



LIFE

Snapshot of Life in MARATHON COUNTY

12th Edition | 2019-2021

Snapshot of LIFE in Marathon County

The LIFE in Marathon County Report has been published every two years since 1997, making the 2019-2021 Report the 12th edition. This data driven report depicts the quality of life in Marathon County. The Calls to Action are used to inform the work of community organizations, many of which use the data to complete grant applications. The full LIFE Report now can be found online, offering an opportunity to dig deeper into the data. Access to population-level data is crucial to empower local leaders and community organizations to create results-based strategies that are data-driven. The LIFE Report project is guided by the LIFE Steering Committee and made possible by generous community funders. The Executive Committee and Steering Committee hope you find it a valuable resource as we work together to make Marathon County the healthiest, safest, most prosperous and connected community!

THE PURPOSE OF THE LIFE REPORT IS TO:

- Acknowledge community strengths.
- Identify community challenges.
- Serve as a catalyst for change by advancing community conversations and partnerships.

CHANGES TO THE 12TH EDITION

The 2019-2021 report continues to encompass four broad sections:

- Prosperous
- Healthy
- Safe
- Connected

NEW! The 2019-2021 report is powered by Marathon County Pulse, a public online data platform giving users access to current Marathon County population data. Pulse will give end users the ability to download a PDF version of the full report. Users also will be able to drill down into the data sources.



Community Assets

Marathon County is rich in resources and activities for residents to enjoy. To set the basis for determining what priorities to call out, the Steering Committee identified community assets available to all residents. These include:

- **COLLABORATION** among Marathon County organizations and agencies.
- **PEOPLE**
- **VIBRANT ARTS COMMUNITY**
- **OUTDOOR RECREATION** with parks and public space for all residents to enjoy.
- **STRONG HEALTH CARE**
- **QUALITY EDUCATION**
- **CENTRALLY LOCATED**
- **LAW ENFORCEMENT** partnerships.

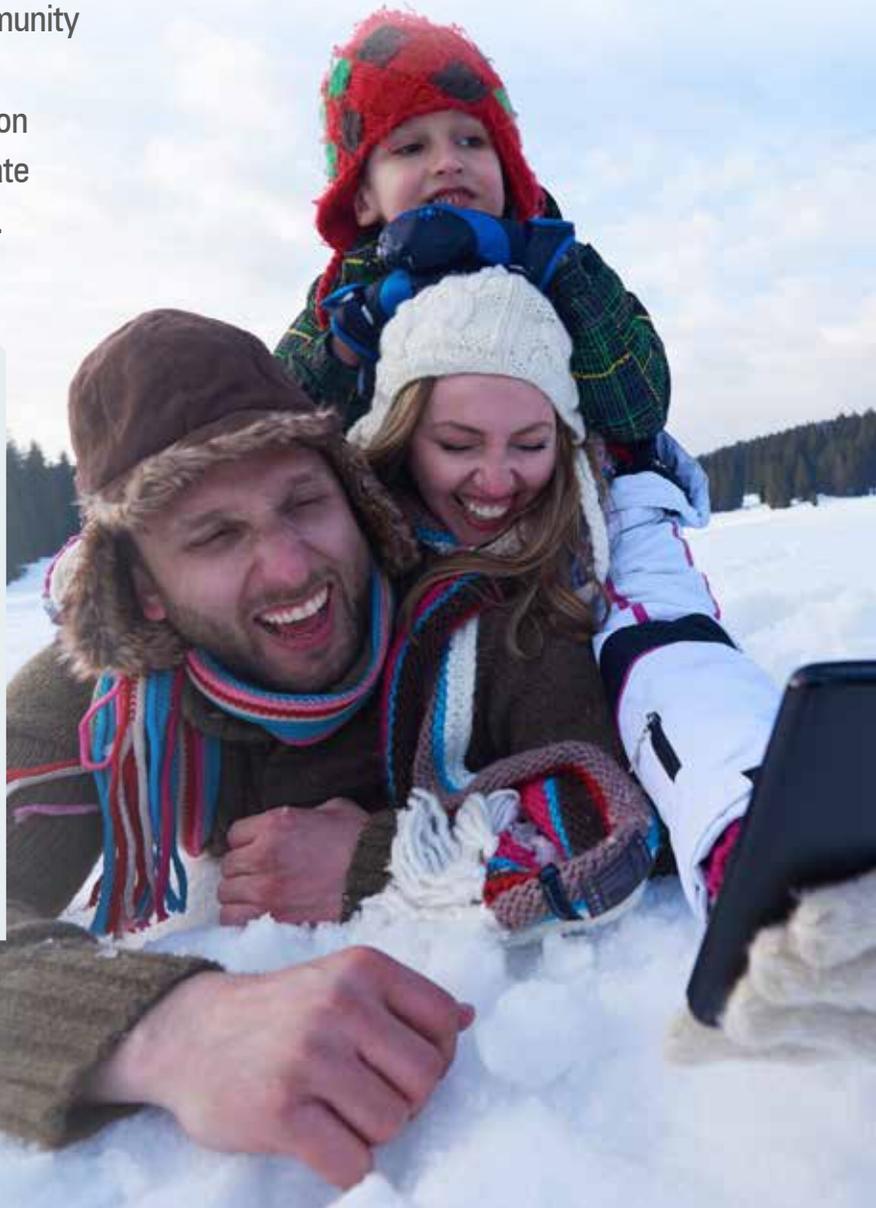


LIFE Calls to Action

The 2019-2021 LIFE Report establishes seven community Calls to Action. These priorities are based on report data, feedback from the Community Advisory Committee and the LIFE Steering Committee. The purpose of these Calls to Action is to advance community dialogue and stimulate action to improve the community's well-being.

