

MFI BRIEFS

Menard Family Initiative Brief Economic Articles

July 2020

INNOVATION DURING CRISIS:

Response to COVID-19 in the Coulee Region

Edited by Adam Hoffer, Ph.D.





MFI Briefs

Menard Family Initiative Brief Economic Articles

INTRODUCTION

By Adam Hoffer, Ph.D.

*Director, Menard Family Midwest Initiative for Economic Engagement and Research
Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse*

Human beings are innovative. Our ingenuity makes possible the marvels of our modern world and our continued existence as a species. In an ever-changing world, we adapt in the face of challenge. In early 2020, we faced a major challenge. COVID-19, an easily transmittable mutated strain of the coronavirus caused a global pandemic. On January 21, a Washington State man was the first diagnosed patient in the United States. Wisconsin saw its first confirmed case on February 5.

By March 13, Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers declared a state of emergency and closed all public schools. Four days later, the governor ordered all bars and restaurants to close and banned gatherings of 10 or more people. Effective March 25, Governor Evers issued a Safer at Home Order closing all non-essential businesses, prohibiting all public and private gatherings, prohibiting travel, and requiring people to stay in their homes.

In the span of a few weeks, or in some instances a few days, the wheels of motion that automate our lives came to an abrupt stop. Uncertainty and countless questions replaced many basic and routine activities we follow to live and thrive. Some questions could not wait long for answers. We needed to test for the virus, and we needed protective equipment and supplies to help contain the spread. Vulnerable populations needed food and shelter. People needed to have continued access to their physicians. Millions of students needed access to virtual education. Our businesses and families needed financial support to survive.

The response to these challenges could mean the difference between life and death for thousands in the Coulee Region. What could we do? Fred Rogers was famous for his ability to explain complicated and difficult topics to children. “When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’”

We looked. We saw helpers and innovators. Everywhere. We were amazed at the response in our local community. Unprecedented times called for unprecedented innovation. The YMCA transformed its entire facility into a childcare center for essential workers. The Sanctuary on King, a newly renovated 20,000 sq. ft. creative workspace in an old church, suspended their operations and offered their space as a quarantined building for healthy individuals with compromised immune systems who may have difficulty isolating themselves elsewhere. Teachers and school officials met every day to pack thousands of lunches (for delivery or curbside pickup) for students who would no longer be able to get their nutrition at school.

Two individuals launched a Facebook Group, Neighbors Helping Neighbors 2020, to coordinate granular, small activities like grocery runs and exchanges of kids’ toys for anyone who needed some help and others who were able to give help.¹ Within days, the group grew to thousands of members.

Beer by Bike Brigade (BBB) organized free ‘giving tables’ in which members throughout the city would fill up tables full of food, free for the taking as needed.² They also executed fundraising

¹ We would like to acknowledge the initiative taken by Amanda Erpenbach and Grace Deason to found the group.

events for more than a dozen other local nonprofit organizations who found themselves overwhelmed by the increased need for their services. BBBB’s typical fundraiser used food prepared by local restaurants that would have otherwise been closed, or raffled products from businesses that were closed. They paid for two cars, raffled tickets to raise funds, and then donated funds to pay every outstanding lunch deficit balance for families in the city of La Crosse.

Countless others performed admirable, amazing work. The response was truly inspirational. It is in that spirit that we – the Menard Family Midwest Initiative for Economic Engagement and Research (MFI) at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse – put out a call for papers that would detail the work of select innovators in the Coulee Region. Our front-line healthcare and essential workers deserve the heroic accolades they receive. We wanted to give an opportunity to praise our behind-the-lines heroes, those innovators and leaders that took quick action when action was needed most.

Briefs

We assembled 11 briefs in this volume. We grouped the briefs into five categories: Healthcare, Business Pivots, New Startups, Education, and Community Resources.

Healthcare

1) *The Adaptation of Healthcare in a COVID-19 World* by Andrew R. Jagim and Paul E. Molling4
Dr. Jagim and Dr. Molling detail the actions taken by the Mayo Clinic Health System (MCHS) in La Crosse, WI to answer the medical needs caused by COVID-19. These include a drive-through testing site, blood testing, a new respiratory clinic and division within the Emergency Department, and a full set of new standard operating procedures within the hospital.

2) *Telehealth* by Chelsea Ale and John Sowders.....8
In a world that moved virtual, patients need continued access to their physicians. Dr. Ale and Dr. Sowders explain the move to telehealth for providers and patients in MCHS Behavioral Health.

Business Pivots

3) *Creating Community in Virtual Space* by Jan Wellik11
Almost all small businesses had to close their doors in response to the pandemic. Sadly, we know some of those businesses will never reopen. Others, however, have been able to innovate and take services that were traditionally delivered in-person and provide those services in a virtual format. Jan Wellik interviews local yoga and spiritual growth organizations and outlines their actions.

4) *La Crosse Area Craft Beverage Community Innovates During a Crisis* by Heather Walder13
Alcohol producers faced economic disaster when bars and restaurants closed. Heather Walder describes how the actions of a few local producers not only allowed for the expansion of their staff and services, but also facilitated the production of hand sanitizer at a time when sanitizer supplies were exhausted in the region.

² We would like to acknowledge the amazing work done by Mario Youakim in running BBBB.

New Startups

- 5) *Face Masks for America* by Amy Marohl18
Before COVID-19, face masks were primarily reserved for surgeons and skiers. Suddenly, face masks were required to leave your house and to enter a business. In her brief, Amy Marohl details how she transitioned her blog and small online Etsy shop into an in-home production facility that produced thousands of masks she shipped nationwide.
- 6) *Painting Us Forward: Giving Vision and Voice in the Time of the Pandemic* by Jennifer Williams...21
Artists, storytellers, and historians may view the world differently than many of us. The COVID-19 pandemic is a unique time in history. Jennifer Williams presents *Painting Us Forward*© - a series of local artistic projects that attempt to portray hope and resilience through visual storytelling.

Education

- 7) *Higher Education Moves Online* by Heather Schenck25
The pandemic forced the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UWL) to close its campus and move all classes to online for the remainder of the spring 2020 semester. Heather Schenck details the actions taken by UWL and presents a case study from her own personal teaching experience.
- 8) *Teaching Clinical Concepts in a Virtual Environment* by Melissa Weege29
The transition of instruction from hands-on and face-to-face, to an online environment, seems daunting for almost any discipline. Teaching Nuclear Medicine and training the next generation of radiation therapists online seems like a heroic task. Melissa Weege describes the curricular evolution of the Radiation Therapy program at UWL.

Community Resources

- 9) *Food Pantry* by Kelsi Grubisich..... 33
Food security is an issue many face in our region. Kelsi Grubisich describes the actions taken by the UWL Food Pantry to provide food and essential items to individuals and families in need.
- 10) *La Crosse Small Business Relief Grant Program* by John Kovari..... 35
Major federal and state assistance programs were created to help businesses survive the pandemic. For a variety of reasons, those programs are often unable to provide the timely support that small, local businesses need. Dr. Kovari summarizes the development, execution, and early results of the La Crosse Small Business Relief Grant Program.
- 11) *La Crosse Nonprofits Collaborate and Innovate to Strengthen Local Pandemic Response*..... 40
by Jamie Schloegel and Mary Kay Wolf
Jamie Schloegel and Mary Kay Wolf describe how local leaders and non-profit organizations came together to create the La Crosse Area Emergency Response Fund. In six weeks, the group raised more than \$1 million in donations from 272 people and entities. They used these funds to provide help where it was most-needed locally, everything from basic food and shelter to small business grants and a family critical bill-paying program.

The Adaptation of Healthcare in a COVID-19 World

By Andrew R. Jagim, PhD^{1,2}, Paul E. Molling, DO¹

¹Family Medicine, Mayo Clinic Health System, La Crosse, WI

²Exercise & Sport Science Department, University of Wisconsin – La Crosse, La Crosse, WI

Background

In early 2020, as the country faced the growing pandemic from the rapid spread of a novel coronavirus (COVID-19), each state and local community was faced with their own respective challenges to combat the spread of the virus and keep their communities safe. The first documented case in southwest Wisconsin occurred on March 18. Mayo Clinic Health System (MCHS) is a major healthcare provider in this region, and took swift action at its hub site in La Crosse, Wisconsin to identify individuals infected with the virus, prevent spread of the virus locally and address growing concerns among patients, employees and the community while, at the same time, care for patients with urgent and emergent non-COVID-19 illness. Due to concern for potential rampant community transmission of the virus, we quickly implemented numerous robust changes to our healthcare delivery methods. Several of these changes were designed not only to protect our staff and the surrounding community, but also to adapt to an environment in which the novel coronavirus remains a prevalent threat.

The primary changes included:

- Implementation of a drive-through COVID-19 nasal swab testing site
- Implementation of a drive-through clinic for convenient and safe blood testing of patients treated with life-saving blood thinners (“anticoagulation clinic”)
- Executing a restrictive visitor policy

- Development and implementation of a designated respiratory clinic and respiratory division within the Emergency Department
- Postponement of elective procedures and surgeries
- Switch from face-to-face outpatient visits to “virtual” visits (e.g., by phone and video)
- Implementation of enhanced cleaning procedures
- Entry point symptom and temperature screenings
- Universal masking policy

Drive-through testing

A major initiative from MCHS physician, nursing and administrative leaders was to develop a safe and efficient method for testing large numbers of patients for COVID-19 infection. In early March, a multidisciplinary team was brought together which included physicians, nurses, administrators, infectious disease specialists, facilities managers, laboratory services, security, public affairs, registration personnel and information technology specialists to develop the required procedures and work flow for a drive-through testing site. A parking lot adjacent to a local decommissioned MCHS building was designated for the local drive-through testing site.

Upon arrival, patients remained in their vehicle while a nurse (wearing appropriate personal protective equipment [PPE]) registered the patient and collected the sample via nasopharyngeal swab, which was later transported to Mayo Clinic Laboratory services in Rochester, MN. Test results were available within 24 hours of sampling. All positive COVID-19 cases were notified by an Infectious Diseases specialist based at Mayo Clinic

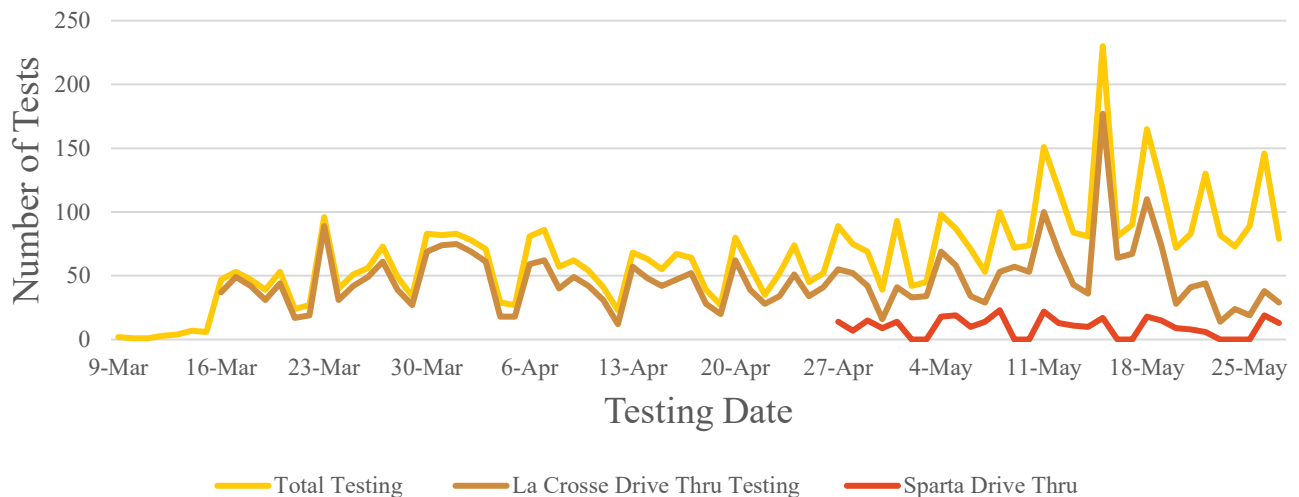
in Rochester, MN and contacted by a local physician for follow-up care. An official from the La Crosse County Health Department was also in contact with the patient regarding self-quarantine recommendations, follow-up care and to initiate the contact tracing procedures. Notably, a similar clinic was later implemented in Sparta, Wisconsin to further support testing efforts for rural patient populations.

Local community partners (e.g., county health department, emergency medical services and police) were updated on the recent developments of the drive-through testing site and were instrumental in informing community members and assisting with the coordination of traffic flow into the testing site. The development of the drive-through testing site

Drive-through anticoagulation clinics

MCHS providers care for patients who live throughout southwestern Wisconsin. It also has numerous physical sites in the region. Many patients cared for by MCHS providers take life-saving blood thinners. These patients, in turn, may require regular blood test monitoring. At MCHS’s Onalaska, La Crosse, and Sparta sites, drive-through anticoagulation clinics were developed. Patients remained in their vehicles while point-of-care machines were used by nurses to test people underneath canopy tents to provide shelter from environmental conditions. Nurses were able to complete the procedure in approximately 15 minutes and provide a safe option for patients needing anticoagulation care.

Figure 1. COVID-19 Total Tests Collected by Day
 3/16 La Crosse Drive Thru Starts
 4/27 Sparta Drive Thru Starts



required a multidisciplinary effort, open lines of communication, and ingenuity in order to implement it in a very short time frame. This quick response and organized effort played an integral role in local strategies to combat the COVID-19 pandemic by offering a safe and efficient process for both Mayo and non-Mayo patients to receive testing as needed. Testing continues to increase (Figure 1.) and the drive-through testing will remain in operation for the foreseeable future.

Outpatient visits and elective procedures

As with several other health care systems, MCHS made the difficult decision on April 1 to defer all non-urgent and emergent outpatient visits, and elective surgeries and procedures, as a precautionary measure to limit the potential risk of exposure to COVID-19 for patients and staff. This decision helped to preserve PPE and reallocate staff in the event of a large influx of patients with COVID-19 disease and widespread community transmission.

