Age Well Series

Wisconsin Coalition for Social Connection



Everyday Connections, Lasting Impact

Simple ways to build relationships and strengthen our communities

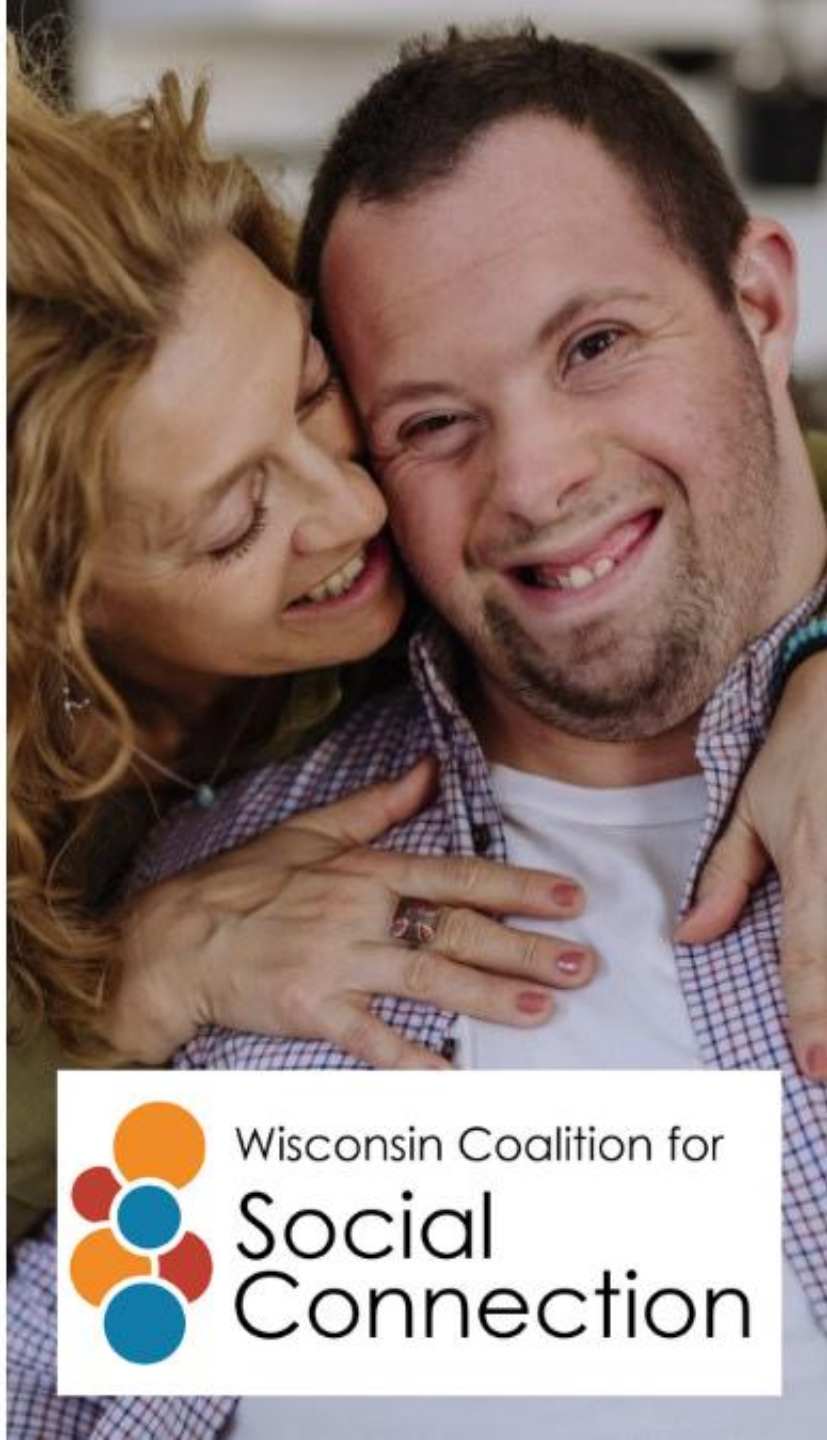
wiha
Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging



wiha
Wisconsin Institute
for Healthy Aging

- **Mission**: To improve the health and well-being of all people as we age by disseminating evidence-based programs and practices and by engaging in collaborative public health strategies in Wisconsin and beyond.
- **https://wihealthyaging.org**
- **Age Well Newsletter**





