

Physician in the Community Scholarly Project Showcase 2026



*Wednesday, August 5, 2026
3:00 pm – 5:00 pm*

*Medical College of Wisconsin – Central Wisconsin
1900 Westwood Drive, Suite 3100
Wausau, WI 54401*

Our Goal

At MCW—Central Wisconsin, we strive to develop physicians who are deeply connected to their communities—professionals who understand how social and structural determinants of health shape patients’ lives and who actively advocate for the well-being of the communities they serve.

Through the two-year *Physician in the Community* course, our students build meaningful partnerships with community members across diverse fields while exploring local health priorities. Working alongside their community partners, they identify needs, design and implement scholarly projects, and share their insights through thoughtful and impactful presentations.

We would like to thank our many community teachers and community mentors, as well as the Physicians in the Community Advisory Board for their input into the training of our future doctors, many of whom will return to live and work in Central Wisconsin communities.

Showcase Program Schedule

3:00-4:00 pm	Student Poster Presentations (please see map for locations)
4:00-4:05 pm	Welcome, Opening Remarks, and Presentation of Teaching Pins – Corina Norrbom, MD
4:05-4:55 pm	Featured Project Presentations ➤ Mallory Rudolph ➤ Matthew Marcou ➤ Emma Jaeger and John Gabriel Pierre Snyder ➤ MacKenzie Kerchefski ➤ Emily Voss
4:55-5:00 pm	Community Engagement Fund Awards and Closing Remarks – Corina Norrbom, MD



Student Projects

- **Broden Bunnell: Stop the Bleed: Expanding Outreach and Evaluating Hemorrhage Control Training in Central Wisconsin**
- **Emma Ceaglske: The Impact Therapy Dogs Have on Human Mental Wellbeing**
- **Tsewang Dolkar: Mental Health Free Clinic: Impact on Medical Student Perspectives**
- **Noah Foster: Mentoring in Medicine: Optimizing Guidance for Crafting the Personal Statement**
- **John Fox: Evaluating Awareness of Well Testing Recommendations and Fish Consumption Advisories in Central Wisconsin**
- **Gage Hazelton: Exploratory Analysis of Conversational Turns in English and Hmong Early Childhood Classrooms**
- **Kaylynn Imsande: Moms for Medicaid**
- **Emma Jaeger: Blastomycosis: An Underdiagnosed Northwoods Disease**
- **MacKenzie Kerchefske: Assessment of Continuous Glucose Monitor Program at Wausau Free Clinic**
- **Karly Kostman: Understanding Barriers to Colorectal Cancer Screening in Wisconsin**
- **Tony Lewis: Developing a Cultural Broker Program: Insights from Hmong and Hispanic/Latino Communities in Central Wisconsin**
- **Rhiley Maguire: Knowledge, Perceptions, and Barriers to Organ Donation: A Wisconsin Student Quality Improvement Project**
- **Matthew Marcou: Effects of the Implementation of Dedicated Physical Fitness Time for Police Officers on Officer Wellbeing**
- **Gabrielle Richardson: ACEing Life: Connecting Adolescent Survivors of Adverse Childhood Experiences with Community Resources**
- **Netzali Pacheco Rojas: Understanding the Mental Health Toll and Vital Advocacy Role of Community Health Worker's Serving Rural Latino Communities**
- **Mallory Rudolph: Disability Advocacy: MCW-CW Teddy Bear Clinic Play Therapy with GiGi's Playhouse**
- **John Gabriel Pierre Snyder: Blastomycosis: An Underdiagnosed Northwoods Disease**
- **Jenna Trzebiatowski: Mini Medics: An Exploration of Medical Careers for Children in Rural Communities**
- **Emily Voss: Staying in the Game: Strategies for Injury Prevention in Pickleball**
- **Benjamin Zimmer: Impact of Community CPR Training on Emergency Response and Health Education Views**



Medical Student: Broden Bunnell

Project Title: Stop the Bleed: Expanding Outreach and Evaluating Hemorrhage Control Training in Central Wisconsin

Community Mentor: Andrea Hebert, MSN, RN, CCRN

Collaborating Organization: Aspirus

Faculty Mentor: Corina Norrbom, MD

Purpose: Before emergency medical workers arrive, bystanders are often the first to help. Actions taken in the prehospital setting offer the greatest chance to save lives, especially in rural areas with longer EMS response times. Uncontrolled hemorrhage is the leading cause of preventable death, as nearly 45% of cases are survivable with early intervention. Expanding Stop the Bleed training can equip bystanders with the skills and tools needed to intervene in situations with life-threatening bleeding.

Methods: Eighty-nine participants completed the Stop the Bleed Course Version 3.0 training and responded to an anonymous, voluntary survey assessing various training outcomes and participant experiences.

Results: Participants reported significantly greater preparedness to assist an injured person experiencing severe bleeding following training ($M = 8.72$) compared to before training ($M = 5.63$), $p < .001$, significantly greater likelihood of attempting bleeding control following training ($M = 8.89$) compared to before training ($M = 5.64$), $p < .001$, and significantly greater likelihood of rendering aid when a bleeding control kit was available ($M = 3.62$) compared to when a kit was not available ($M = 2.83$), $p < .001$. In addition, 78 percent of participants reported that having bleeding control equipment available in public spaces is very important, and 72 percent were very likely to recommend training to others.