Given the region’s success with “flattening the curve” of COVID-19 cases, on May 1, MCHS reactivated elective outpatient visits, surgeries and procedures. However, all patients scheduled for a procedure were required to complete pre-procedure screenings for COVID-19 at the drive-through testing site and later at a clinical site where both serum antibody and nasopharyngeal testing (to test for previous or current COVID-19 infection, respectively) could occur at the same time, following standard clinical procedures. The given surgery or procedure would be scheduled depending on the results of the testing.

Respiratory clinic

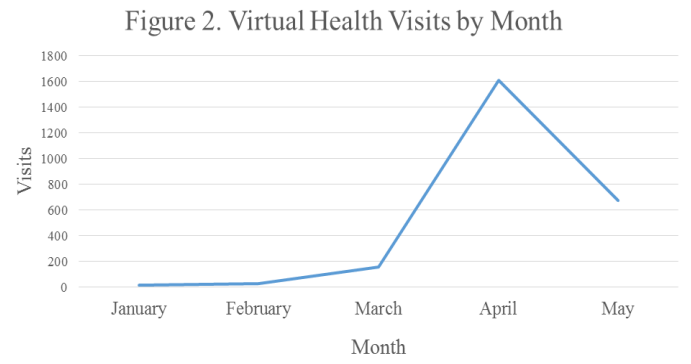
The MCHS clinic site in Holmen, Wisconsin was designated as a respiratory clinic for any patients experiencing respiratory related illness or COVID-19 symptoms in need of non-urgent care. This clinic helped to contain patients with possible COVID-19 infection in a designated location and away from patients elsewhere, thereby limiting potential transmission of the virus. Additionally, emergent patients with respiratory or COVID-19 symptoms were sent to a specialized sub-unit of the Emergency Department at the MCHS La Crosse location. Again, this containment area was designed to minimize potential COVID-19 exposure to patients and staff throughout the remaining section of the Emergency Department and hospital areas.

Visitor restrictions imposed

Another precautionary measure employed by MCHS was to limit outside visitors from any clinic or hospital facility. Initial restrictions started March 15 and limited visitors to one at a time. Restriction of all visitors started March 22. (Exceptions were made for visitors of patients who were children, had impaired decision-making capacity, end-of-life scenarios, etc.) These restrictions were implemented in order to limit traffic flow in patient care areas and minimize potential COVID-19 exposure to patients and staff.

“Virtual” healthcare visits

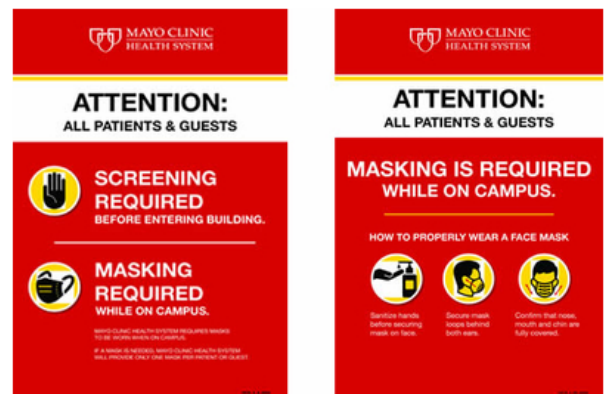
As outpatient visits were deferred until a later date, MCHS quickly ramped-up “virtual” visits for clinicians to meet with patients via telephone or video through the Mayo Clinic Patient Application. In early 2020, MCHS was performing <20 virtual visits a month. By April 2020, virtual visits peaked at around 1,600 virtual visits a month (Figure 2.). This rapid change required involvement of information technology services, registration and billing in order to set up the infrastructure required to complete virtual visits and to meet the needs of the patients who were in need of non-urgent care.



Enhanced cleaning procedures implemented

Enhanced cleaning procedures were implemented to maximize MCHS’s ability to protect patients and staff. Each day, clinic staff thoroughly cleaned exam rooms after each patient with disinfectants shown to eradicate the novel coronavirus, making sure to clean all primary contact areas. A comprehensive cleaning was also conducted on all exam rooms at the end of each day. Additionally, bathrooms, waiting rooms and common areas were cleaned frequently throughout the day with the appropriate disinfectant.

Entry point screening and universal masking



All staff and visitors (when allowed) were asked to report any recent cold or flu-like symptoms in addition to a temperature screen at all points of entry prior to entering MCHS campuses. Additionally, beginning on April 6, MCHS adopted a universal masking policy for all staff which was later extended to include all patients on April 13. All staff, visitors, and patients (2 years of age and older) were required to adhere to the masking policy at all times while on any MCHS campuses. Patients and visitors were encouraged to bring a mask from home; however, masks were provided at screening points if necessary.

Conclusions

MCHS leaders were, and continue to be, in constant communication with local health departments, emergency medicine service providers and neighboring health systems to collaboratively address the COVID-19 pandemic situation within



our local communities. MCHS leadership took swift action to quickly adapt their methods of health care delivery to protect their patients, staff and surrounding community members.

Along with local county health officials, neighboring health systems, EMS, police and fire departments, MCHS play an integral role in helping to prevent the spread of COVID-19 throughout our local community. The implementation of the drive-through testing site, in particular, was an essential part of this effort, as it created a safe and efficient process for testing large numbers of patients to

monitor the prevalence of COVID-19 in our region. This allowed for the implementation of immediate self-quarantine measures and contact tracing in the event of a positive test result. Additionally, MCHS assisted with daily news briefings to continue updating the public on such a fluid and dynamic situation. Several of the adaptations that went into effect provided valuable lessons to MCHS leadership and fast-tracked advancements in technology services such as the virtual health visits that have the potential for transforming healthcare delivery in a post-COVID-19 world.

A large stack of thank you notes were dropped off at the Sparta Campus by a patient thanking staff for their hard work during the pandemic.



The MCHS staff are also grateful for all of the donations received from surrounding community businesses and other organizations such as face masks/shields, gloves, meals and care packages. These kind gestures serve as a testament to the type of community we have in the region where everyone is looking out for each other during such difficult times and doing what they can to help fight the pandemic on a unified front.

A Rapid Shift to Internet-delivered Psychotherapy in Response to COVID-19

By Chelsea M. Ale, Ph.D. & John P. Sowders, Ph.D.

Department of Psychiatry & Psychology, Mayo Clinic Health System, La Crosse, WI³

Background

At the start of 2020, a small part of our two to five-year Strategic Growth Plan included piloting internet-delivered psychotherapy services for our patients at the Mayo Clinic Health System Southwest Wisconsin's (MCHS-SWWI) Department of Psychiatry and Psychology. This fit well with the broader Mayo Clinic plan to transform care by bringing the doctor to the patient in new and different ways. However, many questions still seemed to stand in our way about patient safety, confidentiality, legality, and insurance reimbursement. Historically, MCHS-SWWI had been a pioneer in tele-psychiatry, as the first in all of Mayo Clinic to offer clinic-to-clinic psychiatric care over an internet connection. This meant that after receiving an initial traditional psychiatric evaluation face-to-face in our La Crosse clinic, certain patients could attend follow-up psychiatric appointments at one of our satellite clinics (e.g., Arcadia) by checking-in with a nurse face-to-face and then connecting on a clinic computer to the psychiatrist in La Crosse. We were very proud to offer this cutting-edge treatment method to those for whom travel would otherwise have been a barrier to follow-up care. So, with this model in mind and aspirations of expanding this service to psychotherapy, we continued traditional face-to-face care through March 2020.

An Imminent Need

By mid-March, in response to the COVID-19 threat, Mayo Clinic was rescheduling all non-essential visits, screening clinic patients for viral symptoms, and innovating all care to encourage social distancing and follow the governor's Safer at Home order (see Brief 1 by Jagim & Molling for more on MCHS-SWWI's broader response). Our Psychiatry & Psychology Department felt strongly that we needed to find a balance between protecting our patients and employees from the virus, and not cutting-off needed care from our patients. We were acutely aware that the level of global and community stress caused by a pandemic would take a particular toll on people's mental health. Anxiety disorders, mood disorders, and substance use disorders in particular are triggered and exacerbated by stress and change.

Competency, Legal, & Ethical Considerations

As MCHS supported the whole organization to ramp-up telehealth visits for specific healthcare needs, the Psychiatry & Psychology Department recognized this opportunity to switch the method of interfacing with patients without having to change the content or quality of our treatment. There has been a good amount of research on the delivery of psychotherapy over the internet showing that it can be highly effective (for a review quick review, visit <https://societyforpsychotherapy.org/internet-based-psychotherapy-treatments/>). Quickly, our therapists attended an array of webinar trainings on the ethical delivery of internet-based psychotherapy and many internal trainings to learn to use the technology and follow the new workflows.

Although we would pivot on a dime to provide tele-therapy as a new method for us, we felt it was very important to understand the nuances of delivering competent, high-quality treatment over video. Specifically, we needed to consider questions like: how would we manage patient crises or safety concerns when not physically with the patient? What if a patient hangs-up in the middle of a difficult conversation? How would we assure

³ Special thanks to our Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Therapists, Nurses, Case Managers, Supervisors, OAM Staff, and Admin Assistants who work hard for our patients every day, but showed heroic dedication and adaptability during these tough times.

confidentiality when there might be other people nearby in the home? We would go on to establish small but meaningful new routines to assure the patient’s safety in each of these situations, such as confirming the physical location of the patient at the beginning of the session, should we need to contact 9-1-1 for a safety check on the patient. We also would ask that an adult be in the home and would confirm that we have their phone number in the case of children and adolescents, should we need to reach out for the child’s safety during or after the video session.

Given that Wisconsin had declared a state of emergency, there was question about whether the Psychology Licensing Board would make an exception for an interjurisdictional telepsychological practice across state lines without the psychologist specifically being licensed in each state in which the patient was located. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) expanded coverage of telehealth services during the COVID-19 public health emergency. It also allowed for the provision of some audio-only devices (e.g. landlines) for certain services (including psychotherapy, opioid treatment and certain Telephone Evaluation and Management Services).

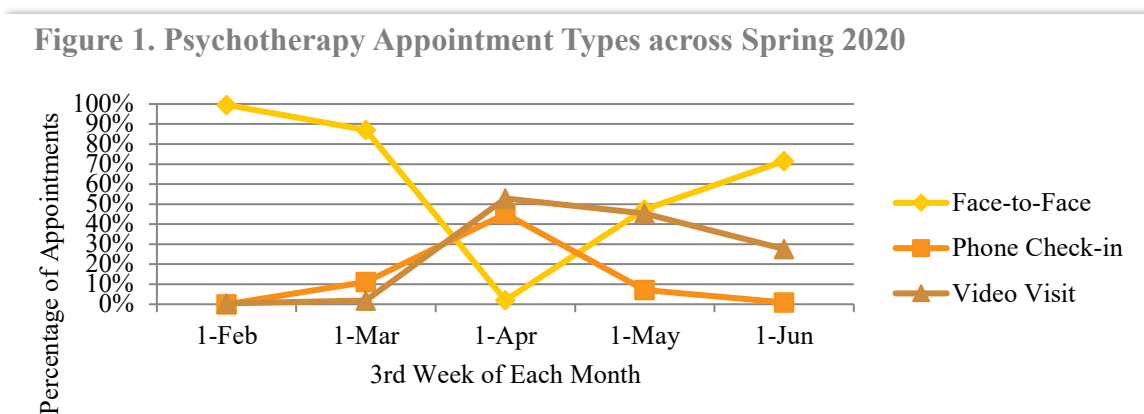
Technology Gaps

Just when we felt we were gaining control over the legal and ethical barriers, we were suddenly thrown the curve ball of moving all staff to work from home. At that time, the majority of therapists did not even have access to their work email off-campus, let alone the technology needed to connect through the secure network to provide psychotherapy via the computer. All while physically separated, we attempted to survey our technology needs, shuffled around laptops, placed orders for webcams and headsets (that we knew were backordered), and dug through bins of old laptop microphones. In a matter of days, we equipped our team of 27 therapists and 4 case managers for a completely new work environment.

As we began to cancel face-to-face appointments, we aimed to maintain the needed level of support for our patients. For about two weeks, while we worked to set-up the procedures needed to use video technology, we were only able to use phone check-ins for patients who opted not to come into the office or those who were thought to have risk factors for a severe case of COVID-19. There was not consensus about whether phone appointments would be allowed as a billable service, but we still felt it was imperative to keep in contact with our patients who may have been struggling. Every staff member actively helped patients enroll in our Patient Online Services, the platform on which Mayo Clinic had contracted with Zoom to provide a highly protected and confidential version of the video service.

Connecting Virtually

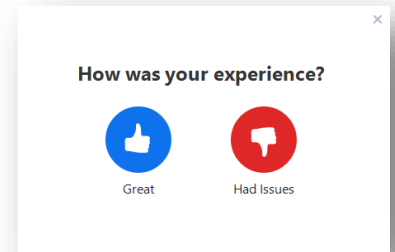
By the last week in March, we were able to start trialing the video appointments. Figure 1 tracks how the types of appointment changed from the third week of February through June.



Our providers reworked their schedules to accommodate different session lengths for brief phone check-ins when video was not possible. We saw a shift toward the use of video psychotherapy sessions throughout April and May. Of course, we had stumbling blocks along the way. A young woman living with roommates, for example, felt that her discussions could still be heard through her closed door. She would end up using the camera on her phone to conduct tele-therapy sessions in her roommate’s car to assure privacy. Our team embraced creativity and adaptation.

While we faced many challenges, most patients and therapists found the transition to be worthwhile and reconnecting (both technologically and metaphorically) to be very fulfilling. After a month of connecting only over the phone, seeing our patients’ faces and being able to read their non-verbal responses felt great. We quickly heard feedback that patients found the video visits to be helpful. For example, college students who had been suddenly sent home, were “very thrilled with the tele-video option as they are able to continue with psychotherapy despite moving during this crisis,” as one student told us.

We heard from local graduating high school seniors wondering if they would now have the option to continue psychotherapy with their same provider when they left for college in the fall. We heard from a person with paraplegia who is now using internet-delivered psychotherapy and is so happy they do not need to come into a clinic to receive psychotherapy and we heard from an individual who was at home recovering from a recent surgery and was relieved to still be able to receive psychotherapy.