Wisconsin Coalition for
Social
Connection

Social Connection Awareness Week

November 8-14, 2026



STATE *of* WISCONSIN

OFFICE *of the* GOVERNOR

Proclamation

WHEREAS, social isolation and loneliness are widespread problems across the country, with over half of all Americans experiencing measurable levels of loneliness; and

WHEREAS, while people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities can experience social isolation and loneliness, research shows that older adults and people with disabilities—especially those with intersecting marginalized identities—are more likely to experience high levels of loneliness; and

WHEREAS, research shows social isolation and loneliness can increase the risk for physical, emotional, and psychological health impacts, including increased depressive symptoms, cognitive decline, risk for heart disease, stroke, dementia, and premature death; and

WHEREAS, according to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), Wisconsinites have expressed desire for communities and networks to be more socially connected, including individuals and groups, virtual and face-to-face, community events, civic engagements, and establishing communities that are more inclusive and accessible; and

WHEREAS, the Wisconsin Coalition for Social Connection, together with partners across the state and nation, strives to raise awareness of and support social connection policies, initiatives, and activities for older adults and people with disabilities that will have a lasting impact; and

WHEREAS, this week, the state of Wisconsin affirms its commitment to supporting all Wisconsinites to understand the value of social connection as a protective factor for health and well-being, and to continue to promote access to and opportunities for social connection throughout the state, and joins advocates and organizations across the public and private sectors to continue to promote access to, raise awareness of, and engage in interventions to improve social connections in the state;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Tony Evers, Governor of the State of Wisconsin, do hereby proclaim November 8 – 14, 2026, as

SOCIAL CONNECTION AWARENESS WEEK

throughout the State of Wisconsin, and I commend this observance to all our state's residents.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Wisconsin to be affixed. Done at the Capitol in the City of Madison this 27th day of October 2026.

Tony Evers

TONY EVERS
GOVERNOR

By the Governor:

SARAH GODLEWSKI
Secretary of State

Wisconsin Coalition for Social Connection

Simple Ways to Build Relationships and Strengthen our Communities



Wisconsin Coalition for Social Connection

Why Social Connection Matters

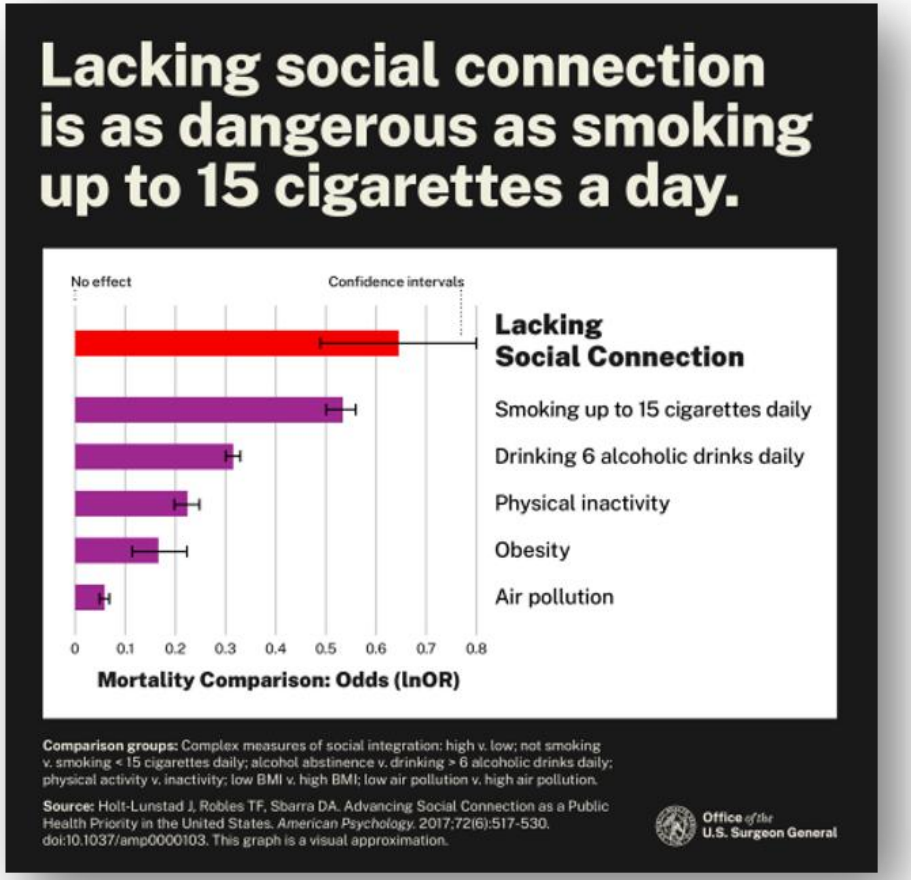
Relationships are an important part of our overall health and well-being.

