As a county-based purchasing health plan, South Country Health Alliance was modeled on the idea that we would reinvest back into our communities. Last year, South Country awarded $3 million to 17 organizations through our Community Reinvestment Grant program. The grants were designed to not only overcome our members’ barriers to health care, but also address other basic needs and social determinants of health.

Here’s a look at their progress one year later.

**BROWN**

**New Ulm Medical Center** $275,000, 3 Years

New Ulm Medical Center (NUMC) expanded its current social work services to provide better care coordination services to emergency department (ED) patients.

“Many of our physicians in the clinic were also counting upon the social worker for assistance with patients that had needs within the clinic,” said Steve Schneider, former director of operations at NUMC. “We realized that there is a significant need for care coordination in our clinic as well.”

South Country has partnered with NUMC and Brown County since 2012 to fund a Healthcare Coordinator who works with ED patients to reduce hospital readmissions and overuse of the ED. With additional funding from the grant, NUMC can also focus on care coordination for clinic patients.

NUMC used grant funding to add clinic care coordination staff to work with the current hospital care coordination staff. They have already seen positive outcomes for their patients.

**DODGE**

**Southeastern Minnesota Area Agency on Aging** $41,300, 3 Years

SEMAAA is implementing more programs for seniors in Dodge, Freeborn, Goodhue, Steele, and Wabasha counties.

SEMAAA’s evidence-based programs are designed for seniors who live with chronic disease, pain, or disability or who are at risk of falling.

With grant funding, SEMAAA has been able to train new program instructors and provide more classes in its communities.

Visit SEMAAA’s website at [http://semaaaroche sternmn.org](http://semaaaroche sternmn.org) for more information on their programs and a schedule of upcoming classes.

**GOODHUE**

**Goodhue County Health & Human Services** $274,920, 3 Years

Goodhue County Health and Human Services expanded its Parent Support Outreach Program (PSOP), which helps address child abuse and neglect.

“PSOP was a program designed for us to be preventive, so we can hopefully prevent families from ever getting involved with child protection,” said Kristin Johnson, supervisor of Goodhue County’s children’s services.

Goodhue County Health and Human Services used grant funding to hire a social worker who can focus on families eligible for PSOP services.

“We’ve never been able to serve this population at this level before,” said Johnson. “We were able to go from serving a very small amount of families to serving more than 100 families in 2015.”

**MORRISON**

**Apple Tree Dental** $277,800, 2 Years

Apple Tree Dental is establishing a new outreach dental clinic in Little Falls to address the need for dental services in Morrison County and the surrounding area.

Apple Tree is working with St. Gabriel’s Hospital in Little Falls to establish a location for its new outreach clinic. The site will be centrally located between the Family Medical Center and the main hospital.

The outreach clinic will start serving patients early 2016, offering both preventive and restorative services to children, adults, and seniors in the community. The clinic will begin operating one day per week.

Seniors from Goodhue County attend a new SEMAAA class.
SIBLEY
Developmental Achievement Center (DAC) $24,000, 1 Year
The Sibley County DAC in Arlington created a multi-sensory environment (MSE) to help improve the health and social wellbeing of people with intellectual disabilities.

Through lights, sounds, texture, and smell, MSEs create a stimulating, yet calming environment for people of any age with disabilities or disorders.

The DAC also hired an expert in the MSE field to train DAC staff on how to use the MSE room. The staff controls the stimuli in the room while an individual interacts with the equipment.

Staff at the DAC has already seen positive outcomes for people who have used the new MSE room. Mark Pauly, DAC director, hopes to offer MSE services to others in the community.

“We were envisioning it with just the small group of our population, but we’re finding that everyone can benefit from it,” said Pauly.

Sibley County Public Health & Human Services $122,700, 3 Years
Sibley County Public Health and Human Services is starting a Community Health Worker (CHW) program to focus on improving the health of the Hispanic population in the area.