Conclusions: The Stop the Bleed Course Version 3.0 continues to significantly improve perceived preparedness and likelihood to intervene in bleeding emergencies. Access to bleeding control kits further increased likelihood to provide aid, highlighting the importance of equipment availability in public spaces. Overall, participants strongly supported the training and emphasized the importance of widespread bleeding control kits, with a high likelihood of recommending the training to others.

[Project Video](#)

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Medical Student: Emma Ceagske

Project Title: The Impact Therapy Dogs Have on Human Mental Wellbeing

Community Mentor: Jenna Vande Zande, BA

Collaborating Organization: University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Faculty Mentor: Corina Norrbom, MD

Purpose: Promoting mental well-being is essential to avoid burnout and maintain positive mental health. Therapy dogs may aid in recovery and decrease stress and anxiety levels. They offer nonjudgemental support to people of all backgrounds. Therapy dogs may also encourage social interaction, compassion, and emotional regulation and facilitate a sense of belonging. We evaluated the overall impacts of therapy dog visits and whether benefits vary based on participant age or gender.

Methods: This project was done in partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire's therapy dog program and therapy dog handlers in Central Wisconsin. Anonymous post-visit surveys were distributed to participants following therapy dog interactions to assess the impact on mental wellbeing. Demographic information, including age and gender, was collected. Survey measures included stress levels before and after the visit, overall experience, mood, social motivation, and perceived well-being.

Results: A total of 66 participants completed the survey. Mean self-reported stress scores decreased from 6.47 before the therapy dog visit to 3.53 after the visit, representing a statistically significant reduction in stress (mean reduction 2.94, $p < 0.001$). All participants reported a very positive or positive experience, and 100% reported improved mood or well-being following the interaction. Positive outcomes were observed across all participants and did not significantly differ by age ($p = 0.11$) or gender ($p = 0.81$).

Conclusions: Therapy dog visits were associated with improved mood, reduced stress, and enhanced overall well-being across participants. Positive outcomes were observed across age and gender groups, with no significant differences identified between demographic groups, suggesting benefit across diverse populations. Future research could explore the impact of therapy dog interventions in additional settings including schools, hospitals, long-term care facilities, and other community environments.

[Project Video](#)

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**Medical Student: Tsewang Dolkar****Project Title:** Mental Health Free Clinic: Impact on Medical Student Perspectives**Community Mentor:** Robert Gouthro, MD**Collaborating Organization:** Wausau Free Clinic**Faculty Mentor:** Corina Norrbom, MD

Purpose: Individuals experiencing homelessness and those who are uninsured face significant barriers to accessing consistent, high-quality mental health care such as financial instability, limited access to healthcare services, housing insecurity, and stigma surrounding mental illness. The Mental Health Free Clinic of Wausau (MHFC) was established to provide psychiatric care to low-income, homeless, and uninsured individuals while also serving as an educational setting for medical students. This project evaluated how MHFC participation influenced medical student perspectives, comfort, and confidence in caring for homeless and uninsured patients.

Methods: Students completed a Qualtrics survey containing Likert-scale and open-ended questions focused on attitudes toward homeless and uninsured populations, understanding of barriers to care, comfort interacting with underserved patients, confidence in providing mental health care, and interest in future service or advocacy. Quantitative responses were summarized using descriptive statistics, while open-ended responses were reviewed for recurring themes related to student learning, empathy, and perceived educational value.

Results: Thirteen medical students completed the survey. 92.3% of respondents reported that volunteering at the MHFC made their perspective on working with homeless and uninsured patients more positive. Most students agreed that their understanding of challenges faced by homeless and uninsured patients improved, and their confidence interacting with the patients also increased. Open-ended responses emphasized the value of hearing patients' stories, building rapport over time, and better understanding the lived experiences of individuals with limited access to care.

Conclusions: Participation in the MHFC positively influenced medical student perspectives toward homeless and uninsured populations and was a meaningful educational experience.

[Project Video](#)

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Medical Student: Noah Foster

Project Title: Mentoring in Medicine: Optimizing Guidance for Crafting the Personal Statement

Community Mentor: Ashley Nichols, MS

Collaborating Organization: North Central Area Health Education Centers (AHEC)

Faculty Mentor: Corina Norrbom, MD

Purpose: Rural communities are disproportionately impacted by national healthcare shortages and difficulty with provider recruitment. Students from rural areas are more likely to return to practice upon completion of medical training. The Advocates in Medicine Pathway (AMP) Program provides undergraduate students from rural Wisconsin with individualized pre-medical advising to support the development of their AMCAS (American Medical College Application Service) application. One of the most critical components of the AMCAS application is the personal statement. Through a comprehensive workshop, this project sought to assist applicants with honing a concise rationale while also including appropriate detail in their personal statement.

