

SOUTH  
HEARTLAND  
DISTRICT



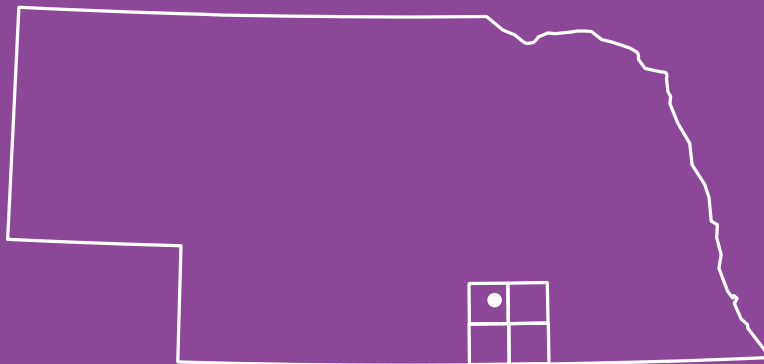
HEALTH  
DEPARTMENT

# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

**26** employees serving **44,733** people across **4** rural counties

DEDICATED TO

- Understanding the needs in our communities
- Communicating effectively
- Supporting individuals and families to be their healthiest



Adams, Clay, Nuckolls, & Webster Counties



[www.southheartlandhealth.ne.gov](http://www.southheartlandhealth.ne.gov)

(402) 462-6211

We speak English & Spanish!

Nationally Accredited

## From the Director

South Heartland District Health Department is excited to announce the launch of our **Healthy Families Nebraska Heartland** home visitation program in 2023. Healthy Families is a free and voluntary in-home, relationship-based service designed to promote positive parent child interactions, healthy attachment, and partnerships with parents so they feel more confident.

Focusing on families beginning at pregnancy up through 3 months of age, our nurse home visitors use the Parents as Teachers curriculum and other resources to offer information on safe sleep, parent/child interaction, breastfeeding, child temperament, development screenings, behavioral concerns, and more.

Our staff also have specialized training in Circle of Security to help parents and children feel safe and secure. In just 6 months, we are already partnering with more than 20 families.

As we work toward becoming an accredited Healthy Families America program, we are excited to be supporting the Healthy Families America vision that all children receive nurturing care from their family that leads to a long, healthy, and successful life.

This report showcases key examples of our efforts over the past fiscal year. Visit our website to explore more about our work and commitment to public health.

“  
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”



**Michele Bever, PhD, MPH**

Health Director

[michele.bever@shdhd.ne.gov](mailto:michele.bever@shdhd.ne.gov)



**Communicable Disease Control**

During the 23-24 fiscal year, the SHDHD 4-county district had 456 confirmed, probable, or suspected cases of reportable infectious diseases other than COVID-19. Staff at SHDHD responded to 31 facility outbreaks of COVID-19 and seven facility outbreaks of non-COVID-19 illnesses. Preventing disease spread helps increase safety.

**SHDHD investigated 456 reportable cases of infectious diseases.**



**Chronic Disease & Injury Prevention**

SHDHD expanded the Falls Prevention Stepping On Program to Nuckolls County. A Brodstone Memorial Hospital staff member received the facilitator training and implemented the first class. The program's addition has increased access to fall prevention skills for SHDHD residents.

**In FY 23-24, 2 classes with 23 participants had a 78% completion rate.**



**Environmental Public Health**

SHDHD uses two PurpleAir monitors to track air quality around our district, detecting harmful particles like smoke, dust, and other pollutants. The data is uploaded to an online map in real time, allowing for easy monitoring of local air quality conditions. Air pollution can aggravate heart disease and stroke, lung diseases such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma, and diabetes.

**SHDHD reported 18 unhealthy air quality days during April, May, & June 2024.**



**Maternal, Child, & Family Health**

Healthy Families Nebraska, a new program for SHDHD, is an evidence-based home-visiting program designed to promote positive parent-child interactions for anyone pregnant or with children under 3 months at home. Three home visitors and one program supervisor partner with parents to help them connect with community resources and feel more confident parenting.

