

# ANNUAL COMMUNITY OUTREACH REPORT

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**Prepared by**  
Community Outreach



# Our Mission

To provide superior healthcare services to those who are sick or injured and offer services that support a healthy life.

## Community Needs Assessment

Tomah Health collaborates with several regional healthcare providers and community-based organizations to conduct a comprehensive Community Health Needs Assessment called the CompassNOW Report. The partnership was formed to help prevent illnesses and diseases while promoting healthy behaviors to improve area residents' lives and lower healthcare costs.

The collaboration conducts a region-wide assessment every three years that identifies and prioritizes health needs by collecting and analyzing data and seeking input from various community representatives. The assessment results have been used to affirm existing programs, develop new strategies, and ultimately improve the community's overall health.

From the Community Health Needs Assessment, collaborators in Monroe County developed the Monroe County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) to address needs in Monroe County specifically.

Tomah Health uses the CompassNOW Report, Monroe County CHIP, County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, and community input to guide our programming services.



# Nutrition

The foods we eat shape our bodies and impact our risk of chronic disease, poor mental health, and overall wellbeing. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 90% of U.S. adults have at least one risk factor for chronic diseases related to poor diet, including high blood pressure and obesity (CDC 2024). These conditions are preventable or manageable through nutrition and lifestyle changes, highlighting the significance of what we eat and how we move.

In Monroe County, 39% of adults are obese, which increases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and various types of cancer (County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, 2025). According to the American Cancer Society, nearly double the number of adults under 55 are being diagnosed with colorectal cancer today compared to 10 years ago (Masciadrelli, 2023). Obesity rates have been steadily rising, linked to increased consumption of high-calorie, nutrient-poor foods. In Wisconsin, 38.9% of adults said they consumed fruit less than once a day, and 22.8% said they consumed vegetables less than once a day. (Wisconsin Department of Health Services, 2023) A nutritious diet, including whole grains, lean proteins, healthy fats, and plenty of fruits and vegetables, helps combat obesity and its associated risks, improving overall life expectancy and reducing healthcare costs.

While we know nutrition is essential, many need help to apply these concepts at home. We're inundated with the latest diet or nutritional trends, and learning how to prepare meals at home can be overwhelming. To help Monroe County residents build the skills and confidence to cook whole-food meals, we created the "Cooking Essentials Cooking Class Series." According to the 2024 COMPASS Now report, 36% of Monroe County residents ranked the availability of community resources to learn new skills or hobbies as poor (Great Rivers United Way, 2024). In response to these items, we launched the first three classes in the series in 2024: Feeding Your Baby in the First Year, Knife Skills 101, and What's for Dinner: Pantry Class. In 2025, we launched an additional 3 classes in the series: Canning with Confidence, Cooking with Beans, & What's Oil the Confusion: A Class About Cooking Oils. In 2025, 170 area residents participated in our cooking classes.



# New in 2025

# Free Cooking Classes



## **CANNING WITH CONFIDENCE**

This class is a partnership between Tomah Health, the UW-Extension Monroe County, and the Community Education Group HCE. This beginner friendly class teaches participants the basics of pressure and water bath canning. Participants learn when to use each technique, how to prepare jars and equipment, and safety principles that prevent spoilage and ensure high-quality results. This class includes information on how to safely pressure can, what supplies are needed, tips and tricks from a Master Food Preserver, recipes and resources, and a live jelly making demonstration.



## **COOKING WITH BEANS**

This hands-on class teaches participants how to select, prepare, and cook a variety of dry beans with confidence. Participants learn different cooking techniques for preparing dry beans and tips to achieve the right texture and flavor. The class also features a live cooking demonstration that shows how to transform simple beans into delicious, satisfying dishes. By the end, participants are equipped with practical skills, new recipe ideas, and the know-how to enjoy beans as a versatile staple in everyday meals.