Into the Future

After several months of reaching our patients via computer, like so many new COVID-19 adaptations, it has started to feel like the new normal. It still stands to be seen how reimbursement of internet-delivered psychotherapy will continue in the prolonged COVID response and hopefully in a post-COVID world. Our teams have found ways to keep connected and continue to provide support to one another through video meetings as well (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Child & Adolescent Team Virtual Meeting

Our department is also trying to find the right balance of face-to-face versus internet-delivered appointments moving forward. As the hospital and clinics have had time to prepare for an increase in cases and have increased cleaning and safety measures, we have moved some of our care back to face-to-face, but continue to provide internet-delivered psychotherapy from our clinic to patients’ homes.

Our main focus will be to continue meeting the needs of our patients through cutting-edge treatment that is affordable, effective, and convenient. During this difficult time responding to COVID-19, we have been pushed to innovate. That push has accelerated our use of technology and hopefully will allow the Psychiatry & Psychology Department to continue helping even more patients treat and recover from mental health disorders.

Creating Community in Virtual Space

By Jan Wellik, Associate Lecturer, Environmental Studies, UW-La Crosse

Out of a crisis, comes opportunity for change. When most small businesses and non-profits closed their doors in March due to the Covid-19 virus, many struggled to keep afloat. However, some are not only surviving, but they have taken the opportunity to step into new territory - the virtual space. The core of personal growth such as yoga, mindfulness and spirituality are often face to face encounters. However, this personal growth has become global in its humanity.

Going Virtual

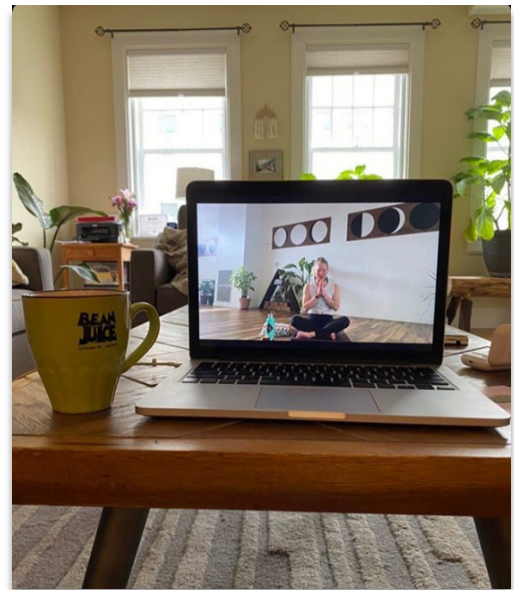
Palm & Pine Yoga Studio + School is one of those small businesses who made the shift. “We tried to be thoughtful and intentional with when and how we did it,” said Kat Soper, owner of Palm & Pine. Soper chose the online platform Union to run livestream classes so that students could watch live classes and replay. As a mother of a 2 ½ year old, Soper knew this flexibility was important.

With the online studio, students can pay a monthly membership fee for access to all of the yoga classes and a library of previous classes to replay. Soper also created an online Community Space on Facebook for previous and current members to connect.

“What most people miss the most is the human connection,” she said. “Though it (virtual community space) is definitely not the same, it is a tool to connect with one another,” she said. One of the positive impacts of this virtual connection has been connecting people from different areas within the US and globally. Palm & Pine has two studios, one in La Crosse and one in Holmen. “People usually go to one or the other,” she said. But with the virtual space, “they are getting to know people at the other studios – creating bridges of connection,” she said.

Similarly, The Yoga Place in La Crosse, quickly transitioned to an online studio this spring. Pam Starcher, owner of The Yoga Place, chose Zoom as the online platform so that students and instructors could see each other. “The teacher is very involved with the student in the Iyengar method – observing and adjusting them, so Zoom works perfect for this forum,” said Starcher. The online studio has been such a positive addition, she said, that students have asked if the online version will still be available when businesses open back up – “we plan to keep offering online classes,” she said.

The shift to virtual has not all been easy though. Instructors have had to learn new skills rather quickly, as teaching online is much different than face to face. This includes learning new online platforms and software, audio equipment and being in front of a camera, rather than a classroom of people. “Still, it is hard, because our operation is based on human connection and face to face connection,” said Soper.



Global Connection

This shift to virtual spaces for connection has yielded an increase in the reach of small businesses to a more global connection. “With the online studio and community, we are able to reach a larger

audience,” said Soper of Palm & Pine. “People who used to live here can now connect with us in other states,” she said. Similarly, Starcher of The Yoga Place said, “People are discovering us online, who have taken our classes 15 years ago, and they have moved away. Now, they can study with their favorite teachers again, online.”



This ability to reach participants outside the La Crosse region, is true for the shift at the Franciscan Spirituality Center in La Crosse as well. The Franciscan Spirituality Center (FSC) is a spiritual non-profit which offers personal growth workshops and retreats. “The joy is that by offering our programs virtually right now, people who couldn’t participate before, can now do so,” said Audrey Lucier, Director of the FSC.

Using Zoom, the FSC has offered several virtual programs this spring, including a Day of Solitude retreat, a Peace and Justice walk for Good Friday, and Art as Prayer. “We also have a role in promoting peace and justice in our community,” said Lucier of the Center’s current offering of two free virtual community programs on racism.

“I see the work we have done for many years around personal transformation, emotional health, and recovering from trauma to be more needed than ever,” she said. The Center offers “compassionate, nonjudgmental listening and teaches about empathy,” according to Lucier. “Our communities are only as healthy as the individual who live in them,” she explained.

Community Impact

Helping to strengthen and support people’s mental health during crisis is an important role of some non-profits and businesses. “I realized how important this offering (yoga practice) is to people,” said Starcher. “So many people have thanked us and said how important their yoga practice has meant to them during this stressful time,” she said.

The role of yoga and personal growth instructors often means creating a safe space for participants. “Our role within that is to hold space for people for self-reflection and to become aware of our heart and mind, and dismantle harm and trauma within ourselves,” said Soper of Palm & Pine. This time of crisis for citizens and businesses, means a range of emotions for all. Palm & Pine helps to be a safe space “for people to feel their emotions, to be in the discomfort and the whole range of emotions – which is to be human,” said Soper. The role of the community in supporting these businesses has been essential.

Both businesses and non-profits have benefitted from the generosity of people through financial donations. With this generosity, The Yoga Place is able to give back by offering a scholarship fund and donation of yoga props to students in need.

“We need to take radical responsibility for our own well-being right now,” said Soper, who created a 30-day Living Community Challenge for Palm & Pine students. With over 90 participants, the goal was to do 30-minutes of yoga and/or mindfulness each day for the month of June. “We wanted to serve people at a time when we needed it the most,” said Soper. “To ground us in our bodies, calm our minds, and clear our hearts.”

Although “neutrality is the most comfortable space to be,” according to Soper, the need for shared humanity and feelings is essential. “This is living yoga,” she said. During a time of many unknowns, “it’s been a good practice to put to use all the tools we talk about in class: breath work, meditation, movements, and non-attachment,” said Soper. With community connection, the virtual space can be a friendly, supportive place.

La Crosse Area Craft Beverage Community Innovates during a Crisis

By Heather Walder, Ph.D.

Lecturer, UWL Department of Archaeology and Anthropology and co-owner, Turtle Stack Brewery

Gathering to enjoy a cold (and, yes, often alcoholic) beverage with friends and family is often part of the culture and heritage here in Wisconsin. La Crosse is home to the longest-running and largest Oktoberfest celebration in the Midwest. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, German and other European immigrants, built breweries that produced traditional European beer recipes popular before Prohibition. By 1900, eight different breweries were operating in La Crosse⁴.

Today, the craft beer, wine, and spirits industries are an increasingly large economic and social force in our state. They encourage tourism, create service and manufacturing jobs, provide social spaces, and give back to their communities. During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, La Crosse area breweries have experienced significant financial hardships but consistently work together to help one another.

With industry leaders⁵ estimating that total craft brewery sales are down 30% and predicting a nationwide decline in taprooms in upcoming months, now is a great time to support some La Crosse area breweries: Turtle Stack Brewery, Pearl Street Brewery, 608 Brewing Co., and Skeleton Crew Brew / Lost Island Winery (Onalaska). These small businesses share a collective interest in serving their customers a taste of normalcy amid this crisis. The newest local craft beverage producer, La Crosse Distilling Company (which also houses a small brewery), has pitched in with a hand sanitizer production initiative. Together, these craft producers of the Coulee Region are working to protect

consumers and staff while continuing to innovate and serve high quality beverages.

Science Meets Craft at Turtle Stack

At Turtle Stack Brewery, the only downtown La Crosse brewery and taproom, brewmaster Brent Martinson has been crafting traditional German, Belgian, and American style beers since 2015. Before becoming a professional brewer, he pursued graduate research in immunology and microbiology. This strong background in science makes his beer production methods very process-oriented, with attention to the smallest details of sanitation and fermentation management. As you might guess, his background also has come in handy while the taproom weathers the pandemic. Martinson states, “We are in survival mode, as a business. Our top priority is staff and customer safety.”

Like the other taprooms locally and statewide, Turtle Stack put up its barstools in mid-March and transitioned to carry-out only, which in their case means 64oz refillable glass growlers. With other local taprooms utilizing existing canning and bottling capacity, Martinson quickly ordered hundreds of growlers, anticipating that supply chains would be disrupted as taprooms nationwide made this transition. Growler pickups follow strict sanitation and social distancing measures, with no-contact pickup available.

The closure of other bars and restaurants meant that local distribution of kegs also came to a halt. But, as the recipient of a Payroll Protection Program small business loan, the Turtle Stack bartenders and managers went to work, tackling the long “to do” list of projects that never seemed to get done during normal operations.

Instead of being laid off or furloughed, bartenders spent hours breaking down and recycling stacks of pallets and buckets, organized and filed years of paperwork, and cleaned the place from top to bottom. They even hired a new employee during the shutdown. There are now dedicated staff for sanitizing growlers by hand, a project that takes 8-10 hours each week. Pre-order and to-go growler sales continue to make up a significant portion of Turtle Stack’s sales. Protecting employees’

4

https://digitalcollections.uwlax.edu/jsp/RcWebImageViewer.jsp?doc_id=fa666b01-389e-4944-9eda-fb2e683e69e9/wlacu000/00000010/00000206

5 <https://www.brewersassociation.org/insights/breweries-slightly-more-optimistic-but-challenges-remain/>

livelihood by ensuring that they continued to earn a paycheck safely during the crisis is a major concern of Martinson and the brewery's ownership group.

When doors begin to reopen, things will look a little different, with plexiglass dividers, reduced seating capacity and physical distancing, compostable single-use cups, and masked employees constantly sanitizing equipment and surfaces. Limited taproom seated was available for a few weeks, but Turtle Stack has returned to growler-only sales because of the significant increase in COVID-19 cases in June.



Customer and staff safety are a top priority in the Turtle Stack taproom. (Photo Credit: Vince Stodola, co-owner of Turtle Stack)

Other innovations that changed the way the taproom works are a little harder to see, but these might have the widest ranging future outcomes. With more time for creativity, and less pressure on production for now-cancelled summer festivals, Martinson has been experimenting with some new beer styles, such as their first Milk Stout, a Tart Saison, and a strong Belgian beer he's calling a "Double Dubble." To limit capacity, and create a unique experience for their biggest fans, the brewery is reserving some hours each week for its exclusive "Mug Club" members. As these "Stack Supporters" meet and interact in coming weeks, they may get to know one another better and develop new

collaborations, charitable projects, or business ventures that otherwise never would have happened. In this case, the pandemic is bringing the community closer together.

Hand Sanitizer Initiatives

Nationwide, with customers in quarantine and store shelves emptied of cleaning supplies, distilleries have stepped up to do what they do best: produce alcohol. This version is not for drinking, but rather for use in hand sanitizer⁶. In March, the La Crosse Distilling Company, a small group of craft beverage professionals, joined this endeavor through a community-based donation effort. The transition to procure ethanol for use in hand sanitizer to help the community was a logical fit with the distillery's mission of using organic ingredients from family farmers, employing sustainable practices and focusing on authentic quality. In early efforts, sanitizer was produced and donated to individuals at five locations across the county.

After that highly successful donation drive, the distillery scaled up their efforts to move toward a greater good, and developed a second phase⁷ of producing and donating larger volume containers. These were distributed to over 175 essential organizations across the Coulee Region and Wisconsin, including first responders, hospitals, and elderly care facilities. A La Crosse Distilling Company press release statement shared that, "As COVID-19 continues to influence nearly every aspect of our personal and professional lives, the health and well-being of our community is top of mind. Amid all the negative, we saw an opportunity to make a positive impact. This is our small contribution to our community and a slight nod to finding the positive in every situation."

With requests for hand sanitizer continuing to come in from across the nation, the owner and founder of La Crosse Distilling Company, Nick

⁶

[https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeanneobrienCoffey/2020/03/26/distilleries-ramp-up-to-produce-hand-sanitizer/#4aa423804e18](https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeanneobrien Coffey/2020/03/26/distilleries-ramp-up-to-produce-hand-sanitizer/#4aa423804e18)

⁷ https://lacrossetribune.com/news/local/la-crosse-distilling-co-distributing-hand-sanitizer-across-wisconsin/article_b8a6372d-3f77-5660-b7fc-bc8a8a044fa9.html

Weber, and co-owner Chad Staehly, recognized a need for a separate company to address sales inquiries and continuing demand for the product. Weber recently formed Forward Path Logistics (FPL) to address the shortage of hand sanitizer for purchase and to meet long-term demand for the product. There is some overlap with distillery staff, but FPL has now hired a net of 35 new employees, no small feat in the middle of a pandemic.