THE CALLS TO ACTION

- ALCOHOL
- CHILD CARE
- DIVERSITY, INCLUSION & BELONGING
- DRUG TREATMENT & RECOVERY
- HOUSING
- WATER QUALITY
- WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



LIFE Calls to Action



ALCOHOL

Alcohol continues to be the most frequently consumed substance of use and misuse among teens and adults in Marathon County. There is a need to increase awareness of the impact of alcohol misuse and abuse on children, families and individuals.

CHILD CARE

Marathon County has experienced a significant decrease in child care programs and their capacity. Our community needs to have accessible, affordable, high-quality child care programs for families to live in Marathon County. We need to explore how our community can support child care.

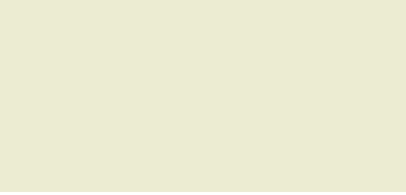
- Create outside investments to support our early childhood teachers and our children.
- Explore how businesses and school districts can support quality child care for their employees is important.
- Address the cliff of eligibility requirements in public benefits in regard to childcare (and MA, FoodShare, etc.). A benefits cliff is what happens when public benefit programs taper off or phase out quickly when household earnings increase. The abrupt reduction or loss of benefits can be very disruptive for families because even though household earnings increased, they rarely have increased enough for self-sufficiency.

DIVERSITY, INCLUSION & BELONGING

Create a community that is diverse, inclusive and everyone has a sense of belonging.

- Combat discrimination (in 2019, more than a third of LIFE Survey respondents reported one or more experiences of discrimination; this is a 7% increase since 2017).
- Ensure a welcoming and inclusive community (LIFE Survey respondents reported a continued decline in satisfaction with how welcoming the community is in 2019. Satisfaction with how welcoming the community is has fallen by more than 20 percentage points since 2013).
- Fewer than half of 2019 LIFE Survey respondents said they were satisfied with the level of tolerance in the community.





DRUG TREATMENT & RECOVERY

There is no community-wide plan to address the treatment and recovery of substance abuse to ensure continuum of care in recovery.

- Create more options in Transitional Housing units for individuals coming out of substance abuse treatment program.
- Expand Medically Assisted Treatment (MAT) outside of correctional settings. The majority of persons impacted by opioid addictions are not in jail, but are being treated at local medical facilities.
- Expand addiction treatment services wherever possible. A 2018 Wisconsin Professional Police Association survey found that 77% of respondents feel law enforcement should treat people addicted to opioids as needing care and treatment, rather than only as criminal offenders.

HOUSING

There is a need to expand quality, affordable, diverse housing. This includes access to rental housing for all incomes, condos, and housing for mid-life professionals.

WATER QUALITY

The community needs to engage key stakeholders and decision makers to address the options, costs and opportunities to reduce phosphorous from agricultural runoff to surface waters to acceptable levels.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Marathon County has gained new residents from surrounding rural counties but has lost residents to larger urban areas in the Midwest. There is a need to continue to develop and promote quality, engaging, entertaining places and amenities that attract people and are accessible to all.

- Promote opportunities for local employers to enhance recruiting and retention strategies.
- Develop, attract and retain the younger, well-educated workers who are critical to a strong Marathon County workforce.
- Our region's economic success requires action to enhance and promote efforts to support diversity and inclusion where culturally diverse communities feel welcome and are provided access to high growth-high wage jobs through development of relevant skills, knowledge and abilities.



Success | Progress

SUCCESS & PROGRESS

Part of the process of compiling the 2019-2021 LIFE Report is to reflect on the progress Marathon County has made since the 2017-2019 LIFE Report was published. The Steering Committee, along with the a community Advisory Committee, identified the following advances in Marathon County:

- **Marathon County School-Based Counseling Consortium** offers on-site mental health counseling to every Marathon County public school district.
- To **serve the growing population of seniors and increase social and community connections**, a multimillion-dollar initiative to develop new facilities and programming has been put into place. Those efforts include development of the YMCA's The Landing and extensive renovations at North Central Health Care.
- A **Crisis Assessment Response Team (CART)** was implemented with goals to reduce the numbers of involuntary detentions, provide better access, divert persons to mental health services, and provide immediate crisis response to alleviate demand on the crisis services. Marathon County has experienced significant reduction in emergency detentions for individuals with a mental health crisis with the formation of two CARTs, which pair a law enforcement officer with a crisis professional.
- The Marathon County Board of Supervisors has made it a priority to identify gaps in high speed Internet access and help residents connect to **affordable high speed Internet services**.
- The Marathon County Board of Supervisors has identified the **protection and enhancement of surface water and groundwater quality and quantity as a priority objective** in its 2018-2022 Strategic Plan.
- As a community, Marathon County has responded to **raise awareness and address the opioid (and other drugs) epidemic** with prevention, treatment and enforcement efforts through changes in organizational policies and practices. Grant funding from the Wisconsin Division of Health Services was secured to create a Medically Assisted Treatment (MAT) program in the county jail. This program will be the first in the state to offer Suboxone or Vivitrol to our inmate population to assist with opioid addiction issues.
- **Access to higher education in Central WI** is better than ever. Barriers to higher education have been greatly reduced and more young people getting degrees than previous generations. Marathon County residents age 25-44 received Bachelor's degrees at a higher rate than previous generations.
- The Marathon County Hunger Coalition member **pantries collaborated to ensure individuals/families receive the food to keep them healthy and fed**. More requests for food assistance were met by pantries throughout Marathon County. School districts, as well as post-secondary institutions, worked to solve hunger for students within their schools by opening food pantries within the schools.
- The Marathon County Board passed a resolution in 2019 to **recognize June as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) PRIDE month**.
- Overall, **Marathon County school districts meet or exceed WI state educational standards** (Forward Exam, ACT), leading to all school districts in Marathon County exceeding the state average rate for high school graduation

LIFE Report Highlights

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

One of the main purposes of The LIFE Report is to be a catalyst for change. For each section, the Section Sub-Committees compiled a list of actionable items to engage in, whether on an individual, organizational or community level. Each contribution can advance this work to make Marathon County the healthiest, safest, most prosperous, and connected community possible.

PROSPEROUS

- For Individuals:**
 - Promote and support childhood literacy.
 - Encourage employers to adopt family-friendly practices.
- For Organizations:**
 - Strive to pay a living wage that allows employees to participate more fully in the local economy.
 - Consider providing on-site childcare.
- For the Community:**
 - Collectively change to realize enhanced childcare services and expand affordable childcare facilities. View childcare providers as critical professionals, not babysitters.

HEALTHY

- For Individuals:**
 - Keep alcohol out of the hands of youth. Model safe and responsible alcohol use.
 - Educate yourselves on addiction as a chronic disease. Support local recovery efforts.
- For Organizations:**
 - Support community initiatives addressing evidence based approaches for solving the issues of substance abuse, affordable housing and basic needs for all members of the community.
- For the Community:**
 - Come together to plan and assist in implementing strategic actions for solving the community's issues of affordable housing, substance abuse and basic needs.

SAFE

- For Individuals:**
 - Stop participating in distracted driving, such as texting while operating a motor vehicle. Stay focused and cognizant.
- For Organizations:**
 - Assist individuals leaving incarceration by providing stable housing and employment opportunities that change lifestyles, while recognizing that this is a group that will occasionally fail.
 - Focus on solutions and funding to better serve individuals with mental health needs.
- For the Community:**
 - Commit to being a community where all people can maximize their full potential and feel valued, regardless of background, experience and perspective.

CONNECTED

- For Individuals:**
 - Seek to visit other communities, reach out to those with backgrounds different from our own, and attend local cultural events.
 - Reach out to neighbors. Consider planning a neighborhood block party or cookout.
- For Organizations:**
 - Continue to innovate and connect with diverse populations. Work with schools, trade organizations and social service providers to better understand ethnic, cultural and generational differences that will help employees connect and succeed.
 - Work closely with the Society for Human Resources Management and wage equity organizations to evaluate and address wage and earnings disparities. As the labor pool shrinks, addressing those disparities will become more important.
- For the Community:**
 - Ensure a diverse and culturally inclusive culture to secure its long-term future. Whether it is attracting millennials, including LGBTQ perspectives or tapping the contributions of minority populations, regional viability requires that everyone is welcomed, engaged and connected in the community.

For the complete list of Opportunities for Action, please see the full report.



The LIFE Report powered by Pulse, sponsored by:

MARATHON COUNTY PULSE SUSTAINING FUNDERS:

- Ascension St. Clare’s Hospital
- Aspirus, Inc.
- Bridge Community Health Clinic
- Marathon County Health Department
- Marshfield Clinic Health System

2019-2021 LIFE REPORT FULL PARTNERS:

- Ascension St. Clare’s Hospital
- Aspirus, Inc.
- B.A. & Esther Greenheck Foundation
- City of Wausau
- Dudley Foundation
- Greater Wausau Chamber of Commerce
- Judd S. Alexander Foundation
- Marathon County
- United Way of Marathon County

2019-2021 LIFE REPORT SPONSORS:

- Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin
- Greenheck Fan Corporation

2019-2021 LIFE REPORT SUPPORTERS:

- EO Johnson Business Technologies
- Marshfield Clinic Healthy System
- Wisconsin Public Service Corporation



To see the full 2019-2021 LIFE Report, or to take a deeper look into the data for each section, visit:
www.marathoncountypulse.org



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