## **WHAT'S OIL THE CONFUSION?**

This class helps demystify the world of cooking oils. Participants learn the differences between common cooking oils, including smoke points, flavor profiles, storage guidelines, health considerations, and the best uses for each in everyday cooking. The class breaks down how to choose the appropriate oil for sauteing, frying, baking, roasting, and finishing dishes with confidence. It also includes a guided oil tasting, allowing participants to compare flavors, aromas, and textures of different oils.

# Free Cooking Classes



## **KNIFE SKILLS 101**

This class covers essential knife techniques, including setting up your cooking area, understanding different knife types and their parts, holding a knife properly, using a guide hand, and mastering various cutting techniques. Participants practice their skills by preparing two types of chopped spoon salads and learning how to make basic vinaigrette dressings. Additionally, the class includes instruction on cleaning and maintaining knife edges.



## **WHAT'S FOR DINNER? PANTRY CLASS**

You only eat as well as the choices you make at the grocery store. This class teaches essential skills for stocking and organizing a well-rounded pantry. Participants will learn about must-have ingredients, such as grains, legumes, canned goods, oils, and acids, and how to choose high-quality products that enhance everyday cooking. The class also covers tips for proper storage, pantry recipe ideas, and samples of pantry items. By the end of the class, participants will have the knowledge to maintain a versatile pantry that supports a variety of meals and encourages home cooking.



## **FEEDING YOUR BABY IN THE FIRST YEAR**

This class guides parents through transitioning from breastfeeding or formula feeding to introducing solid foods. The class covers essential topics such as when and how to start solids, the nutritional needs of infants, and understanding age-appropriate textures and portion sizes. Parents learn about the benefits of various first foods, how to ensure balanced nutrition, and how to handle common feeding challenges. By the end of the class, parents will feel confident in making healthy food choices for their babies and supporting their growth and development during this critical stage.

# Nutrition Coalition

The Monroe County Nutrition Coalition, formed in 2016, aims to improve the health of Monroe County residents "one bite at a time." Tomah Health is an active member and in 2025, we created a Fruit & Veggie Bingo Card to encourage more fruit and vegetable consumption during National Fruits and Vegetables Month in September. In addition, we developed the January Activity Challenge to encourage winter exercise and created an "Indoor Activity Resource" handout to help residents stay active during the colder months. We provided giveaways for both the Activity Challenge and Fruit and Veggie Bingo to boost participation.

Through Coalition meetings, we learned that many food pantry recipients needed guidance to prepare foods such as dry beans, lentils, rice, and peas.

We created 4 different handouts with instructions and "how to" tips and recipes for items commonly available at food pantries. These handouts were printed and distributed to local food pantries in Monroe County. See part of the "Cooking Dry Lentils" handout to the right.

## COOKING DRY LENTILS

### Ingredients:

1 cup dried lentils  
2 cups water or broth  
2 bay leaves (optional)



### LENTIL TIPS

- 1 pound = 2 1/4 cups dry
- 1 cup dry lentils = 2 to 2 1/2 cups cooked
- Cooked lentils can be refrigerated for up to 1 week or frozen for up to 6 months
- Lentils don't need to be presoaked like beans, just rinsed!

1. Rinse 1 cup dried lentils and remove any shriveled seeds or pebbles.
  2. Combine 1 cup dried lentils with 2 cups water or broth. Bring to a boil.
  3. Reduce heat and simmer gently. Cook uncovered for about 15-20 minutes (less for red lentils).
  4. Add water as need to make sure lentils are just barely covered. Lentils are cooked when they are tender and no longer crunchy. Drain well and enjoy!
- \*Do not add salt or acidity until the lentils are done cooking. If you add these during the cooking, the lentils can become tough.