Ethanol is still procured at La Crosse Distilling Company, a partner business with FPL, which handles the sanitizer solution formula and sales. The Marketing director of FPL, Angela Welchert, notes that their efforts seek to achieve community health objectives, keep critical infrastructure working, and help keep the community safe to meet the generational challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The goals of FPL are to address the long-term needs of essential businesses including Federal and State governments, hospitals, nursing homes, universities, etc. They are a “business to business” (B2B) organization supplying bulk volume container options up to 50-gallon drums and fulfillment of bulk volume orders. Bulk purchases of sanitizer remain available for purchase via their webpage⁸. Currently, the La Crosse Distilling Company has resumed their craft spirits production and is continuing to offer curbside carryout from their restaurant menu.

“Drink Local Craft Beer”

The pandemic has reinforced an idea already solidified in Wisconsin’s craft industry: small breweries, wineries, and distilleries aren’t competing against each other; they all benefit from tourism, increased consumer interest in craft beverages, and friendly rivalries to produce the best possible products. One meaning behind Turtle Stack Brewery’s name is that, like river turtles sunning themselves and climbing into stacks to reach the best spot on a log, craft breweries are stacking up together against “big beer” (i.e. Miller, Bud, Coors, etc.).

Craft beer now makes up 13.6% of the U.S. beer market by volume⁹, but lobbyists and distributors for industry giants have enormous political influence and compete for shelf space and market shares, both nationwide and in Wisconsin.

Collaboration among the La Crosse area breweries is nothing new, and when the COVID-19 crisis was beginning to take shape, a

meeting at Pearl Street Brewery on March 23rd brought together the owners of all four breweries (at a 6-foot distance of course). These small business owners gathered to strategize ways to support one another through what was sure to be a difficult and uncertain path forward.



Hand sanitizer bottles being filled at La Crosse Distilling Company by master distiller Mitchell Parr (center) and Travis McKeon (right). Photo Credit: Angela Welchert, Forward Path Logistics

⁸ <https://forwardpathlogistics.com/>

⁹ <https://www.brewersassociation.org/statistics-and-data/national-beer-stats/>

A photo of the group taken by Pearl Street co-owner Tami Plourde was shared widely on social media¹⁰, and was inspiring for many craft beverage fans around the region. Commenters on the post appreciated the show of solidarity and support amongst these local businesses.



Coulee Region Craft Owners on March 23 in a selfie by Tami Plourde, co-owner of Pearl Street Brewery (front). Left to right: Brent Martinson (Turtle Stack); Joe Katchever (Pearl Street), Phil Humphrey (608 Brewing), Jennifer and Todd Wiedenhaft (Lost Island Winery & Skeleton Crew Brew)

The brewmaster and co-owner of Skeleton Crew Brewery, Todd Wiedenhaft described the gathering as a meeting of leaders of a Coulee Region Craft Community that includes craft breweries, wineries, distilleries, and the customer base that supports them.

Jennifer Wiedenhaft, who co-owns Skeleton Crew Brew & Lost Island Winery, proposed the idea of a punch card loyalty program to reward customers who support each of the four area breweries. With a purchase of \$20 at each business (carry-out or in taproom), craft beer fans earn a T-shirt with all four of their logos. The words on the

¹⁰

<https://www.facebook.com/pearlstreetbrewery/photos/a.564195507012321/2710075422424308/?type=3&theater>

front are simple: “Drink Local Craft Beer.” Todd Wiedenhaft describes the “Drink Local Craft Beer” initiative’s main premise: “We should reward the people who are taking care of small businesses. They could shop anywhere, but they choose to go to the breweries... they have choices and they’re choosing to support us.”

Skeleton Crew Brewery and Lost Island Winery also used their extra time in quarantine to update their large outdoor patio area, which has plenty of space for adequate distancing between groups of customers. One appealing aspect of the craft beverage scene is its community and gathering spaces, making restricted seating capacities and physical distancing measures an especially challenging prospect. With large summer events like Riverfest, state fairs, and regional music festivals cancelled, local businesses are looking for ways to bring smaller groups of people together safely. Limited events for local supporters are a possibility for this summer, though there is still uncertainty about this ongoing and developing situation.



Turtle Stack Mug Club member Aaron Kerkvliet picks up his beer from a bartender wearing the “Drink Local Craft Beer” loyalty program t-shirt (Photo Credit: Eric Johnson, Turtle Stack General Manager).

A quarantine-time collaboration brew between Skeleton Crew and 608 Brewing yielded “6 Foot Plank,” a New England style Double IPA (NIPA) with Citra, Azacca, Ekuanot and Mosaic hops, clocking in at 8.5% ABV and available at both

breweries. They envision organizing more collaboration brews, and even a group brew with all four breweries involved at some point.

Meanwhile, 608 Brewery has been keeping their always-diverse lineup flowing, specializing in hoppy beers, fruit infused “slushies,” and “big beers” like imperial stouts. All of these are available in cans, growlers, and limited-release bottles in their taproom. 608 Brewing also participated in the worldwide All Together brew project¹¹, producing a NIPA with some proceeds going to support local hospitality professionals. Early in the quarantine, 608 also loaded up their cellar with numerous used bourbon barrels. This means that 2021 looks to be an excellent year for barrel-aged craft brews.

Pearl Street Brewery, La Crosse’s oldest craft brewery, leveraged their existing Sprout for Kids Foundation¹², a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that benefits local community organizations and families, to develop the La Crosse Bar and Restaurant Relief Fund. This fund distributes donations directly to local small businesses. Their active social media presence continually promotes local restaurants and fundraisers. Pearl Street has also used their quarantine creativity to expand their already wide-ranging lineup of beer and hard seltzer. What’s new there? Wine! According to a May 27 social media post, three different wines made with northern grape varieties are now available in their taproom. They are open daily for carryout hours.

Looking to the Future

Back at Turtle Stack Brewery, a lot more than deep cleaning is happening behind the scenes. This summer, renovations will begin on a soon-to-be announced expansion project, focused on canning and distribution across western Wisconsin. With small business loan interest rates at record-setting lows, service industry professionals in need of work, and retail alcohol sales up nationwide 26.5% between mid-March and mid-May¹³ compared to the same period in 2019, expanding production and

distribution capacity makes sense, even during a pandemic.

Prior to COVID-19, nationwide craft beverage sales had been gaining market share over mass-produced brews by industry giants. Now, some small businesses may not survive the extended shutdown and loss of revenue. In the Coulee Region, the craft beverage community has a shared spirit of cooperation that makes that outcome seem unlikely. These local businesses are supported by customers and fans who enjoy not just the flavors of craft beverages, but also the sense of community found sitting in a taproom or sharing a growler with friends. As taprooms, bars, and restaurants reopen, raise a glass and toast the hardworking and innovative local brewers, winemakers, and distillers of the La Crosse region. Just don’t forget to sanitize your hands first!



*A taste of normalcy: Friends and “Boot Club” members enjoying beverages on the newly re-landscaped Skeleton Crew / Lost Island patio in Onalaska.
Photo Credit: Todd Wiedenhaft, brewmaster of Skeleton Crew Brew*

¹¹ <https://alltogether.beer/>

¹² <https://pearlstreetbrewery.com/sprout-for-kids-foundation/>

¹³ <https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/01/business/alcohol-sales-coronavirus-trnd/index.html>

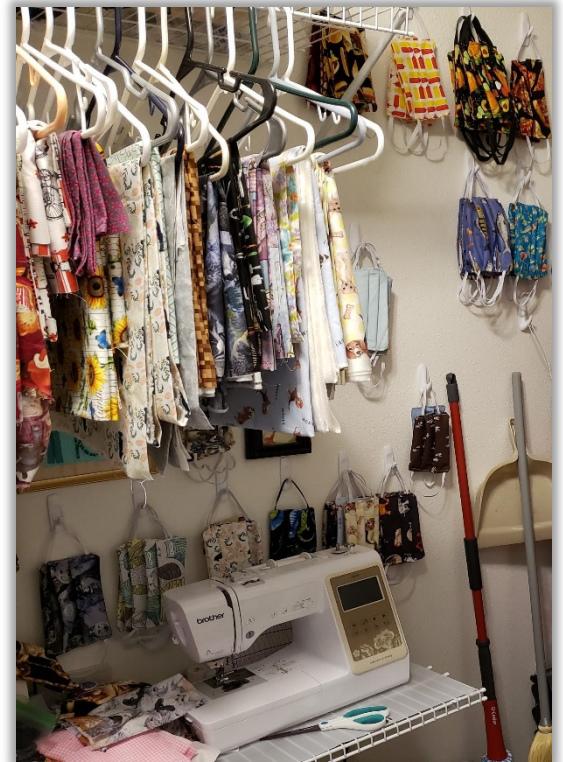
Face Masks for America

By Amy Marohl, an American Lifestyle blogger and Etsy shop owner

Introduction

At the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, I was an American Lifestyle Blogger at neededinthehome.com. I primarily wrote blog posts regarding my home life as an American mom homeschooling four of my eight children. I also had a small Etsy shop called NeededInTheHome that I would occasionally use to sell some of my creative wares. I sold homemade items I sewed, such as microwave potato and popcorn bags, reusable baby wipes and facial pads, table runners and curtains.

Through my blog, I received income via sponsored articles, affiliate marketing, and direct advertisements on the site. Sponsored articles are written by someone else who pays me to post those articles on my page for my readers. Affiliate marketing pays the blogger a commission or percentage of a sale when a customer makes a purchase using a referral (code) from your blog or initiates a purchase by following a link on your blog. Advertisement revenue is generated most often via impressions and clicks (e.g. I get about \$10 per 30,000 impressions with a certain number of click-throughs).



The revenue the blog generated was enough to cover our family expenses that were not fully covered by my husband's full-time job. In late March, I received notice that advertisers were no longer interested in providing payment for sponsored content on my blog. Many affiliates that had been paying a percentage for referrals from my blog to their website had to drop their commission rate to 0% as their shops were shuttered. The ad income was still there, but that revenue also fell, as internet traffic shifted away from home life blogs like mine to sites that covered the pandemic. When the income for my blog dried up at the end of March 2020 with the COVID-19 crisis, I wasn't sure how I was going to help meet my family's financial needs.

My Pivot

On April 4th, Etsy sent shop owners an important message. Etsy was asking shop owners to start making face masks to meet the overwhelming demand. I had recently purchased a face mask sewing pattern and had been making masks for family members and to donate to local essential workers. I knew how to make masks and had fabric and elastic on hand to work with, so I thought I would help out and sell face masks to supply this new demand. Early in April, I listed 14 face masks and sold out in a few hours. I bought more fabric; made more masks, and again, all the masks sold within a few hours.

With no business plan and little preparation, I found myself suddenly with a new business. I knew this business would require more time, time I found in short supply as a homeschooler and homemaker of a family of ten!

A New Normal (or A Family Business)

- I had to pause the blog. I stopped writing articles and sending newsletters.
- My husband took over the children's outdoors and exercise time to provide more sewing time for me.
- During non-school hours, having the older children care for the younger ones while I worked on face masks was essential.
- Some of the children would occasionally help by cutting elastic or fabric or by pinning the fabric to prepare it for sewing.
- My husband also helped by shopping for supplies, preparing packages for shipping, and taking them to the post office.
- I streamlined and standardized a production process for selecting, cutting, pinning and sewing fabric, listing the face masks for sale on Etsy, printing the shipping labels, and packaging orders for shipment.
- When rocking my baby to sleep in the rocking chair, I would answer Etsy shopper questions and special requests from my smartphone.

Headwinds

As I ran out of materials, I had to find more. This became a challenge, as local craft stores were closed and the shelves of fabric at open retailers were empty. Even purchasing online was difficult with some shipping delayed by 30 days. I found the fastest way to get materials was to purchase them from other Etsy sellers since they had them on-hand and could ship them immediately. This proved more difficult, as other crafters began to make masks. Some shops became flooded with orders and overwhelmed by the demand.

The prices for materials started to increase with the demand as well. Elastic, fabric, thread, sewing needles, and poly bags for shipping were all in high demand. I had poly shipping bags on order and the order became canceled because the factory workers were infected with the virus, and the plant had to be shut down. I found another supplier and the bags were shipped right away, but the George Floyd protest events caused the packages to be shifted to different mailing facilities with a note on my tracking that read, "civil unrest - shipment delayed."

With all of this, my equipment also faltered, and a new sewing machine and printer had to be purchased. My husband went shopping for these items and found them to also be in high demand as local shelves were cleared of them. But after much searching and paying a higher price than expected, he found them.

The Demand for Face Masks

In the beginning, it was essential workers that needed the masks and they wanted solid colors. This changed quickly and the general public needed masks to wear to work, out shopping, and to health-related appointments and preferred them with personality.

Special requests from customers started coming in asking for a certain breed of dog on the face mask, or a type of food, or to make them in a child's size. I managed each request as it came in, sometimes having to say no as the requested fabric could not be found anywhere. Restaurants have ordered my food themed masks for employees to wear at work. I have sold many pizza, hamburger, and taco masks. Grocery employees have ordered the vegetable masks. People have also been wearing masks outdoors or in public places. As protests

happened regarding George Floyd's death, most protesters were wearing masks. I received an order to ship a large group of masks overnight to be worn at a planned protest event.

Results

A few face masks became "Bestsellers" on Etsy. As of this writing, my best sellers are dog-themed face masks. Most popular are Beagles, Dachshunds, German Shepherds, and Cavalier King Charles Spaniels. On May 18, I sold my 1,000th face mask and my family celebrated as we took a day off homeschool, played, watched a movie and ordered pizza by delivery, a treat we often can't afford in this large family of ten.

My family kept track of states that were being helped by the face masks. As I printed the shipping labels, my children would color the state in on a large map. We have now reached ALL of the United States with our face masks.



The shift of focus at this time of crisis helped not only my large family, but also over 1,000 of our customers. The support from my family was very helpful and they are all proud to be helping others across America. When more retail stores reopen and retailers start offering affiliate income again and the sponsored posts come back, I will invest time into my blog again. I really hope this whole pandemic is temporary and won't go on too long as it will be nice to get back to a normal routine.