Having meaningful social connections supports our physical and emotional well-being, sense of purpose, and resiliency.

People who lack connections experience serious health impacts including increased risk of heart disease, stroke, depression and anxiety, and 50% increased risk for dementia.

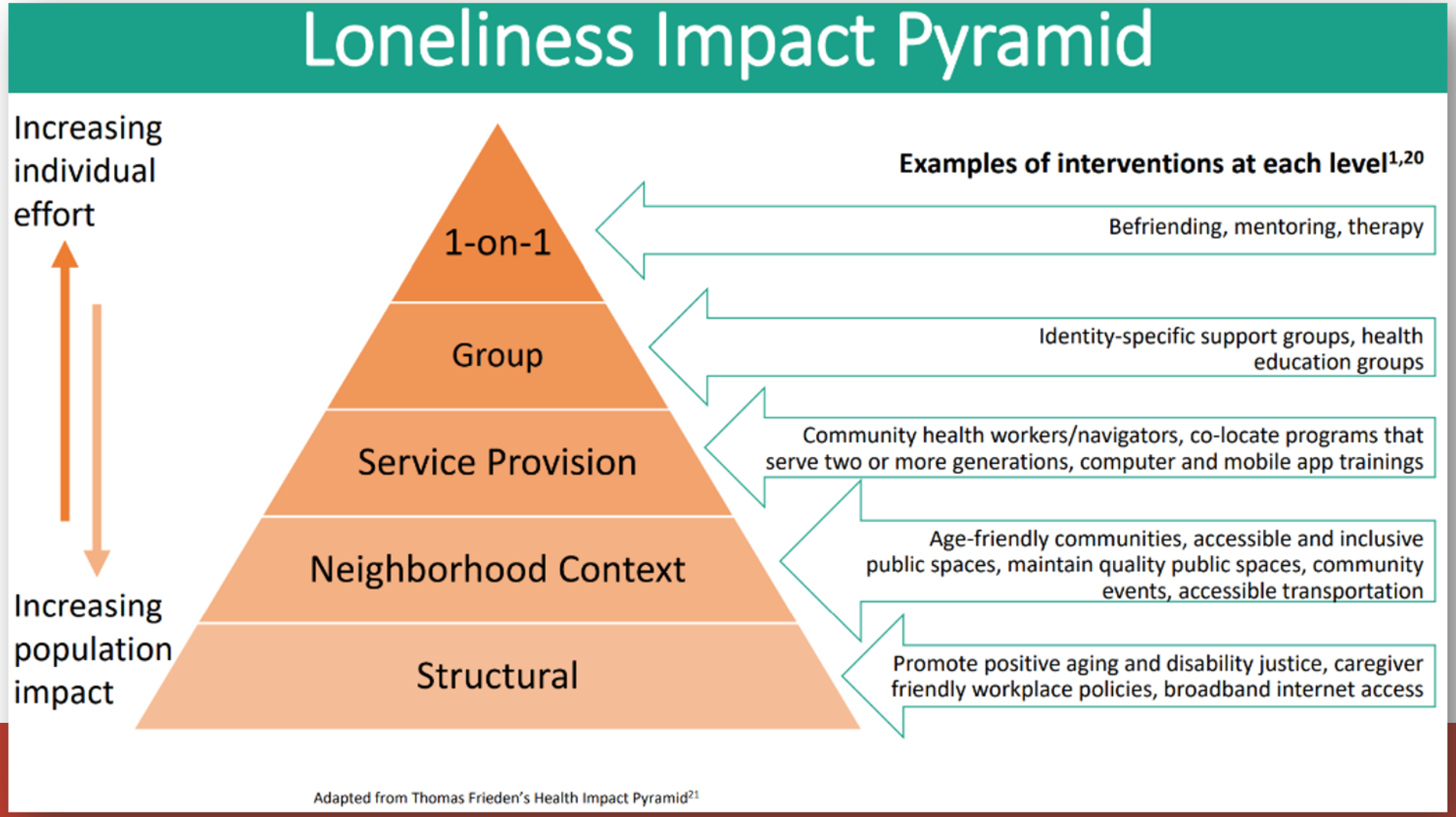
Social isolation versus loneliness. Someone can have frequent interactions with others but still feel lonely, while someone else may have a smaller social network and feel very connected.