**22 SHDHD families enrolled into the Healthy Family Nebraska Heartland program.**



**Access to & Linkage with Clinical Care**

SHDHD's oral health program provides education and preventative dental care to children at preschools and day-cares in the South Heartland District. Based on need, the program can provide fluoride varnish, sealant treatments, and 38% silver diamine fluoride (SDF).

**In FY 23-24, SHDHD educated 260 children, 160 received sealants, & 28 received fluoride varnish.**

**July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024**

Vaccines to  
children and adults  
**1591**

**18** area school nurses  
received SHDHD  
Community Service  
Awards

**47000+**  
hits on SHDHD  
English and Spanish social  
media

Total of **456** reportable  
diseases investigated,  
including **46** COVID cases

**375** fourth graders from SHDHD area participated in  
Nebraska Kids Fitness and Nutrition Day

**18** participants trained in  
QPR (Question, Persuade,  
Refer)

Participants in the Diabetes  
Prevention Program lost an  
average of **17** lbs

**1286**  
total mosquitoes trapped,  
**3** trapping sites tested  
positive for West Nile

**\$2742.06** funds  
received from Give  
Hastings Day to use for  
youth mental wellness

*Success Stories: How we make a difference...*

**South Heartland helps prevent lead poisoning in local children**

Thousands of Nebraska children have been exposed to lead for so many decades. Locally, South Heartland receives about 100 reports for children with elevated blood lead levels every year. Lead is a naturally occurring metal that can cause negative health effects. Children can be exposed by eating lead paint chips, ingesting contaminated food or water, and/or by breathing in lead dust. Because of their developing nervous systems, children younger than 6 years old are particularly vulnerable to the effects of lead exposure since lead is easily absorbed in their nervous system. Even low blood lead concentrations can cause developmental delays, difficulty learning, behavior issues, and neurological damage.

SHDHD is committed to helping prevent and reverse lead poisoning in our district’s young residents. We follow up to assure children with higher lead levels are monitored. We work closely with families to determine the cause of the lead exposure, provide education to show them the hazards in their environment and offer safe options for remediating those hazards.

We also recommend and encourage that children have retesting and follow up with their medical provider. Retests are not always that simple for some young children, and often can lead to anxiety for them and parents. We recently learned of a stressful blood draw for a lead level recheck. After visiting with the parents, and hearing their concerns, I was able to reach out to the hospital lab and arrange for a requested lab tech that the family wanted working with them. The blood draw was completed successfully and the mother reached back out to tell me she appreciated all the extra effort and coordination.

During our conversation, the mom asked if I knew of any available grants to help cover the cost of replacing old windows in their home. I did! Our local Housing Development Corporation is a new partner with South Heartland, whose mission involves helping low to moderate income families to procure safe, decent and affordable housing within the counties of Adams, Clay, Hall, Nuckolls, and Webster. HDC’s executive director Michelle Callahan, met with us recently and we learned about programs they have to help families rehab their homes. After mentioning this to the parent, she asked to be referred, hoping to get assistance in finishing the needed work in their older home.

We are looking forward to expanding our collaboration with the Housing Development Corporation, and to working together to prevent lead exposure in children.

- Submitted by Heidi Davis, Community Health Worker

*Funding for this project was provided through a Lead Surveillance award to SHDHD from NE Department of Health and Human Services.*





Public Health *in Action*



Above: HC Intern Lauren Hauser researched businesses that are regulated for air quality emissions and created a map to help SHDHD visualize locations of these businesses in relation to locations of vulnerable populations (schools, child care facilities, long-term care facilities).



Above: SHDHD facilitated as some members of the Minority Health Advisory Committee discussed the history and purpose of the Committee, potential new members, when/how often to meet, and how to reduce barriers for members to participate.