Methods: AMP students attended a workshop for crafting a personal statement with subsequent peer review. A pre- and post- survey was distributed via an anonymous Qualtrics link as part of a mixed methods design to assess utility of the workshop and confidence in understanding the role and components of the personal statement.

Results: Students wanted to know how they might best convey their passion and motivation for pursuing a career as a physician. Following the session, students expressed an interest in having additional sessions earlier in the AMP program. They considered peer review and suggestions from former applicants to be valuable.

Conclusions: Rural pre-medical students found the AMCAS personal statement workshop and subsequent peer review to be helpful. A future study could determine whether assistance with development of personal statements may improve medical school admission rates for rural applicants.

[Project Video](#)

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Medical Student: John Fox

Project Title: Evaluating Awareness of Well Testing Recommendations and Fish Consumption Advisories in Central Wisconsin

Community Mentor: Gustavo Perna

Collaborating Organization: Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service

Faculty Mentor: Corina Norrbom, MD

Purpose: Well water contamination and unsafe fish consumption represent public health risks in Central Wisconsin, particularly in rural communities relying on private wells and locally sourced fish. Awareness of well testing recommendations and fish consumption advisories is variable, and ineffective communication may contribute to preventable adverse health outcomes. This project aims to assess baseline knowledge and inform improved public health messaging strategies.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey was administered to residents of eight Central Wisconsin counties. Participants were recruited at community health fairs, vaccination clinics, the Wausau Free Clinic, and community events. Surveys were distributed online in English and Spanish. Canned water with custom artwork and informational material was given to respondents as an incentive for survey completion.

Results: Among surveyed Central Wisconsin residents, substantial gaps existed between recommended practices and real-world behaviors related to well testing and fish consumption safety. Although many respondents relied on private wells and consumed locally caught fish, awareness of annual well testing recommendations and fish consumption advisories remained limited. Reported barriers included cost, logistical challenges, low perceived risk, and difficulty accessing information. Respondents reported trust in county health departments and healthcare providers and preferred receiving information online and through community outreach.

Conclusions: Residents identified practical barriers to action and expressed a preference for accessible information delivered through trusted local sources. Future efforts should focus on multilingual educational materials, digital outreach, and initiatives that reduce barriers to well testing. Combining education with actionable services such as free well-water testing kits may represent a promising community outreach strategy that could help to reduce preventable environmental health risks.

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**Medical Student: Gage Hazelton**

Project Title: Exploratory Analysis of Conversational Turns in English and Hmong Early Childhood Classrooms

Community Mentor: Andrea Mueller

Collaborating Organization: Childcaring

Faculty Mentor: Corina Norrbom, MD

Purpose: Childcaring is Central Wisconsin's childcare resource and referral agency. To increase early childhood learning, Childcaring has been using LENA Grow programming in its work with childcare centers. LENA Grow focuses on increasing back-and-forth vocal exchanges between an adult and a child, also called conversational turns. Previous studies have demonstrated that conversational turns are associated with improving various measures of intelligence, brain function, and social interaction. The purpose of this project was to see if there is a difference in conversational turns between early childhood educators and children based on the primary language spoken, specifically Hmong or English, pre and post participation in the LENA Grow program. With this data, Childcaring can identify which classrooms may benefit the most from the program.

Methods: Conversational turn data and the primary language of students and teachers were collected from the LENA database. Because of the non-normal distribution, unequal group sizes, and limited Hmong classrooms, all analyses were descriptive. Medians and interquartile ranges (IQRs) were calculated for baseline, final, and improvement (final – baseline) turns.

Results: In classrooms with Hmong-speaking teachers and students ($n = 6$), median conversational turns increased from 13 at baseline to 28 at final assessment, with a median improvement of 11. In classrooms with English-speaking teachers and students ($n=75$), median turns increased from 32 to 35, with a median improvement of 0.

Conclusions: Although the students in Hmong classrooms initially started at a significantly lower baseline, after completing the LENA Grow program, they made significant progress and reached a level comparable to that of their English-speaking peers. Future directions for the project could include partnering with Childcaring to collect more data and further identify significant baseline differences, which will help inform which classrooms are likely to benefit most from the program.

[Project Video](#)

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Medical Student: Kaylynn Imsande

Project Title: Moms for Medicaid

Community Mentor: Elizabeth Robinson

Collaborating Organization: The Babies' Place

Faculty Mentor: Corina Norrbom, MD

Purpose: Currently, states are required to provide Medicaid coverage through 60 days postpartum. In an effort to improve maternal health, a provision in the American Rescue Plan of 2021 gave states the option to extend postpartum Medicaid coverage to 12 months via a state plan amendment. However, at the time this project began, Wisconsin remained 1 of only 2 US states that had not yet implemented extended postpartum Medicaid coverage. The purpose of this project was to survey moms to gather their perspectives and experiences regarding their postpartum recovery and care. This information was then shared with the American Heart Association (AHA), who presented the data to Wisconsin elected officials to successfully lobby for extension of postpartum Medicaid benefits to 12 months.