What matters most, no matter the number of people we interact with, is **the quality and meaning of relationships -- our sense of community**.



We all have a role

Meaningful connections begin with small, simple actions.



Welcome…

Wisconsin Coalition for Social Connection

Dr. Levy, PhD, RN, APNP

- Co-Principal Investigator, All of Us Engagement
- Health Outreach and Prevention Education (H.O.P.E.)
- National Baptist Convention, USA, Incorporated

www.hopenbc.com
www.nationalbaptist.com

General Baptist State Convention of WI, Inc.



SOCIAL CONNECTION AWARENESS

Dessie Levy, PhD, RN and Ophelia Carr, MS

Project Team Overview

Dr. Dessie Levy is the National Director and Principal Investigator for the Health Outreach Prevention Education (H.O.P.E.) Ministry, and Ophelia Carr is the State Coordinator for H.O.P.E.

The H.O.P.E. Ministry was established under National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. and the General Baptist State Convention of WI in 2011



Dr. Dessie Levy

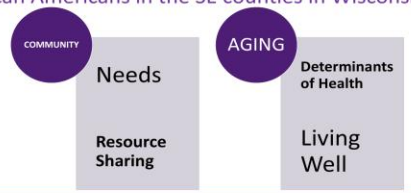


Ophelia Carr

Rationale & Background

According to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Office of Minority Health. African Americans are generally at higher risk for heart diseases, stroke, cancer, asthma, influenza and pneumonia, obesity, diabetes, kidney disease, and HIV/AIDS

WIHA and Milwaukee County invited GBSC-H.O.P.E. to be facilitators for the evidence-based program Living Well with Chronic Conditions to engage African Americans in the SE counties in Wisconsin.



Promising Approaches to Partnerships

With data in hand, WIHA, GBSC and Milwaukee County Department on aging collaborated to train GBSC H.O.P.E. ambassadors.



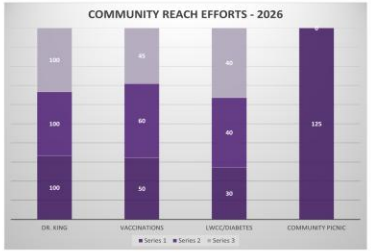




Through its H.O.P.E. Ministry, GBSC embraces the philosophy that health, wellness, education, and community resources should be accessible to everyone.

Partnership's Impact on a Welcoming Environment

While grounded in Christian faith and guided by the principles of love, compassion, and servant leadership, GBSC is committed to creating an environment where all individuals feel welcomed, respected, valued, and supported, regardless of their religious beliefs or connection to a faith community.









Acknowledgements

Our Partners: NATIONAL BAPTIST CONVENTION, USA, INC. , WIHA, HAYAT PHARMACIES, MCW-SCHOOL OF PHARMACY, HUMANA, HORICON BANK

Wisconsin Coalition for Social Connection

Our History, Our Leadership



For more than a century, the General Baptist State Convention of Wisconsin, Inc. (GBSCWI) has demonstrated an enduring legacy of faith-centered leadership, meaningful community engagement, and organizational advancement, remaining steadfast in its commitment to spiritual growth, service, and strengthening communities across generations.

Reverend Anthony Wade, President
Pastor – Second Baptist Church, Madison WI

- National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. is the largest African American faith organization in the U.S.
  - Established in 1880
  - 33,000 churches across the U.S.
- General Baptist State Convention of WI, Inc.
  - Started with 5 churches in Milwaukee, Kenosha, and Racine
  - Established as a State Association in 1924
  - Grew into a State Convention in 1955
- Health Outreach Prevention Education (H.O.P.E.)
  - Established in 2010 by the National Baptist Convention
  - Promotes wellness through health education, health screenings, and research.