Painting Us Forward: Giving Vision and Voice in the Time of the Pandemic

By Jennifer Williams, artist

Painting Us Forward[®] is an expanding art partnership that communicates hope and resilience through visual storytelling. The project features painted portraits of diverse small business owners, accompanied by their own stories of the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on their business. While it is grounded in the La Crosse community the project is among several new local, regional and global arts initiatives that emerged during the coronavirus pandemic. For example, the online publication of contemporary art, *Hyperallergic*, is featuring the series “Views from the Studio,” presenting artists’ workspaces and studio practices during quarantine.¹⁴

Creative Arts in a Time of Quarantine

Visual artists were hit hard by the quarantine. Exhibition venues were shuttered or moved online. Some visual artists found a silver lining, however. We sequestered ourselves in our studios and made art. Wisconsin artist Frank Juarez began a blog called the “Art Heals Movement,” featuring artists from around the state, and their responses to the healing power of art during times of crisis.¹⁵ Our cohorts in the performing arts found no such silver lining, as their work was immediately compromised by the coronavirus shutdowns. Online venues for both visual and performing arts leave much to be desired, but artists are finding creative ways to present content and engage with audiences in this new era. In addition to government aid initiatives, efforts to bolster local economies included independent campaigns to support restaurants and other businesses. Behind every storefront lies a unique story. In myriad ways,

¹⁴ <https://hyperallergic.com/569827/a-view-from-the-easel-during-times-of-quarantine-11/>

¹⁵ https://artdosemagazine.com/the-art-heals-movement/?blogsub=confirming#blog_subscription-2

individuals and communities were in desperate need not only of economic relief, but the kind of hope and resilience that art can provide. Painting Us Forward[®] combines innovative artistic perspective and first-hand storytelling to address this need.

Painting Us Forward

We all now have a [pandemic] story to tell that reveals our experiences and vulnerabilities. It is this revelation that reinforces our human



Nicole – painting by Jennifer Williams

connections. Painting can reveal that too and can explore what we consider to be special about a place, an experience or a person. Through her project Painting Us Forward[®], artist Jennifer Williams creates paintings of small business owners and posts them on Facebook and Instagram, beginning with details of the business owners’ eyes. “I’m struck by how expressive and communicative eyes are, especially as our masks conceal smiles,”

Williams commented, adding “I began the paintings during the onset of the pandemic shutdown, realizing the impacts of social distancing on small businesses. The project is an artistic and empathic connection in solidarity with my community. These people and places are what make La Crosse special and unique.”



Paula and Tammy - portraits by Jennifer Williams



Williams and her project Painting Us Forward[©] was featured in a WKBT News 8 story in June 2020.¹⁶ Her recent paintings have also been part of the Art Heals blog. Work from Painting Us Forward (soon to include accompanying stories) is being photographed and exhibited online, with a physical exhibition planned once the pandemic and social distancing has abated. Proceeds from all sales of original paintings and prints, less material costs, will be reinvested in participating businesses or charities of participants' choice.

The expressive paintings are done primarily from photographs provided by the business owner or taken by the artist. The main medium is oil painting, but as the project develops, the images will be rendered in a variety of media, including digital painting and encaustic. The lifting of some COVID-19 restrictions has allowed for the opportunity to paint from life, which is in many ways preferable because nuances in facial expression can be discerned. While it would be far more efficient to present this work photographically, there is a metaphorical rationale for the medium of painting. Ever since the advent of photography in the 19th century, painting and photography have existed complementarily, and there are enduring, engaging tensions between the two mediums.

Painting Us Forward[©] embraces a complementary relationship, as the gathering of images functions as a starting point for the paintings. Compared with the immediacy of digital photography, painting is a slow process. As the pace of life slowed to some extent during the pandemic, so the slow process of painting allowed for studied observation and reflection. A drawing is created on the painting substrate, using a single color to delineate the composition inspired by the photograph. Then broader areas are developed to include the figure and surrounding space. Specificity comes last as facial features are refined out of the

painting's structure of light and dark values, warm and cool hues.

The very physical process of oil painting in particular involves a kind of "push and pull" through spatial articulation of hue nuances, volume, and clarity of edges, which connects with the keener awareness of our physical realities during the pandemic, including our proximity to each other. As a process, painting takes time: it involves surface preparation, compositional drawing structure, multiple layers to achieve color depth and texture, and in the case of oil paint – drying time. The slow drying time creates an opportunity for revision and mutability, an opportunity for the artwork to develop over time.

Photography is used at various stages of the process to capture surface details and to document the painting's evolution. Similarly, stories of the pandemic and its impact are still evolving, and it will take time to give shape to each unique perspective. It will take time for the economy to recover. Painting Us Forward[©] will be exhibited in a physical gallery space in summer 2021, and this timeframe will allow for the completion of the portraits and gallery presentation, together with completed stories.

To sustain a robust and compassionate community, we need each other and we need the arts in times of crisis. Right now we are challenged to consider what is essential, and there is no doubt that art is essential to our existence, a key to hope and evidence of our resilience.

Copyright ©2020 Jennifer A. Williams. All rights reserved.

¹⁶ <https://www.news8000.com/painting-us-forward-highlights-community-members-as-a-way-to-connect/>

Higher Education Moves Online

By H. Schenck

Professor of Chemistry & Biochemistry, UW-La Crosse

My own little corner of pandemic response lies in higher education. I am a faculty member at the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse who transitioned to teaching courses online with only a few days' notice in March. This is a story of how UWL mobilized to enable hundreds of instructors to do something many of us thought impossible, and of the adaptations I made in one of my courses this spring. I had never taught online before. If you had asked me before March whether I would ever teach online, I would have said it was impossible. I am very glad I was wrong about that.

University Closure

On March 11, UWL announced it would extend spring break and that classes would be online until April 10. That same day, my department (Chemistry and Biochemistry) began coordination efforts for multi-section laboratory classes, which rely on in-person experimentation. Similar efforts were underway in other departments. We had to identify what experiments were most important and rethink how to offer a learning experience that was built around hands-on participation. Little did we know, that was just the beginning of months of “compulsory creativity.”

Five days later, we learned that the UW System would close all campuses for the rest of the semester. Two days after that, UWL announced it would close to all but essential personnel. Some very fast footwork had to happen to halt a semester in full swing on a campus with over 10,000 students, but we did it. One example of a quick and innovative response was the graduation ceremony only two months away that had to be reimagined.¹⁷ The work of graduates must be recognized; this is the biggest event to date in the lives of most graduates, and we need to celebrate it. Our students have overcome many challenges to reach graduation. Earlier challenges didn't prevent our graduates from succeeding, and COVID wouldn't be permitted to stop them, either.

University Response to Moving Online

When the disruption of a few weeks became months, the stopgap measures to get us to mid-April were adapted again to get through May. We had high-level direction about how to support students with internet connectivity issues, encouragement for “asynchronous” activities (where not everyone connects at the same time), and recommendations to be flexible in assignment designs and implementation. We also had plenty of individualized support. Our leadership was responsive to questions and needs, and we had the opportunity to request technology we needed to teach from home. Many UWL instructors also leaned heavily on a few internal

¹⁷ Creativity abounded in UWL's “couch commencement,” our online graduation celebration. The over 1700 graduates were asked for messages of encouragement to share, and UWL provided frames, filters and stickers for graduates to share their accomplishment by social media. Nobody would say it was an ideal way to celebrate four-plus years of hard work, but the university prepared a nice video where the Chancellor and student speakers shared their thoughts and congratulations. The light-hearted resourcefulness of everyone involved in UWL's efforts came through when the Chancellor played UWL's Alma Mater on guitar, while wearing his full graduation regalia.

departments that had resources to help us implement new teaching and assessment methods on the fly. The contributions from those departments were mission-critical for many of us as we navigated the enormous changes.

UWL's Center for Advancing Teaching and Learning (CATL) has always provided a wide range of training, services and information for instructors, and they truly came into their own this spring. They shifted into overdrive providing guidance, links, virtual meetings, presentations and one-on-one consults. Their team of dedicated professionals and their knowledge base of online articles bailed me out over and over this spring. CATL offered weeks of daily drop-in hours in March and April for instructors who were stuck with technology or implementation issues, even during instructor emergencies.



Another vital group at UWL are the Information Technology Services gurus. They sent links to online resources about leading remotely, time management, and software available for remote meetings. They provided individual support for IT needs, including loans of audiovisual equipment for teaching and links to software for the borrowed devices. Many instructors, including me, brought home a document camera or other technology to capture images for lectures and class activities. Without the tireless support of ITS, CATL, and UWL leaders who supported our changes with new technology and guidance, my courses (and many others) would have been very unlikely to meet their learning goals this spring. We simply could not have moved so smoothly into online instruction without massive behind-the-scenes support. I am thankful for these staff members who are a very important part of UWL's competitive advantage.

Case Study: Moving to an Online Classroom

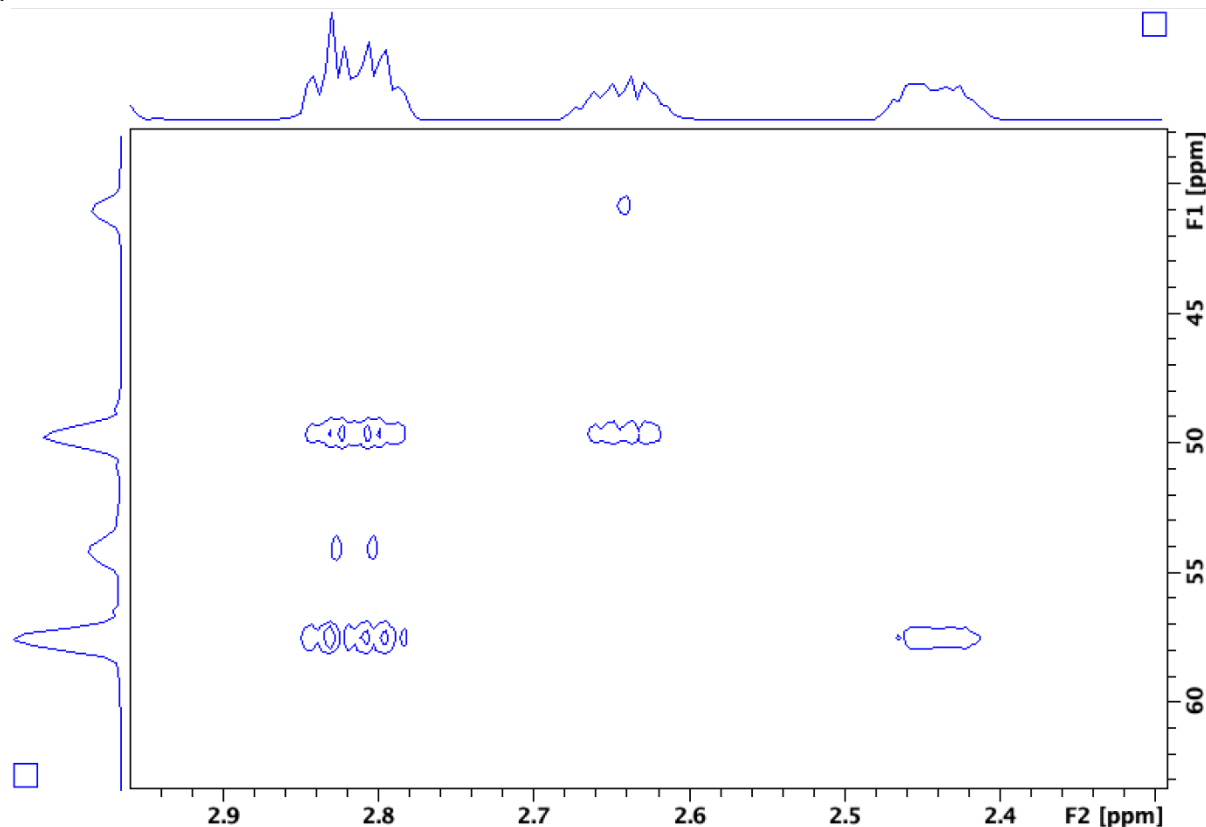
Part of my teaching assignment this spring was CHM424, which is an upper level chemistry elective course with both a lecture and a laboratory component. The course covers advanced techniques in spectroscopy, which examines how chemicals react to energy like infrared light. The result of a spectroscopy experiment is a spectrum. The lab required students to use multiple scientific instruments, but primarily our department's nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectrometer. The NMR instrument is similar in many ways to a medical MRI machine. Other courses use the NMR, mostly in the second half of the semester. For that reason, I scheduled my course's "wet" labs (when students work with chemicals and instruments) mostly before spring break in March. That scheduling choice was a major bit of luck this particular spring!

After spring break, students were scheduled to do one last lab experiment. The other lab activities after break were several "group solve" sessions where students would work together on a collection of spectra. The goal of each group solve is to figure out the structure of the chemical by looking at its spectra. This practice with low-stakes group solve exercises prepares each student to solve his or her own set of spectra in the capstone final experiment, where everyone gets a different structure to solve.

When we learned that the one-week spring break was being extended to two weeks, I suspected that we were unlikely to meet again as a class – at all. I was very thankful for the advance notice before spring break started, because it enabled me to organize a quick response before my students left campus.

In a class built around spectra, the materials for the course are not available on the internet. The materials also can't be built from home on your computer. You must have access to a spectrometer to generate spectra, and you need a photocopier or scanner to share spectra with others. Spectral images are too complex to redraw by hand or simply describe verbally.

The class was going to meet again one last time on March 12. The night before, I pulled out my entire collection of second-half experiments (both the capstone experiment, different for each student, and the group solves). I sorted the group solves into a logical order and began copying and labeling. I also scanned the spectra for the dozen individual experiments. I was in the copy room until nearly midnight. When students arrived at 8:45am the next morning, they were met with two dozen stacks of paper across the back of the room. These were the spectra for all of the group solves for the entire semester, as well as for a few assignments. The students goggled in amazement when I explained that I didn't think we would meet again as a group, but they took the papers.



The next week, when it was announced that campus was closed for the rest of semester, I sat back and smiled, knowing my students had the materials they needed for us to continue learning. I spent the spring break learning about the new technology we would need to use in videoconferences and online quizzes, and setting up and testing my borrowed document camera. My past practice of recording all lectures meant that I was familiar with recording; any student who could not make a lab session would not miss out, because s/he could watch the video.