Methods: Recently postpartum individuals were identified through various community partners. If willing to participate, individuals underwent a single structured interview to gather information on postpartum recovery, utilization of medical care during the postpartum period, and personal experiences regarding postpartum insurance coverage.

Results: Of the 32 women in the study, 50% did not feel physically ready to resume normal pre-pregnancy activities after 60 days. Additionally, 66.7% of women who sought care for physical symptoms and 100% of women who sought care for mental health symptoms required care for greater than 60 days. While 84.2% of women with private insurance felt they had adequate coverage during the postpartum period, only 30.7% of women with Medicaid felt the same.

Conclusions: These findings indicate that postpartum recovery often extends well beyond the 60 days that are covered by Medicaid. Thus, it is likely that Wisconsin women would benefit greatly from expansion of postpartum benefits from 60 days to 12 months.

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Medical Student: Emma Jaeger

Project Title: Blastomycosis: An Underdiagnosed Northwoods Disease

Community Mentors: Lexi Buntrock, Shelley Cohrs

Collaborating Organization: Lincoln County Health Department

Faculty Mentor: Corina Norrbom, MD

Purpose: Blastomycosis is an endemic fungal disease that has a large presence in Northcentral Wisconsin. The annual incidence of blastomycosis in Lincoln County is ten to twenty times greater than the national average, yet it takes 60% of residents three weeks or greater from the time of symptom onset to obtaining testing for blastomycosis. The purpose of this study was to educate Central Wisconsin community members about blastomycosis symptoms, risk factors, and prevalence.

Methods: Community members were invited to attend public blastomycosis presentations. A Qualtrics survey was administered to participants to evaluate pre and post presentation blastomycosis knowledge in different domains using the Likert scale: blastomycosis awareness, geographic distribution, local prevalence, signs, symptoms, and risk factors, as well as confidence in advocating for blastomycosis testing. Data were analyzed descriptively using frequency distributions to visually demonstrate knowledge growth.

Results: Fifteen participants completed pre and post presentation surveys. Self-reported knowledge increased throughout all measured domains. The largest increase in knowledge observed was in awareness of signs and symptoms of blastomycosis (47% to 87%) and confidence in advocating for screening (40% to 80%).

Conclusions: Community education can be an effective strategy to increase blastomycosis awareness in multiple domains. Confidence in advocacy for blastomycosis screening doubled after attending the presentation, suggesting participants not only learned information but felt empowered to act on that knowledge. Community-based interventions represent a promising approach to improve awareness of endemic diseases.

[Project Video](#)

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Medical Student: MacKenzie Kerchefski

Project Title: Assessment of Continuous Glucose Monitor Program at Wausau Free Clinic

Community Mentors: Jeff Oswald, MD and Kathryn Bush, RD, CDCSE

Collaborating Organization: Wausau Free Clinic

Faculty Mentor: Corina Norrbom, MD

Purpose: Diabetes Mellitus is a prevalent chronic condition that significantly impacts the health of America. Continuous glucose monitors (CGMs) are a tool for patients with diabetes to monitor glucose levels, improve blood sugar control and preempt hyper and hypoglycemic events. CGMs are often not available to individuals who are uninsured and have low incomes. Fortunately, the Wausau Free Clinic offers high quality primary care, associated prescribed medications and equipment to low-income uninsured individuals of all ages. This quality improvement project aimed to evaluate effectiveness of CGMs and associated education in positively impacting diabetes management in a free clinic patient population.

Methods: Diabetic patients were assessed for potential prescription of a CGM by their primary care provider. Patients met with a diabetic educator to discuss and learn how to use the device and monitor themselves. Surveys were provided to patients to assess the challenges, barriers, and attitudes before, during, and after CGM use for diabetic management.

Results: Participants were predominately Hispanic/Latino. In general, there was high CGM acceptance and satisfaction. Diabetes management also improved, with patients citing easier monitoring, greater glucose level awareness and limited finger pokes.

Conclusions: CGM device use among this low-income uninsured population improved diabetic management and patient satisfaction in their management of diabetes. It is hoped that continuing to gather information will also help the clinic identify sociodemographics of their diabetic patients who benefit the most.

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Medical Student: Karly Kostman

Project Title: Understanding Barriers to Colorectal Cancer Screening in Wisconsin

Community Mentors: Audrey Day, Keaton Jones, MD

Collaborating Organization: Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service (WIPPS)

Faculty Mentor: Corina Norrbom, MD

Purpose: Colorectal cancer (CRC) is the second leading cause of cancer-related mortality in the United States despite available effective screening methods. In Wisconsin, screening rates vary by county and remain low (39–67%). This project aimed to identify patient, provider, and system-based barriers to CRC screening among Wisconsin residents with a goal of guiding targeted educational and community outreach interventions.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey was developed to assess CRC screening recommendation awareness, health insurance status, use of primary care providers (PCP), screening discussion frequency, and perceived barriers. In partnership with community health workers and community-based organizations, the Qualtrics survey was distributed to Wisconsin residents aged ≥ 18 years via an anonymous link or QR code on flyers, at community events, and on partner social media pages.

