

Cable Area Social Connections Annual Report

April, 2025



“Loneliness ends where community begins.”

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Our Mission: Increase awareness of the health risks associated with social isolation and create opportunities for engaging in positive social interactions.

History and Introduction

In May, 2023, the United States Surgeon General released a new advisory on the epidemic of loneliness and isolation and the healing effects of social connection and community. In response to that report, Carrie Linder from the Bayfield County Aging and Disabilities Section of the Human Services Department convened a meeting on June 28th, 2023, to discuss ways that Bayfield County might address this issue. Two months later in August, a small group of Cable residents who had attended the June meeting and others met to consider what we could do locally. That group, which now operates as Cable Area Social Connections (CASC), is part of Cable Today and reports to the Cable Plan Commission and the Town of Cable. Our work is supported by the Town of Cable, the Cable Area Chamber of Commerce, Forest Lodge Library, local businesses and many volunteers. Active membership of CASC has changed over time; current members are Roger Bird, Elizabeth Holland, Trish Kruse, Suzanne Rooney and Sue Rosa.

Values: From the first, the Cable Area Social Connections has adhered to the following values and ways of working together: (1) Everyone contributes by having a project (2) We listen to understand (3) There is a bias for action (4) We honor each other's time.

Action Plan: The original action plan adopted by CASC early on continues to guide our work.

1. Educate ourselves, community leaders, and the public on the issue of social isolation including contributing factors and risks to the health and wellbeing of those in our community.
 - a. Research the topic of social isolation
 - b. Reach out to others with relevant knowledge and experience
 - c. Seek out information on successful programs
 - d. Develop and carry out a public awareness campaign on the topic of social isolation

2. Identify those in our community at particular risk to the effects of social isolation.
 - a. Partner with local churches and other organizations to help identify those at risk
 - b. Distribute a three-question survey designed to help identify those who feel socially isolated
3. Take steps to reduce the risk of social isolation
 - a. Widely distribute information on local activities and resources that can combat social isolation.
 - b. Partner with local churches and other organizations in taking their own steps to mitigate against the risks of social isolation
4. Find a local 501(c)(3) organization to partner with for the purpose of fundraising;

Update on Current Activities

Educating ourselves and others. The members of CASC share information via email and at meetings. For example, the idea for the Repair Café came from a member after reading about a repair cafe in another part of the country. We educate the public by highlighting the goal of social interaction and connection in everything we do.

Identifying those at particular risk of social isolation. We gave considerable effort to this by contacting the Meals on Wheels program, churches, the post office, and by talking to others in the community. We learned that 1) some people come to this area for the purpose of isolating themselves and are happy with their choice; 2) others take advantage of Meals on Wheels and benefit from the social connections that that program offers; 3) still others have local family members who provide various levels of social contact and support; and 4) some are taking advantage of the programs that we have developed or helped develop, i.e., Senior Meals and the Repair Café, that offer new opportunities for social connection. No doubt there are others who may be at serious risk of the negative effects of social isolation that we cannot reach. Our approach to this is to encourage everyone to pay attention to their neighbors who may be isolated and reach out to them in some way.

Welcoming strangers to C.A.R.E. community dinners. C.A.R.E.-sponsored monthly community dinners are a wonderful fixture of the social scene in Cable from October's Harvest Dinner through April. Each dinner is hosted by a local organization, business or church. Most people who attend these dinners know each other at some level and interact freely. In order to help ensure that anyone new to the area who comes to check them out feels comfortable and welcome, we suggested that a greeter be assigned at each dinner by the hosting

organization. This idea has been adopted and has contributed to the overall sense of community at these dinners.

Three-question isolation survey. As a means of educating the public of the health risks associated with social isolation, CASC has distributed a 3-question survey developed by the University of Wisconsin that helps people identify their own level of social isolation. Surveys can be found at local businesses and the local health clinics and on our website (cableareasoalconnections.org).

A new comprehensive list of area activities. CASC has developed and maintains an up-to-date comprehensive calendar of social activities throughout the Cable area. Activities include book groups, exercise classes, church groups, senior meals, etc. Calendars are updated about four times a year and paper copies are distributed throughout the area in local businesses, churches, and the senior meal site. An electronic version of the calendar is posted on our website (cableareasociaalconnections.org) and Facebook page. And a link to the calendar is on the Cable Chamber's website, Cable4fun.com.

Hearing loop at Cable Community Center. When it became clear that the Repair Café would not use all the grant funds allocated to it, CASC members inquired about and received permission to apply the excess funds (about \$4,000.00) toward the installation of a hearing loop in the Cable Community Center. With the approval and supplemental funds to complete the purchase and cost of installation from the Cable town board, the hearing loop was installed on March 14th and 15th, 2025. A hearing loop is a hearing enhancement device that individuals with hearing aids can link into to better hear what is being said during meetings, presentations, etc. In addition to the hearing loop, the town board paid for two supplemental speakers to be installed at the back of the main room at the community center that vastly improves the acoustics of that room. It is easy to see how the ability to hear what is going on greatly increases the sense of connectedness and reduces the feeling of being isolated for anyone with a hearing loss. A presentation explaining the new hearing loop and how it works is planned for Friday, April 25th, at the community center. This will be a good opportunity for anyone with a hearing aid to check it out.

