****

**403 words, not counting title, customizable text & webinar information**

**From Neighbors to Networks – Connection Happens Here**

The Wisconsin Coalition for Social Connection (WCSC) will host Social Connection Awareness Week this year from November 9–15, highlighting the importance of staying connected for older adults and people with disabilities. WCSC [& your organization] encourages you to make a commitment to connect during Social Connection Awareness Week and beyond. We can all be a part of building more connected neighborhoods and networks. Here are a few ideas on where to start:

* Invite a neighbor or friend over for coffee
* Offer to help someone with a small house project
* Make someone a meal or send a care package
* Introduce yourself to someone new
* Join or start a book club or crafting circle
* Schedule a phone or video call
* Write a thank you note
* Volunteer or get a job
* Spend time with people in different generations
* Attend a health promotion or fitness class

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 feelings of loneliness and may be socially isolated, older adults and people with disabilities are uniquely at risk and being isolated and lonely is a common reality.

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 someone 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. A simple way to think about this is by thinking of the phrase “feeling lonely in a room full of people”.

Social connection, on the other hand, means having the relationships you want and feeling like you belong, are cared for, and supported. Staying socially connected can protect your health—lowering the risk of heart disease, stroke, dementia, depression, and anxiety. It can also help you handle stress, build healthy habits, and even improve sleep! Strong connections also make communities better. When people have safe and easy ways to connect, it builds trust, reduces loneliness, and helps neighbors support one another.

[Local quote/event information here or delete]

Building connections may not happen overnight, but by taking small steps to reduce feelings of loneliness and increasing how much social contact you have with others, you can make a big difference in your life and your community. If you or someone you know wants to get more connected, visit <ConnectWI.org>.

If you have room, you could add flyer (see below) & text: The Wisconsin Coalition for Social Connection and the Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging is holding a FREE webinar on this topic on Monday, November 10th from 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. with speaker Richard Kyte. The webinar will discuss the benefits of connection, finding places to connect, and building happier communities. See flyer for additional details and registration information.

AND/OR If you have room, you could add BINGO card (see below) & text: Participate in Social Connection Awareness Week BINGO! On each square, you’ll find a simple way to reach out, build relationships, and strengthen community—like calling a friend, checking in on a neighbor, or joining a local activity. Complete at least 1 “BINGO” (or the whole card!) and see how small steps create big connections. Show us how you connected by taking a photo of you completing a BINGO activity and uploading it here: <bit.ly/SCAW2025>. Let’s celebrate connection throughout Wisconsin this week!