After spring break, I coached students how to find the videoconference software and we began meeting to do group solves. I recorded videos of sessions, kept an eye on the text stream for student responses, and verbally led the class through each exercise.

For the final in-lab experiment, I had already scanned the spectra they would need back in March. I sent each student a packet of spectra by email for their last experiment. They used the spectra, and the experience they gained working with those types of spectra in the group solve sessions, to complete their capstone experiment for the term.

You may be wondering what happened with my lectures. Since I have recorded lectures for years, I already had a complete set of lecture videos for this course. Watching a video loses the in-class engagement and

problem-solving activities that are so helpful for learning. Nevertheless, when a video is all you can get, it can be a lifesaver. I was able to post videos for the rest of the semester, which was helpful for the students whose internet service was slow. They could work ahead and watch videos when the internet was working. With my lectures pre-recorded, I was able to convert the regular class time into an “office hour” for questions and discussions on a more individual basis.

How about the students? What was their experience? This matters more than any technological advances I may have offered. All students passed the course and completed their assignments. I gave extensions to enable folks to handle the disruptions they had experienced, and reached out by email when I did not receive assignments I was expecting. I worked one-on-one (remotely) with multiple students when they got stuck in their progress on the final experiment. Students let me know when they encountered difficulties, and we stayed flexible and communicated to clarify how things would work.

Were they engaged? Did they learn as I hoped they would? This was where things were really intriguing. I’ve taught this course several times, and for the first time, a few students requested *more* information: more examples and practice. Part of that may be due to online learning having a higher barrier, but I think part of it was the flexibility of the structure. Students were no longer limited to the information I would provide during lecture. They felt they could ask for more without seeming to criticize what I had chosen to cover. It was a delight to see some students really take hold and want to know and see more about the subject.

Was it perfect? Definitely not. I have sticky notes on many pages to remind me where I need to fix problems, and where things didn’t work as I had hoped they would. There were students who found it more difficult to continue learning in an online format. But the bottom line is that we all did get through it, and the final exam showed me that a lot of learning happened, including after spring break.

As happy as I was to see everyone complete the course successfully, I was equally relieved that I got through it. As a 50-something technophobe who bought my first smartphone about a year ago, I did not feel prepared to lead videoconferences and move four different course structures online with only two weeks’ warning. But it had to happen, and I had to figure it out. The word wall for this process would have large words and phrases like “flexibility” and “creativity” and “Plan B”. “Learning” would be big also, because the students and I did a lot of that. I even learned that I can teach online, which I never thought possible. In fact, I signed up to do it again this summer.

Conclusion

Beyond my relief over getting through the semester, I am resoundingly impressed with how UWL has risen to the challenge. Some folks may think higher education can be stodgy, but UWL’s response this spring was both nimble and innovative. UWL monitored the landscape and used the latest information to update its plans, communicate with students and staff, and keep us all safe. What’s more, they mobilized resources to adapt to the changes and supported our diverse efforts amazingly well. They made new technology available and trained us on how to deliver our product (higher education) remotely.

I suspect what I learned about myself mirrors what UWL has learned about itself. There is no way to replace hands-on learning that happens in laboratories, studios and field studies, and online learning lacks the synergy of group experiences we create to prepare highly skilled members of the future workforce. Still, this spring showed that we will always look for ways to innovate and provide a high-quality education for our students. The creativity that UWL and its instructors have mustered to respond to this pandemic shows why students continue to look to UWL for a great education.

Teaching Clinical Concepts in a Virtual Environment

By Melissa Weege, MS, RTT, CMD
Clinical Associate Professor, Health Professions
Radiation Therapy Program Director
UW-La Crosse

Introduction

When it was announced at the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse that we would be completing the spring 2020 semester online, there was a flurry of frantic activity. Offices on campus were cleaned out and home offices were created. Necessary technology was ordered and home Wifi was boosted. It was a very somber and eerie mass exodus, like a bad storm of epic proportions was approaching. At our home, my husband, a high school teacher transitioned to working and teaching at home and our teenage children began learning online. We were grateful for the safety of our home as we faced the large challenges as educators.

In my role as program director of the Radiation Therapy program at UWL, the most challenging part was how to quickly transition a robust clinical curriculum to a virtual environment. I have learned during this time that challenge creates opportunities, ones that would not have existed without such challenge. Challenge also may cause you to reflect on current practices and make changes to things which aren't working, need improvement, or could be more efficient. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenge for every single person in the world. This is a unique time when everyone is dealing with a common problem. The necessity to remove our clinical internship students from their clinical rotations in various radiation therapy

departments including: La Crosse, Madison, Marshfield, Milwaukee, WI and Park Ridge, IL, due to hospital safety guidelines was our challenge. Currently, those students have recently returned to their clinical rotations after a 10-12 week interruption, with a July 2020 graduation pending.

Since students were not able to be present in the clinic, they were also unable to



complete their required clinical competency exams to prepare to become certified radiation therapists and begin their careers. Fortunately, once they complete these examinations, they will be able to graduate. For some that will still be on time, for others, this may require additional clinical time to ensure clinical competency. Not only did they miss opportunities to complete these exams, but also valuable clinical experience in which they continue to develop clinical reasoning skills by applying foundational concepts to clinical scenarios. While they finished their required coursework in an online environment, what was most challenging was developing meaningful curriculum to keep them engaged in a clinical mindset.

The Radiation Therapy Program

The radiation therapy program team consists of two faculty members at UWL: a program director and clinical coordinator.

Each of the six internship sites employ an adjunct faculty member who serves as the clinical supervisor of the two to five UWL students assigned to that site. Uniquely, these adjunct faculty members also teach courses as part of the radiation therapy course curriculum to the students during their 13 months of assigned time at the site. This includes two summer terms, as well as fall and spring terms. The curriculum is streamlined across the sites with the use of a common curriculum and the Canvas Learning Management System at UWL.

In order to continue to promote clinical thinking and reasoning, as well as to engage with clinical concepts, the faculty of the radiation therapy program created curriculum to allow students to continue to do this in a virtual environment. Clinical reasoning is defined by “an ability to integrate and apply different types of knowledge to patient care”.¹

What is unique about the practice of

may have much different types of technology, imaging and treatment used as compared with a different facility. While the overall treatment doses and outcomes are expected to be the same, there are many ways to achieve the same outcome. Often, radiation therapy practice will require radiation therapists to use different thought processes and ideas in order to best treat each unique patient and this is where having exposure to many clinical experiences is critical in educating radiation therapists.

It is often hard for students to make connections between theory and practice and really understand the purpose or “why” behind what they are doing. As radiation therapy processes become increasingly automated, it is ever more necessary for radiation therapy education to provide these connections. We want students to not just memorize processes but really understand the clinical and technical aspects of treatment. When a patient doesn’t



radiation therapy is that each cancer patient is treated differently depending upon the type of cancer. A patient with prostate or breast cancer who is effectively treated at one facility

set up according to theory or processes, therapists also need to have the clinical reasoning to know what to do when there are variations.

A Student-Centered Approach to Curriculum

Using resources provided by the American Society of Radiologic Technologists (ASRT), the national professional organization for radiation therapists, the faculty brought students into collaborative learning communities. For example, the ASRT has clinical refresher modules highlighting standards of practice and treatment techniques for various cancer treatment sites (Eg. breast, brain, bone, etc.). Each student watched the clinical refresher module and then compared and contrasted how that same type of procedure was being treated at their assigned clinical site.

In order for this higher-level thinking to happen, students had to review the procedures they had learned in the previous nine months prior to the COVID interruption. Then the 20 students were placed into four collaborative discussion groups with four other students who were assigned to other clinical sites. This was important for the purpose of increasing each student's exposure to different techniques and variations in treatments at other facilities. The discussion groups broadened their exposure and allowed them to have multiple clinical experiences in a virtual environment. Additionally, the activity is also going to fill the void of the inability to complete external rotations, externships (due to COVID restrictions) at different facilities this summer as they normally would to gain those different experiences.

When feedback was solicited from the students, this is what they noted about the clinical refresher discussion groups:

"I found the clinical refresher discussions with the other students to be extremely helpful. I was able to visualize and learn about how other hospitals treat these disease sites. This will be extremely vital information to me as I start my first job

because it is important to not only have one way of how things are done in my mind. Overall, it kept my mind fresh and sharp on all of my clinical skills. It made the transition back to the clinic very easy for me." - Jaclyn Wanie

"I thought they were super helpful to remember what it's like to be treating patients site by site. It helped jog my memory for small things and I also think the discussion itself will help me study for the boards since all of the information per site is already written out!" - Margaret Koehn

"It was interesting to hear how other sites complete treatments and simulations for the same sites and how they have different devices that help create the best treatments."
- Brianna Mallmann

Another curricular method utilized by the program faculty was using patient stories to keep them engaged with the personal side of patient care. At the time of the COVID pandemic, NBC news anchorwoman, Kristin Dahlgren wrote a piece describing what it is like to be a radiation therapy patient in an almost locked down hospital in New York City.² Students read the article then reflected upon various way they could connect with patients even with masks on and make patients feel safe and comfortable as they are treated in radiation therapy departments. This allowed them to stay engaged with the very important aspects of the patient/radiation therapist relationship. It also helped them to continue to develop empathy as they put themselves in a patient's shoes in need of treatment during a pandemic.

We also had students complete a disease site summary on the required clinical competencies. For example, students need to demonstrate competency on how to treat a patient with breast cancer. For the disease site summary assignment, students outlined the

process of treatment for each disease site noting patient set ups, imaging, technologies used, dose and fraction sizes of each radiation treatment, beam modifiers used, and how to properly educate the patient on their treatments. Each student completed 18 activities over a four-week period. While we felt it would help them understand the treatment process better and the reason why things were done this way, we were pleasantly surprised by their feedback:

“The assignments made me realize some of the tasks and topics I would sometimes overlook and then I actually made note of what I could work on more once I returned to clinic.” - Natalie Majkowski

“The supplemental sheets really helped me out with explaining procedures to patients. I think that a formal writing assignment of procedure explanations should be incorporated into the next curriculum for sure.” - Matthew Buban

Conclusion

As we have seen our students work through these meaningful activities, we observed a greater depth to their knowledge of practice. This is something that may not have happened had we not been forced to create this new curriculum in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As they return to clinic and apply patient empathy, critical thinking and clinical reasoning skills, it is evident to us as faculty that this new curriculum should remain. It definitely afforded the students the opportunity to close the loop on theory and apply it to clinical practice, thus developing greater clinical reasoning skills. While the COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging to the education of future radiation therapists, it has also created opportunities to expand our curriculum and approach education in a new and innovative way that is here to stay.

Works Cited

1. Linn A, Khaw C, Kildea H, Tonkin A. Clinical reasoning: A guide to improving teaching and practice. *Australian Family Physician*. 2012; 41(1): 18-20.
2. Dahlgren K. NBC’s Kristen Dahlgren starts radiation treatment during global pandemic. Today Website. <https://www.today.com/health/nbc-s-kristen-dahlgren-starts-radiation-treatment-during-global-pandemic-t176908>. March 26, 2020. Accessed June 1, 2020.



UWL Campus Food Pantry During COVID-19

By Kelsi Grubisich, Civic Engagement and Leadership
Coordinator, University Centers, UW-La Crosse

Background

When it comes to food insecurity, college students are not always who comes to mind. The University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UWL) campus displays a vast dining facility, a student center with eight dining options, two coffee shops, and vending spread across nearly every building. Food options are plentiful, but they are not free.

A 2019 Temple University study surveyed more than 86,000 U.S. college students and found that 45 percent of respondents were food insecure in the past 30 days.¹⁸ Almost all college students are low-income. Some get little family support to attend school and they often have to stretch their financial support to cover tuition, housing, and food.

College meal plans can be expensive. UW-L meal plans are relatively affordable, compared to dining options at private universities and schools in larger metro areas. However, the lowest cost on-campus full dining meal plan still costs \$1,272 for the 15-week spring 2020 semester.

To help students, faculty, and staff who struggle with food insecurity, UWL opened a food pantry back in 2007. The pantry started in the Cartwright Center, then moved to the new Student in 2017. When the food pantry was located in Cartwright, it was not well known. Most of campus did not even know it existed. Since moving to the Student Union in January 2017, the pantry has become more known across campus and the usage has increased drastically.

Upon the arrival of COVID-19 and the closure of campus, students and staff were still needing to use this service that was offered. With the Student Union being locked, we were unsure of

how this was going to work. We made the decision to move the items from the Food Pantry to a satellite location in Whitney Center. Whitney Center was open until the end of the semester, so students were able to enter the building, scan a QR code, and get the food they needed.

Primary Food Pantry Changes

- New location in Whitney Center from the Student Union during campus closure. Food pantry plans to move back to the Student Union in the Fall.
- Students no longer have to swipe to enter, because the pantry is not in a secure area.
- Students were asked to scan a QR code to register for the pantry when taking food from shelves.
- Assistance from both Chartwells and University Centers staff was needed to make sure the pantry was stocked and kept orderly.
- More students were in need of food than before, due to loss of jobs or funding in some way during the pandemic.
- In May, when the building was locked, the pantry had to change systems.
- An order system was put in place until the pantry can reopen in the fall when the Student Union is open again.



¹⁸ https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/HOPE_realcollege_National_report_digital.pdf

New Campus Food Pantry Procedures

Due to COVID-19, University Centers and the Leadership and Involvement Center have had to make the decision to move the location of the food pantry temporarily. When campus first closed in mid-March, we made the decision to close the food pantry until further notice. During this time, we worked with the Division of Student Affairs and Diversity and Inclusion to figure out a way to keep this service available to our students, faculty, and staff. With the help of these areas along with Chartwells, we decided to move the food pantry to Whitney Center. Whitney Center was open seven days a week for lunch and dinner until May 15. We decided that this would be a good place to put the food pantry because it was the only building unlocked for the majority of the day. We were able to keep the food pantry open from 12-6pm daily.