Securing a fiscal agent. In anticipation of the need to secure funding for our activities, CASC looked for a fiscal agent for grant-seeking purposes. C.O.R.E., a 501(c)(3) agency in Washburn, Wisconsin, which runs a food pantry and offers other social services, has agreed to serve as our fiscal agent. The Bayfield County grant supporting the Repair Café ended March 31st, 2025, so we will need to find our own funding going forward. The Town of Cable has very generously helped us bridge the gap in the near term. Future expenses will include insurance, supplies for making repairs and food for our Repair Cafes,

support for Make Music Day, and maintaining our website. We expect that donations from the Repair Café will make that program self-sustaining, but we will need funds for our other activities.

Website. CASC launched its website in March, 2025, and have secured a maintenance contract for one year through the Repair Café grant funds. The URL is cableareasocialconnections.org.

Member Recruitment. We are very fortunate to have recruited a new member with strong computer skills who has agreed to keep our Facebook page up to date. We have also had wonderful success in recruiting volunteers to help with the Repair Café who possess a wide variety of skills and who love helping others. And we have begun receiving inquiries from our website from people interested in our work.

Three Major Ongoing Projects

Bayfield County Senior Meals. CASC was instrumental in establishing a new Bayfield County senior nutrition site by partnering with Bayfield County and Cable UCC church. Senior meals began in February, 2024, and are served the 1st and 3rd Monday of every month. Food is prepared and served by Lakewoods Resort, no doubt one of the reasons the meals have become so popular. Attendance has reached as high as 60 but typically runs 35-45. In addition to meals, short presentations on food- and health-related topics and other information of interest to seniors happen often. The Bayfield County Health Department offers seasonal vaccination clinics on site, and representatives from BART (Bay Area Regional Transportation) come every other month to promote their services and answer questions. PC, from Lakewoods, gave a fun presentation on “Creating a Gourmet Meal from What You Can Find in your Cupboard.” And Amada Westland, the new director of Forest Lodge Library, came to introduce herself shortly after she arrived, and recently she returned to introduce Bayfield County’s new digital navigator program.

First Annual Make Music Day. June 21st of every year, the summer solstice, is the date of Make Music Day, a festival of music celebrated around the world. It is a wonderful opportunity for everyone to gather and make music together. CASC brought this international event to Cable for the first time in 2024. Musicians of all stripes and skill levels are encouraged to participate and all events are free and open to the public. The Chamber, local businesses, churches and museums all offered spaces for performances by local musicians and would-be musicians, and area residents filled the air with music all afternoon and into the evening. We even had a kazoo band, a sing-a-long at the Cable UCC church, and a tai chi demonstration on the lawn of the old school site. Plans are underway for our 2nd

annual Make Music Day, again on June 21st, which this year falls on a Saturday. We have received financial support for this event from both the Cable Area Chamber and the Town of Cable. Anyone interested in knowing more about Make Music Cable 2025 and how to participate should contact Sue Rosa at sue.rosa6744@gmail.com or consult our website, cableareasocialconnections.org.

Repair Café. As a result of Bayfield County getting a large grant to address social isolation throughout the county, CASC received funds to start a Repair Café. At a Repair Café, people bring their broken items to get repaired by volunteers with the skills to fix them. The first Repair Café was held at the Cable Community Center in October, 2024, and we have held one each month since. We have volunteers who can fix furniture, picture frames, small appliances and other electrical items such as lamps, etc., mend clothing and knit items, and sharpen knives and scissors. We also have a volunteer who comes each month with a craft item to make. The concept of a Repair Café originated in The Netherlands as a way of keeping things out of landfills. An unexpected added benefit has been the sense of community Repair Cafes create and the social connections people make. In addition to getting things fixed, those who come to Cable's Repair Café have an opportunity to socialize, get a mini-massage, help with journaling, tech issues, gardening advice, and even lunch. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to come whether or not they have something that needs fixing. Each month, new people stop by either to check us out or offer to help. Others come for the socialization and chance to experience the positive vibe. We think of it as both fixing *things* and tending to *body and soul*. In addition to the support from Bayfield County for this project, the Town of Cable has been a source of considerable support. We also got a great boost from *Bottom Line News and Views* in October with a front-page, above-the-fold feature article introducing the Repair Café.

Summary. In the last year and a half, since August, 2023, Cable Area Social Connections has established a presence in the Cable area. Through the variety of programs and activities that we have undertaken, we are fulfilling our mission to increase public awareness of the health risks associated with social isolation and helping to create a rich variety of opportunities for positive social interaction. With the continued support from our local community, we hope to continue and expand our current programs, initiate new ones, and support others in their efforts to meet the social needs of all those living in and visiting our area.

Special Note: We respectfully request that this report be attached to the minutes of the Plan Commission and the Town of Cable Annual Meeting in order to reach people who may be interested in joining us. We are happy to answer questions.

Please call or email Suzanne at: 715-798-3344,
letzmotorsuzieg@hotmail.com.

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