Above and Left: At his final presentation to SHDHD staff, HC Intern Isaiah Strachan shared the lead poisoning prevention materials he created for health care providers and parents.



SHDHD staff Wear Red to promote heart health for American Heart Month





Public Health *in Action*  
SHDHD's New Oral Health Program

Oral Health Education at Valley Child Development Center: Teaching oral health (brushing and flossing) to young children



SHDHD's Dental Team (Community Health Worker and Dental Hygienists) provide oral health services to young children at Valley Child Development Center in Red Cloud

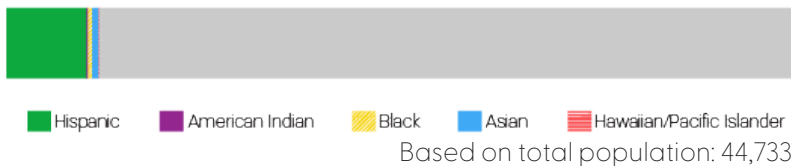


### Helping all communities thrive

In addition to paying careful attention to health literacy to make health and safety accessible to all, we assess the effectiveness of information-sharing with Hispanic and Vietnamese residents. Our minority advisory group is helping to identify avenues for trusted communication. We are using these to share monthly communications so that these same pathways can spread critical information in health emergencies.

### Minority Health Initiative (MHI)

**14%** Minority Population

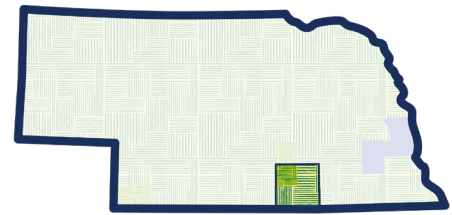


**MHI eligible residents: 6,397**  
**FY 2023-2024 Funds: \$62,579**

### Strategies & Outcomes

Our minority health advisory group (AG) is invigorated by some reorganization and new members who assisted in editing the Spanish version of our Community Health Survey, helped distribute the completed survey to the Hispanic community, and encouraged their participation. A Vietnamese business owner assured surveys reached the Vietnamese community with translators when needed. Results from the **114** surveys from Hispanic and Vietnamese community members, as well as results from a focus group conducted in Spanish, will help the AG understand community needs and decide what to focus on to help their communities thrive. In collaboration with SHDHD, the AG and interested community members will use the results to form goals for a new minority health improvement plan.

### Community Demographics:



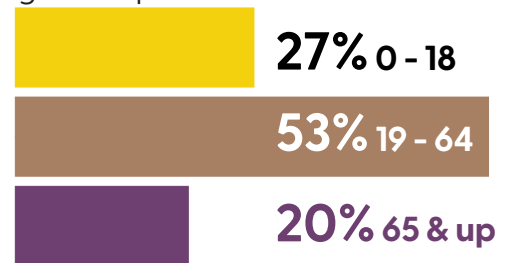
■ Rural & Micropolitan  
 ■ Metropolitan



**8%** of residents speak languages other than English

Common Languages: Spanish, Vietnamese

### Age Groups:



**8%**

Veteran Status



**14%**

Persons with disabilities







### Communicable Disease Control

When respiratory viruses spread in the community, the risk to vulnerable residents in long-term care facilities also increases. With 18 facilities in our district, SHDHD-certified staff provided OSHA-compliant Respiratory Fit Test Training to 10 facilities. Thirty-six staff members were trained to fit test staff, assuring respiratory masks were properly fit to protect against airborne transmissions.

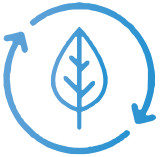
In FY 23-24, SHDHD-certified staff provided **Fit Test Training to 56%** of the LTC facilities in our district



### Chronic Disease & Injury Prevention

SHDHD launched a Smart Moves diabetes prevention class for Spanish-speaking participants. This cohort met in person weekly for six months and monthly for six months, making recommended lifestyle changes. The four participants who completed the year-long course reported a total of 12,101 minutes of exercise. SHDHD has been successful in assisting participants in reducing their risk of type 2 diabetes.