## Common Lentil Types

| Lentil Type                                                                                          | Details                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Cooking Time                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Brown Lentils<br> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Most common type</li><li>• Flat shape; light brown to dark brown in color</li><li>• Mild, earthy flavor</li><li>• Keep their shape well when cooked</li><li>• Use in soups, salads, stews, casseroles, or veggie burgers</li></ul>                                                          | 15-20 minutes                                            |
| Green Lentils<br> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Flat shape; pale green to blue slate color</li><li>• Rich, earthy flavor, slightly more bold or peppery than brown lentils</li><li>• Keep their shape well when cooked</li><li>• Use in salads, side dishes, as a base for fish or meat</li></ul>                                           | 15-20 minutes                                            |
| Red Lentils<br>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Red, orange, or yellow in color; turn golden when cooked</li><li>• Mild, nutty, sweet flavor</li><li>• Red lentils are split, so they cook quickly, and become very soft and lose shape when cooked; easily puréed</li><li>• Use in soups, Indian Dal, and Middle Eastern recipes</li></ul> | 7-15 minutes on their own<br>In soup/stew: 15-20 minutes |

# Mental Health



Since 2014, Tomah Health has been an active member of the Monroe County Mental Health Coalition, addressing the county's growing mental health concerns. With one mental health provider for every 370 residents (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2025), mental health continues to be a pressing issue. The 2023 Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) found that 51.6% of Wisconsin students experienced anxiety, 35% felt sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row, 18.6% seriously considered suicide, and 14.9% made a suicide plan (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2023).

To support the mental health needs of Monroe County, Tomah Health co-lead the Education Sub-Committee of the Mental Health Coalition. This committee provides valuable community training programs such as Youth Mental Health First Aid, QPR Suicide Prevention Training, Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences, WeCOPE Stress Management Program, and Trauma-Informed Care 101.

The Coalition's current strategic plan follows a four-step approach focused on:

- Mental Health Education & Training
- Systems Change & Advocacy
- Trauma-Informed Care
- Increasing Coalition Member Engagement

In addition to these outreach efforts, our cooking classes support mental health by promoting healthy eating habits. Research shows that a healthy diet enhances brain function and cognitive performance and protects blood vessels (Harvard Medical School, 2024). Diets rich in omega-3 fatty acids, antioxidants, and whole foods contribute to improved mental health and a lower risk of depression and anxiety (Tello, 2018 & Naidoo, 2016).

In addition to our involvement in the Coalition, Tomah Health sponsors and hosts significant health events, including The Healthy Aging Expo, Women's Health Night, and Men's Health Night. These events bring together local organizations that specialize in community services for Monroe County.

# Alcohol & Other Drug Misuse



In Monroe County, 23% of adults reported binge or heavy drinking, and 35% of driving deaths involved alcohol (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2024). In addition to alcohol, opioids, and other drug use are of concern. In Wisconsin, 4.7% of the population misused opioids in 2019, and 0.5% used heroin--both higher than the national averages of 4.1% for opioid use and 0.3% for heroin use (Opioids Summary Data Dashboard, 2019). From 2018-2020, the count of opioid-related deaths in Wisconsin changed by 46.7% (Opioids: Summary Data Dashboard, 2019).

Tomah Health is an active Monroe County Safe Community Coalition member, which aims “to reduce and prevent alcohol, tobacco, and drug use, enhance traffic safety, and promote healthy choices.” This year, we assisted with the “Wake Up Call Room” events, educating parents about warning signs of substance misuse in their pre-teens’/teens’ bedrooms. We also supported the Coalition’s “Substance Use Prevention Day,” where Monroe County sophomores learned about vaping, inattentive driving, and opioid misuse and heard from individuals in recovery. Looking ahead, we plan to partner with other organizations to offer community training for naloxone (Narcan) use for opioid overdose prevention.

In 2023, Tomah Health opened a Suboxone Clinic Site to help those struggling with opioid addiction. “Suboxone helps alleviate withdrawal symptoms right away and is also taken long-term to help with cravings and prevent relapse (McMahon, 2022).” Additionally, we offer Methadone Monitoring Labs to help patients safely continue treatment and reduce the risk of opioid relapse.

In the Emergency Department, patients are given information on the Coulee Recovery Center, and staff will contact several facilities that provide rehab services if patients ask for help. We also offer a Peer Recovery Coaching Program where patients with substance use disorder can meet with a peer coach who has lived substance misuse experience and can provide support.