Results: 566 respondents completed the survey. 93% reported having health insurance and 91% had a primary care provider (PCP). Discussing CRC screening with PCPs varied by age. Most agreed that CRC screening could save their lives (86%). Common perceived barriers included bowel preparation (75%), concerns about insurance coverage (42%), fear of pain or discomfort during testing (38%) and fear of what might be found (39%).

Conclusions: Gaps in patient–provider communication and perception-based barriers to CRC screening remain. It is important to address these issues to improve CRC screening rates.

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Medical Student: Tony Lewis

Project Title: Developing a Cultural Broker Program: Insights from Hmong and Hispanic/Latino Communities in Central Wisconsin

Community Mentor: Sharon Belton, PhD

Collaborating Organization: Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service (WIPPS)

Faculty Mentor: Corina Norrbom, MD

Purpose: Hmong and Hispanic/Latino individuals face significant barriers in accessing and navigating health systems in Central Wisconsin. Cultural brokers are trusted individuals who function as bridges between healthcare systems and communities facing health disparities. They can improve communication, build trust, and help patients obtain culturally appropriate medical care. The purpose of this project was to gather and analyze feedback from Hmong and Hispanic/Latino community members. A public university, medical school, and community-based organization partnered to assist a healthcare system seeking to develop a cultural broker program.

Methods: One-on-one interviews with Hmong and Hispanic/Latino individuals in Central Wisconsin were conducted by community health workers (CHWs) and a medical student. Additionally, two focus groups and two deliberative dialogues were conducted by the CHWs. In total, input from 59 individuals was collected and synthesized, resulting in a large body of qualitative data that was analyzed for key themes.

Results: There was strong support for the development of a cultural broker program to address barriers. Key recommendations for a cultural broker included:

- Help patients overcome access to care barriers, improve health literacy, and assist them with navigating care within complex and often confusing health systems.
- Address communication and language barriers and improve access to fluent, medically competent, high-quality, and culturally sensitive interpretation services, especially in-person interpretation.
- Support patients' cultural beliefs and help them overcome cultural barriers in healthcare systems; bridge gaps in providers' understanding of patients' cultural expectations and preferences.
- Have a strong community presence and establish a high level of community trust.

Conclusions: Findings identified through this project can be used by health systems seeking to develop a cultural broker program that is responsive to unique community challenges and needs.

[Project Video](#)

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Medical Student: Rhiley Maguire

Project Title: Knowledge, Perceptions, and Barriers to Organ Donation: A Wisconsin Student Quality Improvement Project

Community Mentor: Tracie Cook

Collaborating Organization: University of Wisconsin Organ and Tissue Donation

Faculty Mentor: Corina Norrbom, MD

Purpose: Organ donation relies on public awareness, informed decision-making, and family communication. Although students often support donation, gaps remain in understanding the donation process and common misconceptions. This quality improvement project assessed student knowledge and perceptions before and after a standardized educational intervention.

Methods: A standardized PowerPoint presentation developed with UW–Organ and Tissue Donation was delivered to two graduate programs, one undergraduate program, one high school, and approximately 2,500 high school students attending the Wisconsin Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) Conference in Spring 2025. Participants completed anonymous 33-item pre and post intervention Qualtrics surveys assessing knowledge, perceptions, barriers, and demographics. Data from 140 respondents were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Results: Students demonstrated positive baseline attitudes toward organ donation; 68% were registered donors, 80% had discussed donation with parents, and 71% knew how to register. Baseline knowledge gaps were identified regarding donation procedures and misconceptions. Following the educational session, 100% of students agreed that becoming an organ donor is an easy way to help others in need, demonstrating improved understanding of donation impact.

Conclusions: Wisconsin students showed strong support for organ donation but benefited from targeted education addressing knowledge gaps. A brief standardized educational intervention represents a scalable strategy to improve awareness and encourage informed donor conversations among students and communities.

[Project Video](#)

[Project Poster](#)



Medical Student: Matthew Marcou

Project Title: Effects of the Implementation of Dedicated Physical Fitness Time for Police Officers on Officer Wellbeing

Community Mentor: Lt. Garrett Carr

Collaborating Organization: Wausau Police Department

Faculty Mentor: Corina Norrbom, MD

Purpose: Police work is physically demanding, and officers are expected to maintain physical fitness on personal time despite having reduced capacity to do so due to long shifts and other stressors. We explored whether Wausau Police Department would like dedicated time for physical fitness and current barriers that may be preventing officers from maintaining fitness.

Methods: A Qualtrics survey was emailed to current Wausau PD officers prior to the implementation of the fitness program. This survey inquired about current physical fitness habits and willingness to participate in the program. The survey also collected information on the barriers that officers currently face in maintaining physical fitness on and off-duty and other variables that may prevent effective utilization of the program.

Results: The survey received over 60 responses from the police department. Responses were largely favorable, with 62% saying they would utilize a fitness program every shift or frequently. 82% of respondents said that it was difficult to work out off-duty due to external factors (time, family obligations, etc.), and 45% agreed it was difficult to stay physically active while on-duty.