Welcome…

Wisconsin Coalition for Social Connection

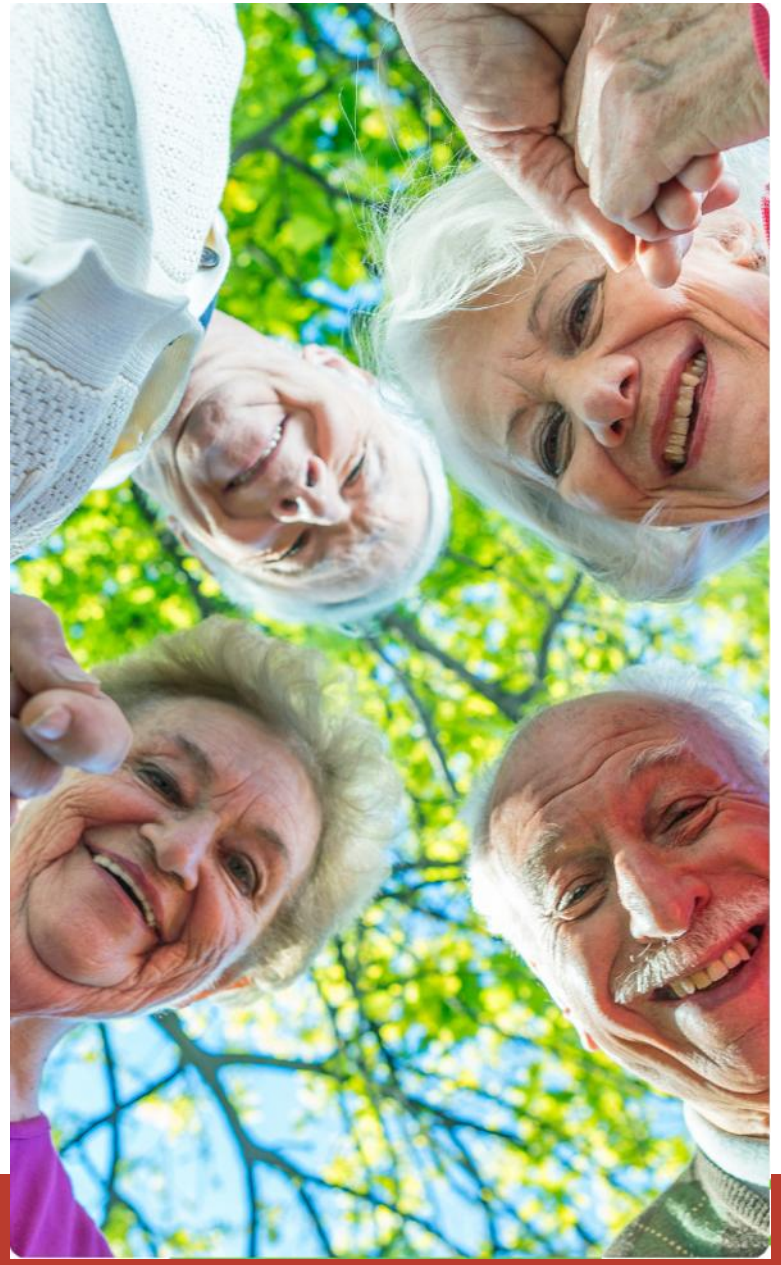
Harvey Padek

- Director of Community Health Worker (CHW) Operations
- Milwaukee Area Health Education Center

MILWAUKEE AHEC

www.milahec.org





Simple Ways to Build Relationships and Strengthen our Communities

Wisconsin Coalition for Social Connection

Everyday Connections. Lasting Impacts.

