**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE CONTACT:** Name

Date Email

**Back to the Basics: The Building Blocks of Connection**

(CITY, WI) At one time or another, we’ve all been lonely. For most of us, it’s temporary. While people of all ages and backgrounds experience isolation and loneliness, older adults and people with disabilities are uniquely susceptible and being isolated and lonely is a common reality. Governor Evers recently declared November 10-16, 2024, as Social Connection Awareness Week in Wisconsin to bring attention to this topic and support people throughout Wisconsin.

But what is loneliness and social isolation? Often used together, there are some differences:

* Social isolation is an *objective* measure of the number of contacts that a person has. People who are socially isolated have little, if any, contact with other people.
* Loneliness is a *subjective* feeling about the gap between a person’s desired levels of social contact and their actual social contact. The common saying “have you ever felt lonely in a room full of people” speaks to this. Someone may not be isolated but can still feel lonely.

If you or someone you know is feeling lonely or isolated there are many things you can do to improve your social health. This year, the Wisconsin Coalition for Social Connection (WCSC), suggests going back to the basics. Take time to call, video chat, visit or plan an outing with an older adult or person with disability in your life. Other things you could do or suggest to a loved one include volunteering or getting a job, taking a health promotion class, joining a fitness facility or local club, visiting a park, or using technology.

According to the United States (US) Surgeon General, about half of adults in the US indicated that they experienced loneliness which can increase the risk for early death as much as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day. Both loneliness and social isolation are associated with serious health impacts including a 29% increased risk of heart disease a 32% increased risk of stroke, and a 50% increased risk of dementia as well as a significant increased risk for depression and anxiety. Take time this week, and in future weeks to build your social connections. You may start small but challenge yourself to continue to grow your connections.

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To learn more or join the movement, visit [ConnectWI.org](http://ConnectWI.org)

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