Conclusions: The majority of officers surveyed were in favor of dedicated physical fitness time while on-duty. The infrastructure needed for this program, namely exercise equipment and space, is currently in place, but there are barriers that prevent it from being used. A pilot fitness program has been approved and is currently being implemented at the department. Another survey is planned 6-12 months after implementation to evaluate efficacy of the program and changes in officer health.

[Project Video](#)

[Project Poster](#)

**Medical Student: Gabrielle Richardson**

Project Title: ACEing Life: Connecting Adolescent Survivors of Adverse Childhood Experiences with Community Resources

Community Mentor: Shannon Young, Ph.D.

Collaborating Organization: Enrich, Excel, Achieve Learning Academy - Wausau Area School District

Faculty Mentor: Jeffrey Amundson, PhD

Purpose: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), such as abuse, neglect, or socioeconomic challenges, are traumatic events that happen before the age of 18. Students with high ACE scores are shown to have lower academic achievement and trouble with relationship building, often needing the help of mentors and the community to work through their adversity while becoming self-reliant. If individuals are not able to appropriately work through their adversity or do not have the resources available, they often repeat the cycle of trauma and instability. The Enrich Excel Achieve Learning Academy (EEA) is a charter school in the Wausau School District for students in grades 6-12 who have had difficulty in other learning environments. Many of the students have high ACE scores.

Methods: A singular, easily navigable website was created using Weebly for EEA. Through the website, EEA students could learn about and access pertinent and available resources for teenagers in Marathon County. The resources were subdivided into categories such as housing, food, and clothing. The website was then presented to all of the EEA students to increase awareness and provide education on use.

Results: Between January 1, 2025 and December 31, 2025, there were 93 unique users who accessed the website with a total of 277 page views, meaning about 3-4 resources were utilized per user.

Conclusions: Providing a singular website for students with high ACE scores may help them access available resources and thus promote self-sufficiency.

[Project Video](#)

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Medical Student: Netzali Pacheco Rojas

Project Title: Understanding the Mental Health Toll and Vital Advocacy Role of Community Health Worker's Serving Rural Latino Communities

Community Mentors: Orella Hills, Nicole Terrill

Collaborating Organization: Hola/Neighbor 2 Neighbor (N2N)

Faculty Mentor: Corina Norrbom, MD

Purpose: Approximately 15,000 Hispanic/Latino residents live across 8 counties in Central Wisconsin. Community Health Workers (CHWs) serve as trusted liaisons supporting healthcare access, social services, and advocacy for vulnerable populations, and are uniquely impacted as members of the same communities they serve. This project examined the prevalence, manifestations, and contributing factors of secondary traumatic stress (STS) among Hispanic CHWs in rural Central Wisconsin, a population largely absent from existing literature.

Methods: Semi-structured interviews and a focus group were conducted with Hispanic CHWs. Five interviews occurred before (Fall 2024) and four after (Spring 2025) a presidential administration change resulting in significant immigration policy shifts. Data were analyzed thematically. A culturally tailored workshop series was developed with CHW advisory input. Pre and post surveys utilized the Brief ProQOL-12 and Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale.

Results: Thematic analysis identified key STS contributors. CHWs described compounded vulnerability from sharing undocumented status with clients, experiencing personal and vicarious trauma simultaneously. Immigration-related distress, family separation fears, and community withdrawal — with families delaying prenatal care and essential services — were pervasive. Workforce reductions (22 to 11 staff) doubled the trauma load on remaining CHWs, who reported moral distress, compassion fatigue, role justification burden, and chronic job insecurity from grant-dependent funding. Despite this, CHWs channeled distress into advocacy: guardianship planning, Know Your Rights workshops, and coalition building. Peer support, collectivistic values, and nature-based practices emerged as protective factors, though no organizational mental health resources existed. Hispanic CHWs reported the highest mean STS scores (23.9) compared to Hmong (18.8) and refugee-serving (19.3) CHWs, while maintaining high compassion satisfaction (44.4).

Conclusions: Hispanic CHWs experience significant STS amid escalating community needs. Phase 2 will evaluate whether culturally grounded interventions buffer cumulative STS. Future plans include advocating for stable CHW funding, developing culturally aligned mental health resources, addressing training gaps in STS self-identification, and longitudinal tracking of CHW well-being.

[Project Video](#)

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Medical Student: Mallory Rudolph

Project Title: Disability Advocacy: Medical College of Wisconsin-Central Wisconsin Teddy Bear Clinic Play Therapy with GiGi's Playhouse

Community Mentor: Erica Erdman

Collaborating Organization: GiGi's Playhouse

Faculty Mentor: Corina Norrbom, MD

Purpose: Children with intellectual disabilities often experience feelings of fear and anxiety in medical environments, creating barriers to effective healthcare delivery. This project assessed the implementation of a play-based Teddy Bear Clinic to inform improving medical preparedness and inclusivity at GiGi's Playhouse.

Methods: Families and caregivers of children with intellectual disabilities attending GiGi's Playhouse in Weston, Wisconsin were invited to participate in an anonymous survey following attendance at a Teddy Bear Clinic event. Participants completed a paper survey at the initial event and at a follow up event about a year later to assess perceptions of anxiety, medical preparedness, and communication.