A CHW is a trained health educator who works with managed Health Care Program (MHCP) recipients who have difficulty understanding health care providers due to cultural or language barriers.

CHWs have a close understanding of the communities they serve, which helps them work as a reliable link between public health and social services and members of the community.

Sibley County has hired and trained a CHW, who has already begun working with Hispanic individuals in the area and connecting them to local resources that will meet their health care needs.

Fernbrook Family Center $167,471, 1 Year
Fernbrook Family Center created an Early Childhood Therapeutic Program in Owatonna for children with mental health disorders and their families.

The new location in Owatonna, called Little Fern, offers clinical group services for children ages 3 to 5. Children use the space to play, learn, and develop key social and emotional behaviors.

“There is a high need in the community,” said Teya Dahle, Fernbrook’s Birth to Five director. “We’ve already heard about some successes that are seen in the school setting, as well as in some homes.”

Fernbrook also purchased a van to provide transportation for families that need to get to and from their group sessions.

Minnesota Prairie County Alliance - Steele $259,200, 3 Years
MN Prairie in Steele County is developing a system of care that will address the trauma needs of children in Steele, Dodge, and Waseca counties.

The grant funded a new screening tool that will help case managers determine if children entering the child welfare system have a greater need for trauma assessment. MN Prairie also hired a mental health professional, who provides supportive services for parents and children.

“We are trying to address earlier what’s going on with the children and how they might be emotionally impacted by the things that are happening in their lifetime,” said Shari Kottke, child and family social services manager at MN Prairie.

MN Prairie will also continue to train case managers and other mental health staff to improve their ability to meet the needs of trauma-exposed children.

Owatonna Hospital/Allina Health $145,214, 1 Year
The Owatonna Hospital/Allina Health expanded its in-reach social work services to provide care coordination services to ED patients and patients in the clinic.

“We thought that the frequent users of our emergency department that are currently served through our in-reach program have the same characteristics that frequent users of the clinic have,” said Liz Keck, health care coordinator at the Owatonna Hospital.

Similar to NUMC, SCHA has a partnership already in place with the Owatonna Hospital, South Central Human Relations Center, and MN Prairie to fund a health care coordinator at the hospital. The grant has allowed the hospital to hire more staff to focus on care coordination for clinic patients in addition to ED patients.

“We’ve been able to serve
more patients in the emergency department because of the additional staff that has been hired,” said Keck. “We’re seeing more patients and are able to respond more quickly.”

**Steele County Clothesline**
**$30,000, 1 Year**
The Steele County Clothesline in Owatonna provides free clothing and other household items to local residents in need. The grant funded their program and operation costs for one year.

“The grant allowed us to have time and resources to move beyond the store,” said Maureen Schlobohm, executive director at the Clothesline. “We’ve only been able to focus on the clients that walk through the door, but now we can reach out and connect to other organizations in the community.”
The Clothesline also used the grant to hire new staff to meet the increasing need in the community. The number of families the Clothesline serves is steadily increasing, as well as the number of new families that visit the Clothesline, with as many as 68 families visiting in a day.

Visit [www.steelecounty-clothesline.com](http://www.steelecounty-clothesline.com) to learn more about the Steele County Clothesline.

**Todd County Health & Human Services**
**$465,400, 2 Years**
Todd County Health and Human Services is building a new community center and kitchen in Eagle Bend.

The current Eagle Bend Senior Center provides around 4,000 meals each month to seniors in Todd County, Wadena County, and other surrounding counties. However, it has not been able to meet the increasing need for nutritional meals in the community.

“With our growing senior population in this region, we just weren’t able to meet the capacity for senior meals as needed,” said Katherine Mackedanz, community planning unit manager at Todd County Health and Human Services.

Todd County has partnered with other organizations in the community to begin renovating the Eagle Bend Community Kitchen and Center. The new center will be built in a repurposed section of the former Eagle Bend High School and is expected to open to the public in 2016.

“We want to make sure that we’re going to have the capacity for future needs and be able to provide for seniors not only in our county but for the region,” said Mackedanz.