In FY 23-24, this SHDHD minority cohort lost an average of **23 lbs.**



### Environmental Public Health

SHDHD received federal funding through an EPA Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) grant that tests water in schools and daycare facilities for lead. Within the SHDHD district, young children attend older schools, in-home daycares, and facilities (built before 1978) where lead has been found. Protecting children from the harmful effects of lead exposure is a high priority for SHDHD.

In FY 23-24, **11** samples were collected and **2** additional daycares are pending.



### Maternal, Child, & Family Health

To reduce risks of getting diseases and help people of all ages live longer, healthier lives, SHDHD offers vaccine clinics for children (VFC) from birth through 18 years of age, and their adult family members (VFA). To be eligible for these programs, children and adults must meet one of the following criteria: have Medicaid, have no health insurance, be under-insured, or be American Indian or Alaska Native.

**627** VFC/VFA programs, **151** vaccines to kids & **300** vaccines to **144** adults

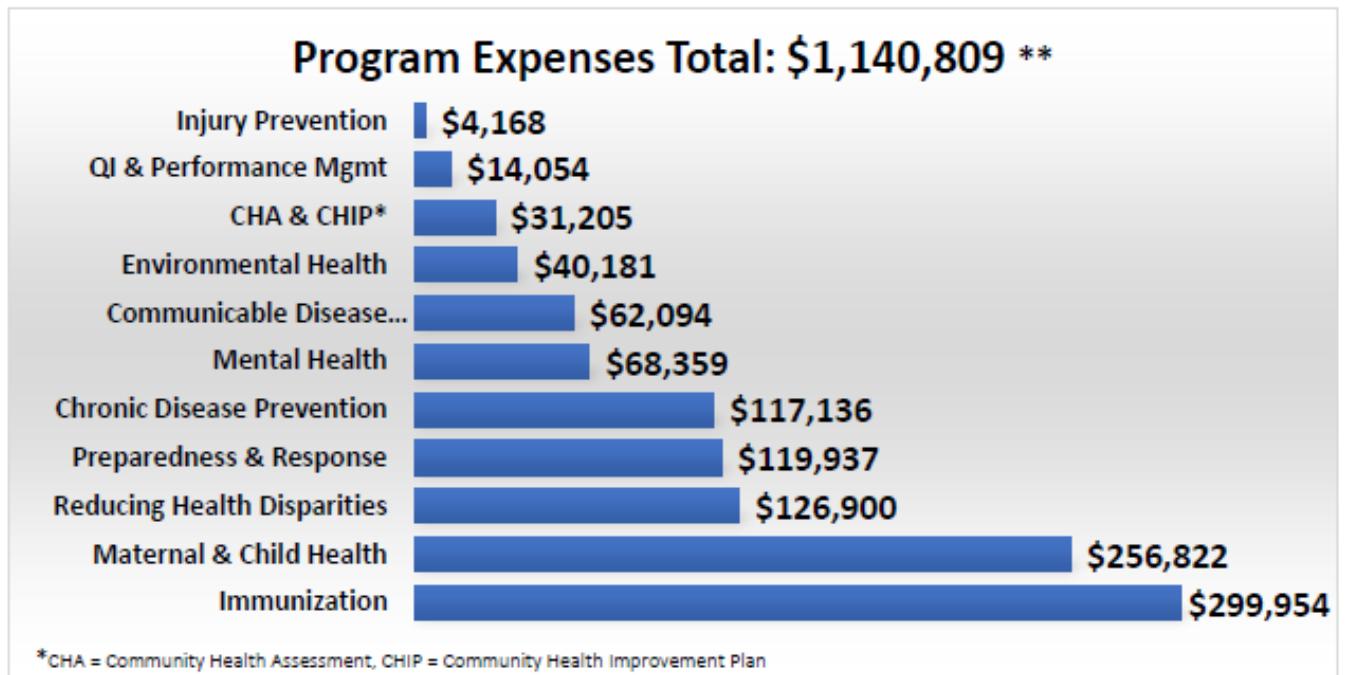
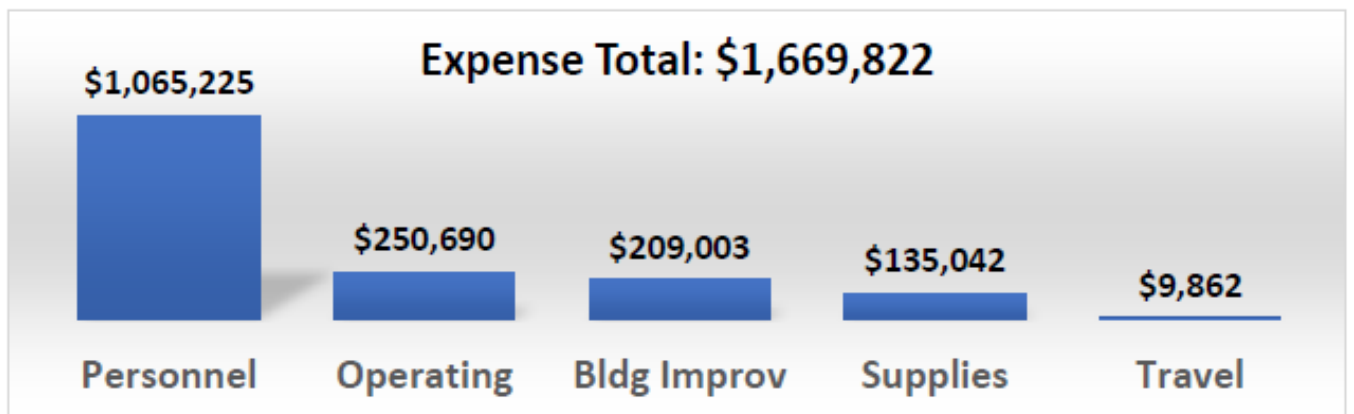
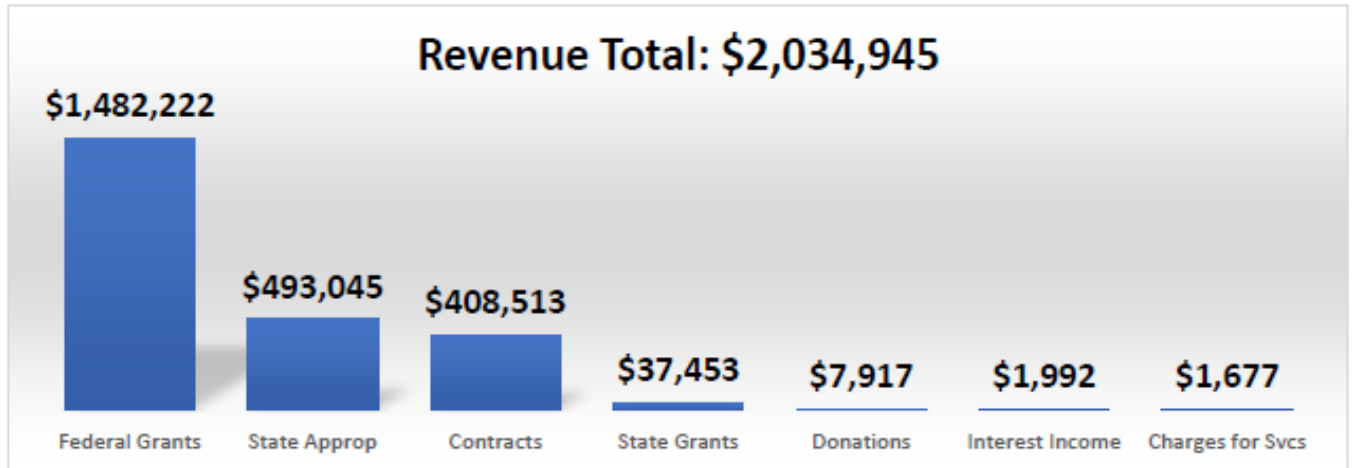


### Access to & Linkage with Clinical Care

In an effort to increase the number of lower income or uninsured residents in the South Heartland District to screen for colon cancer, SHDHD provided 154 free, home-based screening test kits to residents 45-74 years of age. Seventy three (73) kits were submitted for testing with 84% negative and 16% positive, requiring a follow up visit with a provider.