Results: Thirty-three caregivers completed a baseline survey following participating in the Teddy Bear Clinic, and 15 caregivers completed the one-year follow-up survey. Baseline responses demonstrated variability in involvement during medical visits and in participant's comfort with healthcare environments. At one-year follow-up, 94% of caregivers reported that the Teddy bear Clinic prepared their child very well or extremely well for future medical appointments. Additionally, 74% of caregivers reported improved understanding of medical devices following participation in the event. Overall, responses reflected positive perceptions of medical preparedness and familiarity with healthcare encounters following participation.

Conclusions: This project evaluated the use of a structured Teddy Bear Clinic to improve medical preparedness and support possible healthcare experiences for children with intellectual disabilities. Caregiver response at one-year follow-up demonstrated positive perceptions of preparedness for future medical visits and improved understanding of medical devices following participation. These findings support familiarity with healthcare environments while providing medical students with opportunities to develop skills in disability inclusive care.

[Project Video](#)

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Medical Student: John Gabriel Pierre Snyder

Project Title: Blastomycosis: An Underdiagnosed Northwoods Disease

Community Mentor: Lexi Buntrock

Collaborating Organization: Lincoln County Health Department

Faculty Mentor: Corina Norrbom, MD

Purpose: Blastomycosis is a highly endemic fungal infection in Lincoln and Marathon Counties. Diagnosis of the infection is often delayed, and delays in diagnosis can cause serious or fatal illness. The purpose of the project was to determine the level awareness of blastomycosis among local clinicians within Lincoln County & Marathon County, and whether the disease was considered as a part of their differential for unresolving pneumonia.

Methods: A literature review was conducted regarding the typical and atypical manifestations of blastomycosis, its treatment, and its geographic impact on the state of Wisconsin. We then developed a 20-minute lecture to highlight key findings and presented to local physicians in local hospital systems within Lincoln and Marathon counties. A pre and post survey was created using Qualtrics and an anonymous QR code displayed after the presentation.

Results: 11 primary care physicians completed the survey. After the presentation, survey participants indicated that they felt more confident in ordering screening tests of blastomycosis and that they are more cognizant of the delayed onset of symptoms of blastomycosis.

Conclusions: Educating physicians who practice in endemic blastomycosis areas may decrease delays in diagnosis for patients with blastomyces infection.

[Project Video](#)

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Medical Student: Jenna Trzebiatowski

Project Title: Mini Medics: An Exploration of Medical Careers for Children in Rural Communities

Community Mentor: Julie Bollmann

Collaborating Organization: Children's Imaginarium

Faculty Mentor: Corina Norrbom, MD

Purpose: There is an ever-growing need for physicians in rural communities throughout the state of Wisconsin. Attempting to increase the number of physicians and healthcare workers in Wisconsin's rural communities may begin with medical career exploration during childhood. Medical students who grew up in rural areas are more likely to practice in a rural setting, and therefore increasing the number of medical students from rural areas can increase the number of physicians practicing in rural communities. Mini Medics focuses on providing an opportunity for youth from rural areas of Wisconsin to engage in medicine-related career exploration.

Methods: Medical career exploration events were hosted at the Children's Imaginarium in Wausau, Wisconsin. Children were accompanied by a guardian as they proceeded through various stations of hands-on learning. Surveys from both parents and children were collected at the end of the event and the data was assessed via Qualtrics Survey Software.

Results: 94% of children who attended Mini Medics and completed the survey said they enjoyed the event. Many parents gave written qualitative comments regarding their satisfaction with the event. Most parents commented that they would like to see more of this type of event, with inclusion of topics such as the importance of healthy eating and nutrition.

Conclusions: Providing fun health exploration events for children can increase interest in medical careers. Healthcare-related career exploration opportunities for children and families from rural areas may inspire more rural children to pursue a career in medicine.

[Project Video](#)

[Project Poster](#)



Medical Student: Emily Voss

Project Title: Staying in the Game: Strategies for Injury Prevention in Pickleball

Community Mentor: Lisa Knoll

Collaborating Organization: Wausau Area Pickleball

Faculty Mentor: Corina Norrbom, MD

Purpose: Pickleball participation has increased rapidly due to its accessibility and strong social component. Participation offers many benefits, including improved cardiovascular health, weight management, muscle and bone health, cognitive stimulation, and reduced social isolation. However, musculoskeletal injuries are common, likely due to frequent play, prolonged sessions, and ease of entry for participants. Warm-up behaviors represent a possible strategy to reduce injury and support sustained participation. This quality improvement project evaluated the prevalence and causes of pickleball-related injuries, as well as participants' warm-up knowledge and behaviors, in a community setting.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey was conducted among adult pickleball players (n=112) recruited from three sites in Wausau, Wisconsin, in the first quarter of 2025. Collected data includes demographics, frequency/duration of play, warm-up beliefs/behaviors, and injury history. Descriptive statistics and Spearman rank correlations were used for analysis. The project was determined to be exempt by the Medical College of Wisconsin Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Results: Among respondents, 25% reported no pickleball-related injuries, while 71% with injury history reported two or more injuries. Knee and elbow injuries were most common, with overuse as the leading cause, followed by sudden change in direction. A greater proportion of previously injured players reported warming up compared to uninjured players. A weak but statistically significant correlation was found between the perceived importance of warming up and confidence in warm-up knowledge ($\rho = 0.24$, $p = 0.016$). Strong correlations were found between importance and behavior ($\rho = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$) and between confidence and behavior ($\rho = 0.58$, $p < 0.001$).