Since the closure of Whitney Center in May, however, we have been working to implement an online ordering system. We have an order form posted on our Food Pantry website that students can fill out weekly and pick up their food on Wednesdays. Once we are able to be on campus again, we will move our Food Pantry back to the Student Union. Students will then have swipe access to the food pantry by filling out the user registration form that can be found on our food pantry website. We do not ask for any need-based information on the form, just enough information to be able to grant students the access they need.



Donations to the Food Pantry

During the academic year we host food drives monthly among 11 campus departments. We are also members of the Hunger Task Force of La Crosse and go there twice a week to get food to stock the pantry. This past academic year, we also hosted a variety of other food drives on campus and received donations from the community. For the summer, we have had many campus community members asking how they could support us. To this point, we have hosted two food drives with a contactless drop-off at Whitney Center. In April, we collected nearly 3,000 food items to support our food pantry. We have also collected monetary donations that will be used to purchase items that are still needed to serve our students. We will continue to use the Hunger Task Force this summer to provide food to students.

Food Pantry Statistics (2019-2020 Academic Year)

- 270 New User Registrations during the 2019-2020 academic year
- 3,706 Food Pantry Entries (before COVID-19)
- 2,356 items donated during monthly food drives (October-March)
- 2,723 items donated during April COVID-19 Food Drive
- 1,660 items donated during June COVID-19 Food Drive

Conclusion

In conclusion, we are doing everything that we can to be sure that our students are fed during COVID-19. We are providing students with an opportunity to pick up food on a weekly basis, providing them enough of the items selected to get them through the week. We appreciate all of the support that we have been given from our campus community and the La Crosse community. We would not be able to support the students through this hard time without all of the financial and food donations.

La Crosse Small Business Relief Grant Program

By John Kovari

Associate Professor, Department of Political Science & Public Administration, UW-La Crosse

Introduction

While the federal government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic is well-documented, the response of local, municipal governments in Wisconsin is perhaps lesser known. The City of La Crosse is one of the first (and few) municipal governments in the state to create a government relief program for local businesses in response to the public health crisis and its impact on the commercial sector. This brief describes the origin and timeline of the creation of the La Crosse Small Business Relief Grant program, its structure and guidelines, and grant outcomes; initial reflections and conclusions are also offered as a way to offer guidance to other local governments considering programs of their own.¹⁹

Origin and Planning

The first confirmed case of coronavirus in Wisconsin was confirmed by the media on February 5, 2020, and as the COVID-19 virus spread, local governments increasingly began planning for the public health crisis. While most local governments do not have a formal program in place as of mid-June 2020, a few municipalities like the Cities of Racine and La Crosse began planning special programs to assist local businesses with the economic hardships of the pandemic, even prior to Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers issuing a “shelter

in place” order effective March 25. The following describes the City of La Crosse's response.

As early as the beginning of March, the City of La Crosse's Planning Department staff was hearing from its business community with fears and worries about how a Wisconsin lockdown might impact their establishments. News about the rapid spread of COVID-19 grew, and on March 12, the same day that Governor Evers declared a public health emergency, City Planning Director Jason Gilman asked Economic Development Planner Andrea Schnick to investigate options the city might have to support its local businesses and workers.

Even prior to Gov. Evers closing taverns and restaurants statewide on March 17, Schnick had already been in contact with numerous business owners about the pain and fear they were experiencing, partly because it was still unclear in early/mid-March how other levels of government would proceed. A shutdown would mean a staggering drop in revenue and the likely result of laying off or furloughing employees, in addition to a loss of inventory and maintaining monthly expenses (such as utilities and capital and insurance costs). The worry among small businesses in the restaurant industry and storefront retail was especially heightened, because of high inventory and turnover/retraining costs.

During this time, Gilman and Schnick recall developing a heightened sense of urgency to put together pro-active local plans to quickly address the situation, as opposed to waiting for state and federal responses, which were perhaps slow/contradictory, as well as a fundamental need to provide even nominal support to businesses as a gesture of support and goodwill during a tenuous time.

In brainstorming options for a City response, planning staff began researching what other local governments were offering, only there were virtually no existing models to replicate. Staff also attended numerous virtual seminars about federal and state programs that could assist local businesses, with La Crosse staff asking deliberate questions about options for local governments; again, the extent of local government support was minimal if almost nonexistent.

¹⁹ Interviews for this research were conducted from June 8-15, 2020, with three key members of the La Crosse Planning Department (Jason Gilman, Andrea Schnick, and Caroline Gregerson), as well as several key stakeholders from the La Crosse business and nonprofit community (who wished to remain anonymous).

Schnick operated under the assumption that help from the federal or state level would eventually arrive, but it would be awhile and might not truly assist all businesses. At the time, the only form of federal assistance was the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Economic Injury Disaster Loans of up to \$2 million at 3.75% over a 30-year term, but only available where credit is otherwise unavailable.²⁰

At the state level, the only existing assistance was available through the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation's (WEDC) Small Business 20/20 program, which was limited to businesses with which the approved community development financial institutions (CDFIs) had existing loans; this applied to only one business in La Crosse.

Given the lack of available support programs, the City expanded discussions to inquire about what would help businesses stay liquid and afloat. The initial round of brainstorming was focused on low-interest disaster loans.

However, after ongoing conversations with business owners, it quickly became clear to the Planning Department that the original focus on low-interest loans would not work. Business leaders worried that burdening themselves with additional debt would make a bad situation worse, and Schnick concluded that, ideally, the new City program should help keep someone's head afloat and not slowly push them underwater with debt.

In short, towards the end of March 2020, neither federal nor state programs had delivered immediate financial aid, and even though momentum grew that the federal government would enact some kind of economic stimulus, concern remained that small business owners would not qualify or have resources to apply for and/or receive complicated forms of federal or state assistance.²¹

²⁰ Eventually, the CARES Act was approved by Congress on March 27, which includes SBA's Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans to small businesses. Details of the PPP can be found at the SBA website here:

<https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/coronavirus-relief-options/paycheck-protection-program>.

²¹ Hindsight suggests these early concerns were not far off base, given that the rules for one of the main components of

It became clear that the City would need to prioritize quick, immediate grant assistance to businesses directly impacted by the pandemic. Schnick ultimately identified two key ways to deliver immediate help to area businesses and summarized them in a March 13 memo to City Planner Jason Gilman and Mayor Tim Kabat. The first was to offer loan deferment for those few La Crosse businesses with loans with the City for 3 months (April, May, June), including capital, small business development and upper floor renovation loans; this was accomplished through a mayoral executive order on March 20. The other method was to provide direct financial relief, and is now called the Small Business Relief Grant Program (SBRG).²²

The La Crosse City Council approved Resolution 20-0499 on April 9, 2020, officially establishing the Small Business Relief Grant program. A motion was initially made to refer (or delay) the ordinance for 30 days, over concerns that the program would "bail out" businesses that had not built up an appropriate level of savings and that the Planning Department needed to further vet program guidelines. That motion failed 1-11 (with one recusal), and the ultimate motion to approve the program passed unanimously (12-0, with one recusal).

In approving the resolution, council members stressed the need for quick action to support the area's businesses and employees, and commended the Planning Department's alacrity and thoroughness in constructing a brand new program. Council members further noted that although the rush towards creating a new program might not be completely perfect, it was better to err on the side of immediate assistance in the face of the severe economic and public health crisis facing their constituencies.

the CARES Act, its Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), which focused on small businesses, revised original program parameters in May/June to allow for more flexibility in applying and reimbursing for eligible expenses.

²² The La Crosse City Council approved Resolution 20-0499 on April 9, 2020, officially establishing the Small Business Relief Grant program.

Program Details & Funding Sources

The SBRG set up a competitive application process for interested parties who could apply for up to \$5,000 per 10 employees, with a maximum of \$25,000 per business (and a minimum request of \$1,000), with an application deadline of April 24.

Eligible costs included operating expenses associated with staff salaries, rent, insurance, and/or utilities. Capital expenses for inventory, supplies, furniture, software, and equipment were also considered. Basic eligibility was also limited to focus grants towards businesses with a documented need, low- and moderate-income applicants, and businesses located in areas the city previously designated as Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas (NSRAs), where residents may qualify for housing rehabilitation programs. Other eligibility requirements included a location within city limits, proof of hardship from COVID-19, and proof of good legal standing and being current with local/state/federal taxes and child support payments. Applicants were also required to provide the following specific information: owner income self-verification (including last two years of IRS Form 1040s), business operating agreement (for businesses with multiple partners), a copy of business liability insurance, and previous four weeks of payroll documentation.

Applications were formally scored by a team of four Planning Department staff; the application review process took roughly a month to process and verify application information. Applications were scored individually by each team member according to the established criteria requested in the application forms, which could be submitted online.²³

After all applications were received, each of the four Planning Department team members scored the applications individually. Because some of the criteria regarding documented need and readiness were somewhat subjective (e.g. the capacity and experience to operate the business), the Planning Department team decided to discuss every

application collectively and then assign a final score via team consensus. In order to distribute funds as equitably and broadly as possible, some adjustments were made in the final tally.

Before grant awards began to be delivered in early June, recipients were required to make a \$100 “job deposit” per employee prior to receiving their grant. The job deposit will be returned when the business is able to demonstrate proof of employee retention, no later than six months after receiving the grant.

Three major funding sources financed the SBRG program, although the original appropriation was enhanced with a second round of funding. During the first round, approved on April 9th, the City reallocated \$200,000 in administrative fees the City receives from tax incremental financing (TIF) districts,²⁴ and repurposed \$150,000 from existing 2020 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds.²⁵ The second round expanded funding for SBRG by adding \$174,000 in additional CDBG funding that was allocated to the City via the CARES Act.²⁶ The third major source of funding came from a partnership with Couleecap, an area

²⁴ This revenue source should not be confused with TIF incremental revenue, which can only be used for approved project expenses associated with the TIF district. Rather, funding for the SBRG program was collected from fees municipalities typically charge for administering/managing the TIF (up to 15% of total project expenses can be collected). For SBRG funding, the Planning Department recommended utilizing these fees, which had yet to be collected from several TIF districts in the city. These funds would ordinarily go into the city’s general fund.

²⁵ The repurposed CDBG funds were originally intended for the City’s Small Business Development Loan and Women and Minority-Owned Business programs, which the City uses as needed, and exists in the form of a revolving loan pool. Given a slowdown in new business development proposals, the Planning Department applied to the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for, and received, a substantial amendment to their previously-approved 2020 CDBG spending plan; substantial amendments require public notice, and the City received no community concerns.

²⁶ The City’s final distribution of funding between TIF administrative fees and CDBG was ultimately redistributed, where TIF administrative fees contributed only \$195,000, not the original \$200,000 set aside, with the remainder funded with CDBG assistance (\$174,000 from CARES Act).

²³ The full program guidelines and scorecard can be found at <https://www.cityoflacrosse.org/home/showdocument?id=2516>.

anti-poverty nonprofit, which provided \$18,600 in additional financing.²⁷

Grant Outcomes

The Planning Department received a total of 115 applications, totaling \$1,185,138 in requests through the April 24 deadline. Of the 115 that applied, 92 received City grants totaling \$494,800. Couleecap awarded an additional 8 grants totaling \$18,600. The City grant awards ranged from \$2,000 to \$25,000, although only one applicant received the maximum amount. Applicants on average received awards equaling \$5,378. Couleecap-financed grants ranged from \$1,600-\$5,000, with an average of \$2,325.

Table 1 lists the distribution of SBRG awards by industry sector (as coded by the author) and some descriptive statistics. It is important to note that since the Planning Department was able to fund nearly all *eligible* applicants, the distribution below does not necessarily reflect a preferred distribution by the Planning Department; the distribution more reflects amounts requested by applicants.

Table 1. La Crosse Small Business Relief Grant Program Distribution by Industry and Amount (City and Coulee Cap Grants Combined)

Industry	Count	Frequency	Amount	Average Per Recipient	% Total Funding
Restaurant/Tavern	28	28%	\$ 212,100	\$ 7,575	41%
Service	28	28%	\$ 109,800	\$ 3,921	21%
Retail/Storefront	13	13%	\$ 49,000	\$ 3,769	10%
Beauty/Spa	10	10%	\$ 31,000	\$ 3,100	6%
Gym/Dance Studio	9	9%	\$ 35,000	\$ 3,889	7%
Health	5	5%	\$ 23,000	\$ 4,600	4%
Hotel	5	5%	\$36,000	\$ 7,200	7%
Childcare	2	2%	\$ 17,500	\$ 8,750	3%
Total	100	100%	\$ 513,400	\$5,134	100%

Over half (56%) of all grants went to the restaurant/tavern and service industries;²⁸ these businesses received \$321,900. Retail/storefront businesses made up 13% of recipients and received a total of \$49,000 in grants. On average,

restaurants/taverns, hotels, and childcare businesses received more than other industry applicants.

Figure 1 below presents the count of awards by the number of employees per business. What becomes clear is that the majority of grants (88%) went to businesses with 25 employees or less.²⁹ A plurality of grants, over one-third (39%), were awarded to businesses with five or fewer employees.

In terms of other scored criteria, several findings are present. Forty-nine percent (49%) of grantees were a minority-based enterprise and/or low/moderate income-owned businesses, and fifty-five (55%) were located in NSRA neighborhoods. Seven percent (7%) of applicants had received previous assistance from the City.