SHDHD distributed **154** colorectal screening test kits with **84%** negative results

## Financial Report July 2023 - June 2024



\*\*Total program expenses covered by grants, subawards and contracts

# Our Work Continues...

## July 2024 - December 2024

### Highlights since the end of the fiscal year

- Finished the 2019-2024 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) cycle
  - Completed a new Community Health Assessment
  - Identified priorities for the next 6-year Community Health Improvement Cycle: Mental Wellbeing, Chronic Conditions, and Elder & Senior Health
  - Expanded vaccine clinics to weekly with walk-in option
  - Quality improvement /Performance Management for all staff
  - Board passed a resolution on social media and youth mental wellness
  - Purchased a public health outreach services van
  - Added 2 more bilingual staff members
  - Designed a new website
  - Trained in Disease Forecasting
  - Expanded the Healthy Families America program
  - Working toward 2025 Reaccreditation
- 

### TJ Vance

*December 5, 1979 - July 10, 2024*

The South Heartland District Health Department Board and Staff were deeply saddened by the loss of TJ Vance in July 2024. Vance was a member of the SHDHD Board since 2019, representing the Webster County Board of Commissioners. With spunk and kindness, Vance was a dedicated supporter of South Heartland's mission and a faithful contributor to the Board of Health's work. He is missed by all of us.







# South Heartland District Health Department Board of Health 2023 -2024



*Adams County* Charles Neumann, Board of Commissioners  
Barbara Harrington  
Michelle Oldham

*Clay County* Richard Shaw, Board of Supervisors  
Sandra Nejezchleb  
Nanette Shackelford

*Nuckolls County* Jerry Grove, Board of Commissioners  
Megan McMeen  
Jean Stichka (now Roger Williams)

*Webster County* T.J. Vance (now Jeff Pohlmeier-Mans), Board of Commissioners  
Kathy Murphy Buschkoetter  
Torey Kohmetscher

*Professional Representatives* Kathleen Amyot, MD  
Michael Kleppinger, DDS  
Erin Jobman, DVM

*Officers* President: Sandra Nejezchleb  
Vice President: Michelle Oldham  
Secretary/Treasurer: Charles Neumann

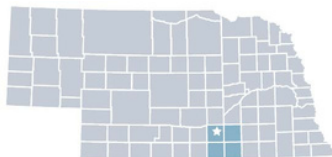
### Our Vision is...

#### *Healthy People in Healthy Communities*

#### **Mission**

The South Heartland District Health Department is dedicated to preserving and improving the health of residents of Adams, Clay, Nuckolls, and Webster Counties.

We work with local partners to develop and implement a Community Health Improvement Plan and to provide other public health services mandated by Nebraska State Statutes.



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WWW.SOUTHHEARTLANDHEALTH.NE.GOV

### Our Public Health Actions are...

- Helping Kids Get a Healthy Start
- Improving Access to Health Services
- Promoting Healthy Choices
- Preventing Cancer
- Investigating Diseases
- Containing Disease Outbreaks
- Tackling Obesity
- Addressing Mental Wellness
- Reducing Substance Misuse
- Identifying Community Health Needs
- Creating Walkable Communities
- Preventing Diabetes
- Reducing Radon Exposure
- Preventing Falls
- Promoting Health Screenings
- Protecting Our Most Vulnerable



PROUDLY SERVING ADAMS, CLAY, NUCKOLLS AND WEBSTER COUNTIES