local vendors to offer **Power of Produce (POP)** days at the local farmers markets, which empower children and seniors to make healthful food choices, increase family participation at farmers markets and build a healthier community. In New Ulm and Springfield, the event served 120 families with children and 120 senior citizen households.
- Worked with the farmers market sponsor, KNUJ, to secure an **EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer card) machine** to allow SNAP-eligible community members with low incomes to shop at the market and access

locally grown fruits and vegetables. Growers also benefit by being able to reach more community members who may otherwise not have access.

- Partnered with New Ulm Schools Community Education to offer several one-session workshops titled **“Meal Prep That Fits Your Budget.”** The workshops attracted 22 participants and combined education, locally grown produce, and tools to ease the stress of meal planning while shopping within a budget (and eating healthier)
- Launched **Healthy Eats New Ulm** to encourage everyone in the community to visit some local restaurants and try some great-tasting, healthier dishes.

Brown County Chemical Health Action Team

- Created a **billboard to promote responsible locked storage of cannabis** at home.
- Continued to educate the community about a **social host ordinance** and why it matters. Met with 100 local students in 9th to 12th grade to explain what a social host ordinance is and discuss how to get involved in helping to create a countywide plan.
- Promoted the drug-use prevention campaign called **Red Ribbon Week** and created a **vaping flyer** for sharing on social media in school newsletters, given the high prevalence of vaping among area youth.

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Summer-long demonstration project at the intersection of 1st North St. and Garden St.

Walk and Roll to School Day

Worksite Wellness Action Team

- Hosted **quarterly worksite wellness networking and training events** for 65 attendees.
- Sponsored the annual **Poker Walk** in partnership with the Chamber and Ameriprise Financial to promote physical wellness; offered the annual **Holiday Trimmings program**.
- Partnered with the Brown County Mental Health and Wellness Action Team to update and rebrand a **resiliency program** to better fit the needs of worksites and make it easier to implement. Embrace Wellness continues to help employees build resiliency through fun, evidence-based mental well-being strategies.

Mental Health Action Team

- Offered a free **safeTALK training** in partnership with the New Ulm Ministerial Association to 28 faith-based professionals on how to help prevent suicide.
- Launched the **Brown County Lunch Table Initiative**, which brings public health nurses and health educators into the schools to talk to students and staff about various health topics, ranging from physical health to mental health and anything in between. The goal is to lower the rates of mental illness, self-harm and suicide attempts of students by providing them access to additional supportive adults to whom they can turn.
- Partnered with the Farm-City Hub Club to offer a free **QPR training** to help people learn how to recognize the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to use three simple steps — **Question, Persuade and Refer** — to help save a life.
- Partnered with a local school, church and nonprofits to offer **four trainings on understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences** to 84 community members.
- Promoted a **Kindness in Chalk activity**, where people covered the sidewalks with messages and images of love, peace, hope and acceptance with the intention of bringing smiles to the faces of those who need it the most.

Safe Routes to School Action Team and Coalition for Active, Safe and Healthy Streets (CASHS)

- Finalized New Ulm's **new Active Transportation Plan** with consulting assistance from MnDOT's Active Transportation Program. More than 100 community members provided input via a survey. The final adopted plan will help the city and stakeholders take steps toward expanding the active transportation system for walking, bicycling and other types of human-powered mobility, implementing the priorities identified, and facilitating intergovernmental coordination.
- Conducted a **summer-long demonstration project at the intersection of 1st North St. and Garden St.** in partnership with the City of New Ulm. CASHS team volunteers installed temporary curb extensions, or "bump outs" to help residents in the neighborhood and throughout the community experience how curb extensions help slow traffic and make it safer for all who use Harman Park and walk or bike in the area. A total of 19 community members completed a survey about the intersection and all shared positive feedback.
- Rebooted the **School Patrol** for Jefferson and the Middle School campuses, with 11 student patrols (after having none over the last two years).
- Revamped the **school arrival/dismissal procedure** and conducted a pilot for a **weekly Walking School Bus** from Lincoln Park for students to walk to the St. Paul, Jefferson and Middle School campuses.
- Conducted two **Walk and Roll to School Days** to encourage walking or bicycling to school, with 84 students participating in May and 125 in October from four different schools, along with numerous volunteers.
- Hosted a **training for the Walk! Bike! Fun! curriculum**, developed by the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota, and trained four area educators, a SHIP coordinator and a Safe Routes to School coordinator.

For more information on the work of the Heart of New Ulm's seven action teams, visit www.heartofnewulm.com