Conclusions: Findings suggest that most players value warming up, but fewer than half feel confident in warming up or consistently do so. Community-based warm-up education may reduce injury and support continued participation.

[Project Video](#)

[Project Poster](#)



Medical Student: Benjamin Zimmer

Project Title: Impact of Community Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Training on Emergency Response and Health Education Views

Community Mentor: Gustavo Perna

Collaborating Organization: Health Opportunities for Latin Americans (HOLA)

Faculty Mentor: Corina Norrbom, MD

Purpose: There are disparities in access to life-saving Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) training in underserved, rural, and primarily Hispanic communities. Systemic barriers such as language, accessibility, and work constraints contribute to lower CPR training rates and reduced emergency preparedness. The primary aim of this project was to improve the implementation of bystander CPR training in primarily Hispanic and rural underserved communities and increase an individual's confidence to intervene in an emergency.

Methods: Participants completed the American Heart Association Friends and Family CPR training through a bilingual, community-based initiative conducted in partnership with community health workers. Trainings were offered in English or Spanish and followed by an optional anonymous post-training survey available in both languages. The survey assessed prior health education experiences, confidence in performing CPR, perceptions of culturally tailored materials, and willingness to intervene in an emergency.

Results: Thirty-six participants completed the survey. At baseline, 44.4% (n=16) reported no prior CPR training, highlighting a community preparedness gap. Following the session, participants reported increased confidence performing CPR, with 65.7% (n=23) feeling "much more confident" and 34.3% (n=12) "slightly more confident." Additionally, 91.2% (n=31) expressed interest in future health education sessions, and 100% (n=36) would recommend the course and believed more people in their community should receive CPR training.

Conclusions: Findings highlight that brief, culturally and linguistically tailored CPR training can enhance emergency preparedness, build confidence, and expand engagement with community-based health education. By meeting participants where they are, both linguistically and geographically, this initiative demonstrates how community partnerships can reduce inequities and strengthen local capacity for emergency response.

[Project Video](#)

[Project Poster](#)

Community Engagement Awards

The Community Engagement Award was established to help the students invest in the community through their projects and has been generously supported by Dr. David and Mary Ann Lillich, Incredible Bank, and the Dan Storey Foundation. This fund will help support the following projects in the upcoming year:

- Pearl Scallon – Breast Cancer Screening Education in the Hmong Community
- Alyssa Williamson – Integrating Intergenerational Collaboration into the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum (LYWAM) SPARK! Program
- Tyler Stroup and Stephanie Larson – Analysis of Rural Health Ethics
- Parker Kuehni – Reasons for Special Olympics Athletes' Utilization of MedFest and Factors Contributing to Their Healthcare: A Quality Improvement Project with Special Olympics Wisconsin
- Alexandria Kraus – Wellness on Wheels
- Corinn Fritz – Anaphylaxis Training in Rural Wisconsin; Impacts of Epinephrine Availability and Anaphylaxis Preparedness at Wisconsin Farms

Physician in the Community Advisory Board

We would like to thank our many community partners, teachers and mentors, as well as the Physicians in the Community Advisory Board for their time and input!

Physicians in the Community Advisory Board:

- Sarah Beversdorf – Aspirus
- Cari Guden – Edgar School District
- Francisco Guerrero – HOLA, Inc
- Brian Gumness – BA & Esther Greenheck Foundation
- Dakota Kaiser – Tall Pines Behavioral Health
- Kris Lahren – Medical College of Wisconsin – Central Wisconsin
- Brittany Mews – Clark County Health Department
- Caitlin Suginaka – Marathon County
- Yingyakia Vang – Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service
- Jeffrey Oswald – Wausau Free Clinic
- Christopher Zeman – Aspirus

Teaching Pins

MCW Teaching Pins recognize excellent teachers that advance medical students' learning and support the core missions of teaching and engagement in the community. The following outstanding medical student teachers have been recognized by the MCW Curriculum and Evaluation Committee for this past academic year.

- Jeffrey Amundson, PhD – Assistant Professor
- Francisco Guerrero, BS – Community Partner
- Lanette Walker – Community Partner

Student Project Support

If you would like to contribute to the Community Engagement Fund to assist future students with their community engagement projects, please contact:

Karen Ropel
Director of Development
Medical College of Wisconsin
kropel@mcw.edu
414.955.4739

Thank you for your support!

Matthew Hunsaker, MD
Campus Dean

Corina Norrbom, MD
Course Director

Terri Walkush
Course Coordinator