# Support Groups



## PARKINSON'S SUPPORT GROUP

In 2014, we started the Parkinson's Support Group to support local residents impacted by Parkinson's disease. The group meets the first Tuesday of every month from 1:00-2:30 p.m. in Classroom 1B, offering education and support to help participants cope with the challenges and changes associated with the condition. This group is for people with Parkinson's and their caregivers.

## CANCER SURVIVOR GROUP

In 2024, a local resident contacted to inquire about starting a Cancer Survivor Group. After conducting an area needs assessment, we found that while several organizations offer financial support for cancer care, no groups focused on emotional support in Monroe County. In response, our social workers partnered with Emplify Health's social workers to launch the Cancer Survivor Group at Tomah Health. This group, open to anyone diagnosed with cancer or a cancer survivor, meets the second Wednesday of each month from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. in Classroom 1B.



# Additional Services

## SAFESITTER BABYSITTING CLASSES

We offer a comprehensive SafeSitter Babysitter training program for adolescents in grades 6-8, teaching how to handle emergencies while caring for younger children and how to stay home alone safely.

Students learn first aid, CPR, basic childcare skills, and behavior management techniques. They also gain valuable life and business skills, such as screening childcare jobs, discussing fees, and greeting parents. This year, we reduced the cost to \$30 per child to make the class more affordable for families. The cost included lunch, the SafeSitter handbook, mini first aid kit, and the essential numbers notepad.

## FOOT CARE CLINICS

We partner with Viterbo University nurse practitioner students to offer free foot care clinics annually. Using state-of-the-art equipment, the students trim, cut, and clip nails, corns, and calluses. Due to high demand, we added clinic days and extended the number of available slots in 2024, and we now offer three free clinics each year. This year, we saw 140 patients during two foot care clinics (one was cancelled due to inclement weather). These clinics play a crucial role in the community, as Medicare does not cover foot care unless there is a qualifying preexisting medical condition.



# | Community Work

In addition to our community involvement to address the identified needs in Monroe County, we actively work to meet other community needs.

We partner with the Tomah Area School District (TASD) and provide free CPR/AED and First Aid certifications for staff and coaches, helping the District meet state and WIAA requirements. We also teach CPR/AED and give hospital tours to the Health Occupations Classes at Tomah High School. Additionally, we serve as a clinical site for Clinical Observations, a Healthcare Careers Class at Tomah High School, which allows students to observe different departments weekly at Tomah Health.

We teach a monthly class on various health topics for a senior group and provide annual volunteers to the Rotary Club of Tomah's Freeze Fest, "Swish Across the Lake." We attend wellness fairs annually, offering information on various health topics.