What can you do to strengthen connections in your community

Social Connection Awareness Week & WI Coalition Social Connection Updates

November 12 1-2 pm
Free webinar: Independent Living-Meaningful Connections
with Gerald Hay

December 15 2:00-3:30 PM
WI Coalition for Social Connection Network Meeting:
Transportation and Social Connection



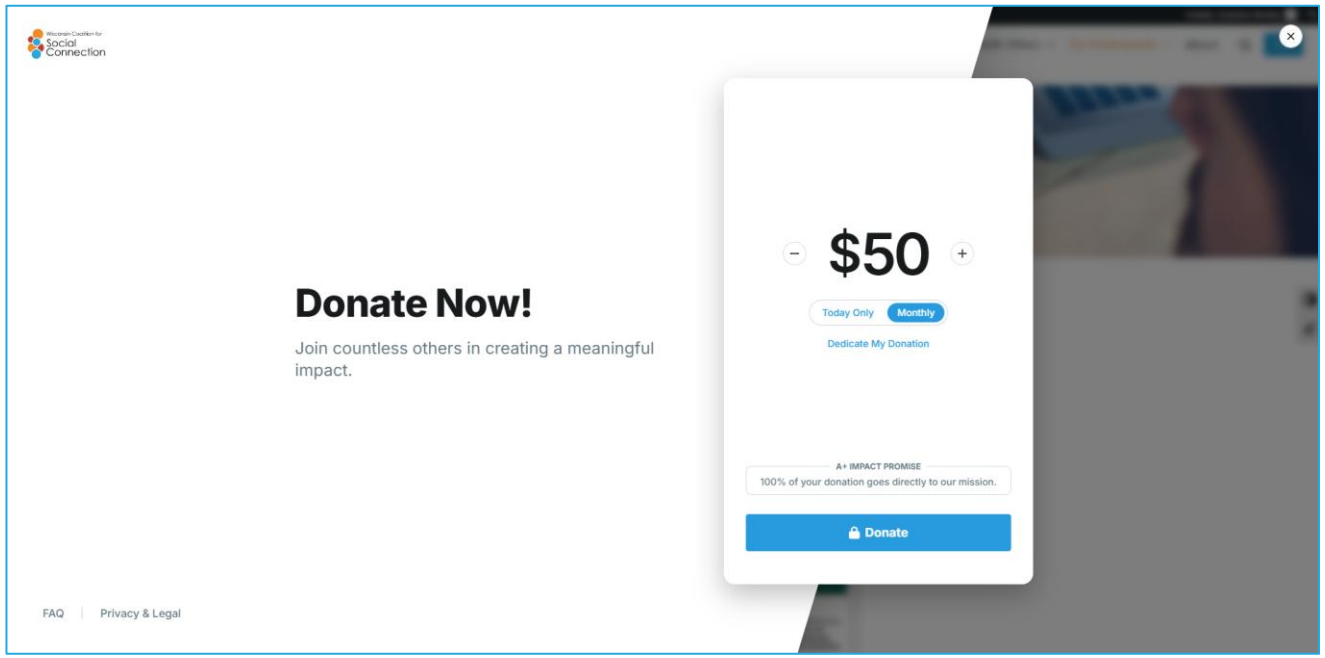
Wisconsin Coalition for Social Connection

Thank You!

Found this event informational?

Your donation helps keep us going!

Wisconsin Coalition for Social Connection



bit.ly/ConnectWIGive

Stay Connected!

ConnectWI.org| Facebook.com/ConnectWI
ConnectWI@wihealthyaging.org



Thank you, Sponsors!

Wisconsin Coalition for Social Connection

wiha Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging

GWAAR Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Inc.

MolinaCares Building Stronger Communities...One Life at a Time

tmg Let's clear the path ahead.

Next for Age Well Series

- Stay up to date on our website and newsletter for release of 2027 events!



The way we think and talk about aging can shape how we experience it. Research shows that people with a positive view of aging live, on average, 7.5 years longer. In this engaging presentation, we'll explore how our beliefs, expectations, and attitudes about aging can influence our health, well-being, behaviors, and experiences as we grow older. We'll also look at how the messages we hear and share about aging can shape the way we see ourselves and others. Most importantly, we'll learn about **Reframing Aging**—a simple approach to challenging our assumptions and changing the way we think and talk about aging to create more positive possibilities for ourselves, our relationships, and our communities.



Presenter:
Jill Renken, Executive Director
Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging

December 16
1:00-2:00pm

Register Here

REFRAMING AGING+DISABILITY WISCONSIN

wiha Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging
https://wihealthyaging.org

wiha
Wisconsin Institute
for Healthy Aging

Q&A