Reflections and Conclusions

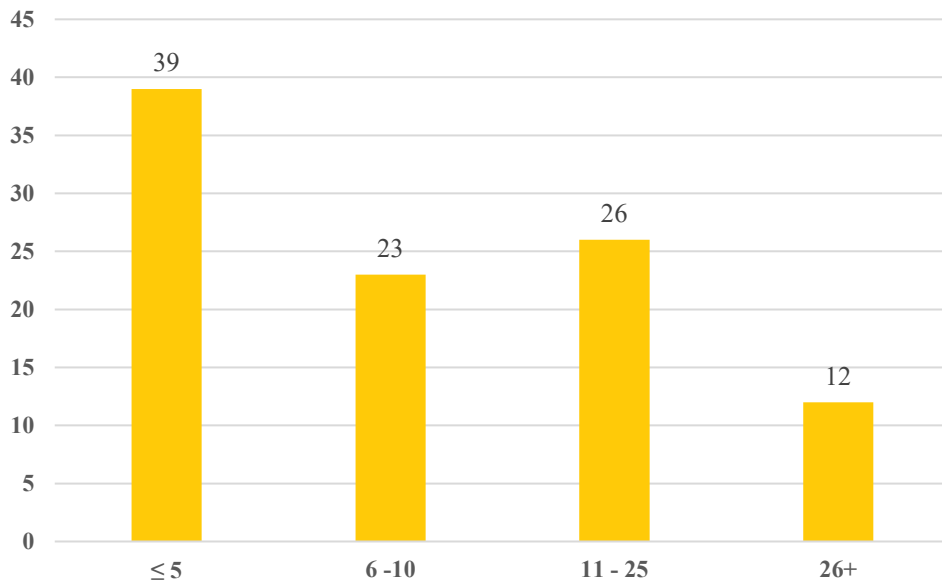
Since the creation of the SBRG program, other governments have approved a variety of business assistance supports, many utilizing federal CARES Act funding. For example, the State of Wisconsin announced its own \$75 million Small Business Grant Program administered through WEDC, where 30,000 businesses statewide could apply for a \$2,500 grant.

²⁹ Please note that these employee counts do not distinguish between full- and part-time employment.

²⁷ Coulee Cap, along with Wisconsin Women’s Business Initiative Corporation (WWBIC), is also serving a role in providing follow-up technical assistance to grantees.

²⁸ Service industry is coded to include a wide variety of businesses, including but not limited to insurance companies, home cleaning, auto repair/towing/taxi, graphic design/marketing, travel, and photography; the idea was to capture those businesses with commercial office space as opposed to retail storefronts, although some “service” businesses coded here do have a retail storefront component.

Figure 1. La Crosse Small Business Relief Grant Distribution by # of Employees Per Applicant



As of the time of this writing, other municipal-level programs in Wisconsin are few and far between. A few examples include the City of Racine who distributed \$250,000 in forgivable loans on April 2nd to 18 small businesses, the City of Green Bay who authorized \$100,000 in no-interest loans up to \$10,000 for businesses with up to 100 employees, and the City of Milwaukee announced its own small business relief program in mid-May,

The City of La Crosse is unique in its early preemptory action and use of own-source (general fund) revenue to address the economic hardships resulting from COVID-19. However, there is some concern that utilizing the general fund for these activities also impacted the magnitude of cuts it experienced as a result of COVID-19. The City was forced to cut its overall 2020 operating budget by \$4.4 million (nearly 7% of the total budget), impacting several departments with job cuts and employee furloughs, including \$95,000 in salary cuts and furloughs to the Planning Department (roughly 16% of their 2020 budget), which could have been offset by the amount used for SBRG. In a way, the La Crosse Planning Department staff may have cut their salary to assist their local businesses.

When asked to look back on SBRG and its implementation, La Crosse planning staff offered

thoughtful and honest reflections. Mostly, staff capacity was major issue; reviewing each of the 115 applications individually (and following up with applicants to acquire full documentation) required a substantial amount of time in addition to their regular duties.³⁰ Planning staff also wondered whether targeting more specific industries would have been helpful, given the pandemic’s long-term impact on restaurants especially.

Furthermore, the application did not distinguish between part-time and full-time, which meant staff were trying to compile FTE comparisons across applicants; in hindsight, that data might have been more easily reported by business owners.

Overall, given the unique ways in which Wisconsin local governments responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, this landscape presents numerous opportunities to explore how governmental responses can better respond to future crises and preserve economic outcomes. While it is too early to perform an objective analysis of COVID-19’s enduring economic impact, profiling the La Crosse response raises interesting questions for future political and economic research. What level of financial assistance is appropriate? Do grants or loans work better? Does early action make a difference? Should assistance be directed geographically, or targeted toward specific industries? Ultimately, time will tell which communities were most impacted by job losses and business closures and how well the La Crosse Small Business Relief Grant Program fared in supporting its business community.

³⁰ In contrast, the SBA’s paycheck protection program partners with existing, local financial institutions to do the underwriting, perhaps a way of freeing up governmental resources to focus on outreach.

La Crosse Nonprofits Collaborate and Innovate to Strengthen Local Pandemic Response

By Jamie Schloegel, Executive Director La Crosse Community Foundation and Mary Kay Wolf, Executive Director Great Rivers United Way

Introduction

When the coronavirus infected La Crosse County, it required a response as novel as the virus itself. The La Crosse Community Foundation and Great Rivers United Way responded with an innovation unmatched by anything in its combined 160 years serving the community.



United Way of the
Great River Region

During the week of March 9, the prospect of COVID-19's imminent arrival loomed over La Crosse County. By Thursday that week, store shelves had emptied of hand sanitizer, household cleaning products, sanitizing wipes and, for a reason no one yet understands, toilet paper. People were stocking up, bracing for what they speculated was to come — of course, not one of them knowing for sure.

Meanwhile, Great Rivers United Way and the La Crosse Community Foundation knew that whatever the fallout from the incoming threat, people would need help. They had watched as other cities had locked down, just as their health care institutions had geared up. Together they developed a plan to ensure nonprofits in La Crosse County

would have to collaborate to build a community pool of resources.

Events unfolded quickly the following weekend on Tuesday, March 17, Governor Tony Evers ordered all restaurants, bars and entertainment centers to close indoor operations, nonessential businesses to close or send employees to work from home and residents to stay home unless they had vital errands or business. The order, while aiming to restrict the spread of the virus, also restricted many residents' ability to earn an income.

Almost immediately, hundreds were jobless. Essential businesses had to develop means to distance workers from one another and implement rigorous cleaning practices. Dozens of nonprofit organizations had to find new ways to deliver critical services.

Homeless shelters and warming centers could no longer accept all the guests that needed them while maintaining social distancing requirements. Hunger prevention programs had to figure out how to deliver food. Everything changed. Services were, almost literally, turned inside out; spoke-to-hub operations reversed course. Where people before came to receive services, organizations instead had to devise ways to deliver the services to the people.

La Crosse County confirmed its first diagnosed case of COVID-19 the next day, March 18 — the same day the La Crosse Community Foundation and Great Rivers United Way announced their plan. Together they had established the first ever La Crosse Area Emergency Response Fund.



Grant Program

Historically, the foundation had reviewed grant requests from nonprofit organizations every quarter. Nonprofits submitted their requests, and at a routinely scheduled meeting, a committee of eight community volunteers reviewed them and made funding recommendations to the foundation's board of directors. Great Rivers United Way's grant application cycle was

once every two years engaging 100 community volunteers for evaluations. But in the new environment, new needs emerged daily, sometimes even hourly, demanding a far more swift, nimble response. That was precisely the need for which the emergency response fund was designed.

The La Crosse Area Emergency Response Fund's priority was to provide funding to La Crosse County charitable organizations that already offered direct services to the area's most vulnerable populations. The aim was to ensure immediate support to meet basic human needs for people hardest hit by reduced and lost work resulting from pandemic-related closures.

The evaluation committee comprised representatives from the community foundation and Great Rivers United Way, and funds were distributed on a rolling basis, making it possible to move resources quickly and adapt to evolving needs.

The fund was established with \$20,000 from the La Crosse Community Foundation, with Klauke Investments committing a lead gift and another donor committing \$20,000 in matching funds. As people throughout the community wanted to help, the fund gave them the means to make a meaningful difference. Six weeks later, the fund exceeded \$1 million in donations from 272 donors.



The first grant request arrived the same day the foundation and GRUW announced the emergency fund, underscoring the great need for it. In the grant, the Hunger Task Force sought \$10,500 for supplies to transport food for distribution and buy more food to meet the growing demand brought on by business closures and resulting unemployment.

Another 34 grants have been funded to-date, each focused on addressing residents' immediate, basic needs. Not surprisingly, preventing and addressing hunger was a substantial area of need.

The Boys and Girls Clubs of La Crosse, which through its Supper Club had been serving dinner to 2,100 kids who would otherwise go without a hot, nutritious dinner, had to move nightly meals at the clubs to children's individual homes. The La Crosse Area Emergency Response Fund supported the effort with two grants totaling \$25,000.

The fund provided another \$10,000 to the School District of La Crosse nutrition program to ensure hungry school children, whose classes had moved from school to home, could continue to receive healthy breakfast and lunch meals seven days a week. With help from the fund, school nutrition workers packed and delivered 17,500 meals every week.

Another essential need was shelter, and the fund was able to help there, too. With \$200,000 of a \$500,000 gift to the emergency fund from the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, the fund was able to cover significant expenses created with the Safer at Home order. The La Crosse Warming Center, for instance, transitioned from a 7PM-8AM shelter to a 24/7 operation that required social distancing — and a lot more space to do that.

In two days, a team of colleagues from the Warming Center, Catholic Charities, Salvation Army of La Crosse and the Coulee Collaborative to End Homelessness moved the shelter to Cathedral School, reserving the shelter for people quarantined after exposure and isolation for anyone who caught the virus. There, the emergency fund covered related costs for more meals, more handwashing stations, portable toilets, showers and around-the-clock cleaning.

About one paycheck cycle after businesses shut down, many people with small incomes living paycheck-to-paycheck were no longer able to pay bills for basic needs. To fill that gap, the emergency response fund provided \$97,000 to Couleecap to establish an emergency, critical bill payment program. The program helped eligible people pay for rent, utilities and phone bills as they waited for government aid and unemployment benefits to arrive.

Other grants have helped nonprofit childcare providers continue to care for children of essential workers and increased outreach to vulnerable youth and adults to ensure their well-being in a time of isolation, uncertainty and stress. Grants have supplied diapers for families who can no longer afford to buy them, and they have supported St. Clare Health Mission in efforts to arm patients with prescriptions needed to reduce clinic visits — and thereby lessen their exposure to coronavirus. The list continues, and the number of residents aided in these efforts is countless.

Aside from seeing the funds help people who never before needed help, most gratifying was seeing the many partnerships that formed around the projects supported, like the groups working together to address homelessness during the crisis.

For Boys & Girls Clubs, the Waterfront Restaurant and Tavern and its owners were first on the scene to prepare the meals. Many other local restaurants followed to support the continuation of The Supper Club.

For the La Crosse School District's program, its transportation company, GO Riteway Transportation, bused the food and nutrition workers to pick-up locations and homes throughout the district Monday through Friday for the first few months before the La Crosse YMCA, Salvation Army and community volunteers stepped in to help.

Additionally, when the market for Superior Fresh, an organic farm in Hixton, Wisconsin, waned due to the pandemic, the family farm contacted the nutrition program to distribute fresh produce to families in need. In addition, Grow La Crosse distributed seedlings to a pilot group of families to begin growing their own food.

Conclusion

As of May 30, 2020, the La Crosse Area Emergency Response Fund has disbursed more than \$750,000 for nonprofit programs in La Crosse County aiding people hardest hit by the pandemic's economic aftermath. Equally important, it has supported and encouraged numerous community partnerships. As La Crosse enters a time of economic instability like most have never experienced, this sort of collaboration will be critical to many nonprofit organizations' long-term survival.³¹

³¹ Details and information on the La Crosse Area Emergency Response Fund can be found, including the fund balance, list of donors, and list of recipients, can be found on the Foundation's webpage, <https://www.laxcommfoundation.com/give/la-crosse-area-emergency-response-fund-activated/>



MFI Briefs

Menard Family Initiative Brief Economic

This volume was edited by Dr. Adam Hoffer. Dr. Hoffer is the Director of the Menard Family Midwest Initiative for Economic Engagement and Research and an associate professor of economics at the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse. He earned his undergraduate degree from Washington & Jefferson College and his Ph.D. from West Virginia University. Dr. Hoffer is the co-editor of the edited volumes *For Your Own Good: Taxes, Paternalism, and Fiscal Discrimination in the Twenty-First Century* and *Regulation*. His academic research has been published in journals such as *The Southern Economic Journal*, the *Journal of Sports Economics*, and *Journal of Economic Education*.

Copyeditor: Dr. Jan Wellik, UWL Environmental Studies

About the Menard Family Initiative

The Menard Family Midwest Initiative for Economic Engagement and Research (MFI) was established in 2019 by a gift from the Menard Family. MFI’s mission is to engage participants in economics through experimental research and enriching, interactive experiences to ultimately discover answers to our social, economic, political, and legal challenges.

The MFI provides UWL students more opportunity to learn economics through hands-on experiences and community engagement. Through research and engagement, the Initiative’s work highlights effective solutions and helps advance positive change.

Research and Engagement Areas

- Regulation
- Tax and Budget Policy
- Economic Opportunity
- Sports Economics
- Innovation
- Political Economy
- Behavioral Economics

Coming Soon from the Menard Family Initiative:

Regulation and Economic Opportunity: Blueprints for Reform Edited by Adam Hoffer and Todd Nesbit
(Expected publication - Fall 2020)

Regulatory expansion has been stunning. The Code of Federal Regulations – the accumulation of rules imposed by the departments and agencies of the federal government – now exceeds 180,000 pages. With a reading speed of two minutes per page, the average American would need more than 250 days of consecutive, around-the-clock reading to wade through the comprehensive list of regulations promulgated by federal government agencies. The CFR does not even include the additional regulations imposed by Executive Order, state governments, and local municipalities.

Regulation matters. Functional, evidenced-based regulation can provide significant public benefits, such as protecting uninformed consumers, limiting the effects of monopoly power, improving public health and safety, safeguarding civil rights, and protecting the environment.

Poor regulation can be devastating. Interest groups can convince the government to use its coercive powers to their own benefit and profit at the expense of everyone else. The financial and time costs of complying with regulations can drastically outweigh the benefits. Even regulations created with the best intentions can have such perverse effects in the form of eroding the fundamental market processes that underpin the remarkable level of economic development we in the West enjoy, leaving in its wake poverty and civil unrest.

The goal of this volume is to study regulation. We ask fundamental questions that include not only the actual effects of regulation, but also a study of how regulations are created.



MFI Director and Associate Professor of Economics Adam Hoffer works with economics student Kyle Vandeursen.



Visit Us