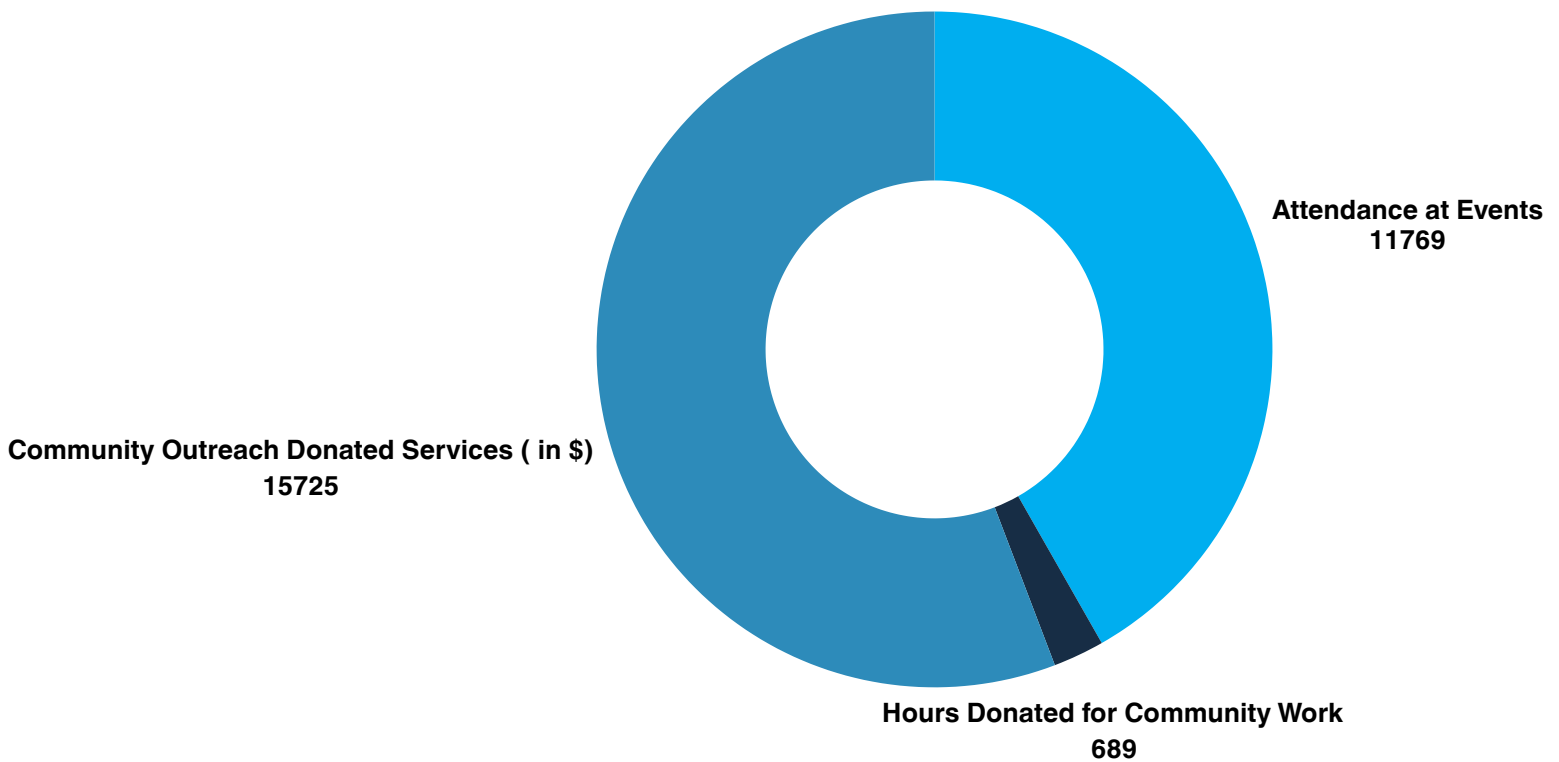
We help coordinate National Night Out, an event encouraging interactions between community members and emergency response personnel. This year, we focused on water safety and fitted children for the correct life jacket size.

We also organize the Healthy Aging Expo, Women's Health Night, and Men's Health Night. These significant community events promote health and wellness in Monroe County.

Additionally, we offer CPR/AED Skills Check Offs for community members and teach various educational classes upon request.



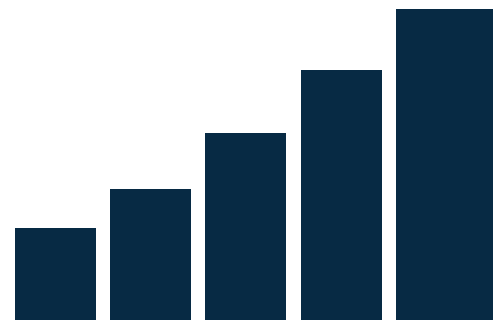
# Community Outreach Donated Services



**Total Number in Attendance at Events: 11,769 People**

**Total Hours Donated for Community Work: 689 Hours**

**Total of Community Outreach Donated Services: \$15,725**



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# Contact Us

Do you have ideas for our  
community programming?

Please reach out to:

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**Tomah Health**

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