

Julie Lassa: Power of rural: Empowering healthier communities in rural Wisconsin

Posted on Wednesday, Nov 29, 2023

The column below reflects the views of the author, and these opinions are neither endorsed nor supported by WisOpinion.com.

In Wisconsin, USDA Rural Development works hard to empower rural people and organizations with the information they need to take full advantage of over [70 programs](#) specifically designed to support healthy, rural communities.

On [National Rural Health Day](#) this year, we were reminded that a strong community is rooted in its people. Celebrating the “Power of Rural” gives us the opportunity to highlight the incredible efforts of rural health care providers, farmers, communities, and individuals dedicated to advancing good health and access to nutritious food.

In [Fennimore, Grant Regional Health Center](#) used a \$533,750 Emergency Rural Health Care grant to construct a new community clinic which will begin seeing patients at the end of 2023. I was there for the groundbreaking and recently toured the facility with a member of The White House Domestic Policy Council. The clinic will offer primary care and family medicine, rehabilitation services, and laboratory and radiology services which will allow residents to get quality health care close to home.

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

Making sure that everyone in rural Wisconsin has access to reliable, high-quality health care services like urgent care, primary care, and dental care is important. That’s why I’m proud of the positive impact that [Emergency Rural Health Care Grants](#) have had in our state. These grants were created by President Biden’s

historic legislative package, the American Rescue Plan Act.

USDA Rural Development also supported the construction of a new hospital in Barron County. [Cumberland Healthcare](#) utilized a \$35 million direct, low-interest loan and \$5 million loan guarantee from USDA Rural Development to replace a 60-year-old building with a new facility. This hospital enhances access to and delivery of healthcare for an expanded regional area, providing crucial local healthcare options for patients in Northwest Wisconsin.

We also recognize that good health outcomes depend on access to healthy food and that far too many people in our state's most rural and remote locations lack access to it.

Through programs like the [Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program](#), the [Meat and Poultry Intermediary Relending Program](#), and the [Food Supply Chain Guaranteed Loan Program](#), USDA works to create stronger food supply chains that benefits American producers, meat and poultry processors, and consumers.

In Cadott, Crescent Meats is utilizing a \$1.6 million Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program grant towards the expansion of their current facility in Chippewa County. Crescent Meats produces cuts of meat, ground meat, and value-added products including summer sausage, sticks, jerky, brats, hot dogs, and patties. This expansion project will add an additional 35 jobs.

Throughout November, USDA Rural Development is celebrating National Rural Health Day by sharing success stories and the resources we have available to champion communities working tirelessly to support rural health across the county.

USDA Rural Development is a partner who invests in keeping rural people healthy.

You can learn more about our programs and eligibility by visiting our website at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/wi> or by calling our Wisconsin State Office in Stevens Point at (715) 345-7600.

-Lassa is Wisconsin state director, USDA Rural Development.