**WABASHA**

**Schoen Family Dentistry**
**$91,667, 3 Years**
Schoen Family Dentistry in Wabasha is using the grant to decrease its waiting list and serve more patients in the community.

“We had a long waiting list,” said Dr. Tom Schoen, DDS, of Schoen Family Dentistry. “We knew that if we could increase our capacity to see these people in a timelier manner, we could treat these people not only for emergencies but for preventive care that they need.”

Schoen Family Dentistry has hired and trained an additional dental hygienist and purchased new equipment. They have been able to see nearly double the number of patients than they were able to before the grant.

Schoen Family Dentistry provides both preventive and restorative services for patients of all ages. They hope to continue adding resources to serve more patients in the community.

**Wabasha County Social Services**
**$277,400, 3 Years**
Wabasha County Social Services established a new Fernbrook Family Center office in Wabasha to provide mental health services to children in the community.

“One of the areas of services that had been lacking in the county was children’s mental health,” said John Dahlstrom, Wabasha County social services director. “We had places children could go get therapy, but none of them were in the county.”

Fernbrook Family Center set up its office in Wabasha earlier this year and has been working with Wabasha County clients since April, serving approximately 40 clients and their families.

Wabasha County used the grant to establish the new Fernbrook office and hire and train program staff to provide services to people with mental health issues. Though most of Fernbrook’s clients are children, they also serve adults.

**WADENA**

**Tri-County Health Care**
**$105,581, 3 Years**
Tri-County Health Care in Wadena expanded its Community Paramedic program that provides primary care and preventative services to residents in their homes.

The program works with the hospital’s care coordination team to serve long-term care, home-bound, mentally ill, and other high-risk patients.
“During daytime hours, we have the nursing staff that does care coordination,” said Allen Smith, Tri-County’s emergency response manager. “But if we have a patient that has a medical issue at home, our community paramedics will fulfill that function after hours and on weekends.”

Funding from the grant also helped purchase a vehicle for patient visits, train new staff, and establish monitoring tools to measure the program’s effectiveness.

Smith said they have seen positive outcomes for patients by improving patient satisfaction, improving their quality of life, and saving health care costs. Tri-County has saved $80,000 this year, following last year’s total savings of $102,000.

City of Wadena
$229,418, 3 Years

The City of Wadena is using the grant to conduct research and create new wellness programs at the Maslowski Wellness and Research Center (MWRC).

The research will help the MWRC determine what programs it should offer to meet the needs in the community.

“This has given us a fantastic position to be able to take a brand new facility and turn it into something that really meets the needs of what the people that are going to use it have,” said Heidi Happel, community health specialist at Wadena County Public Health. “That’s what’s going to lead them to keep coming back and supporting a healthy lifestyle.”

The MWRC opened last year on Dec. 6, 2014, and serves more than 1,200 people from Wadena and surrounding communities. It offers a wide range of facilities and classes for children, adults, and seniors in the community.

After evaluating early research, the MWRC created two new programs for kids, including summer swimming lessons and an educational class called FitWise that teaches students about its facilities. The MWRC will continue its research and tailor its programs to meet the needs in the community.

Visit www.wadenawellness.com for more information about the MWRC.

The Waseca County Early Childhood Initiative provides a safe and fun environment for families to build positive relationships.

The Incredible Years program offers classes to high-risk Waseca County families in need. The classes help improve parent-child interactions, build positive relationships, and develop more nurturing parenting. This can lead to stronger social skills, self-confidence, academic performance, and behavioral development in children.

The classes are held one time a week for 18 weeks at the Community Education building in Waseca.

We are pleased with the progress our grant recipients have made this year and look forward to seeing how they will continue to develop their initiatives to improve the health, wellbeing, and access to care for our members and the residents of our counties.

We thank our counties for standing by us and giving us the opportunity to serve the people in your communities. Without you, the Community Reinvestment Grant program would not be possible.

Thank you!