

Executive Summary

This represents the first effort at producing a report on Local Indicators for Excellence (L.I.F.E. Report) for the greater Oshkosh area (including all adjacent surrounding towns). This report is being produced under the sponsorship of WinnebagoLand FOCUS and is a first attempt at producing a regular compilation of key statistical indicators about our community. Since almost all of the data indicators come from published sources, much of it will only be as recent as 2001.

We recognize there may be indicators we have overlooked or others that might be better than those chosen to reflect how we are doing as a community in a variety of key areas of community life. The Executive Committee fully intends to produce this report every two years and hopes to make improvements with each succeeding edition. This report is also available in an online version at: <http://www.lifeinwinnebagoLand.org> and will include additional information when it is available and links to many of the information sources.

This first effort has yielded the following overview of L.I.F.E. in WinnebagoLand. In general terms, we find the quality of life in our communities to be excellent. The fact that we are doing well on many of the indicators does not mean we can relax our efforts to keep our quality of life excellent. But as with all communities, there are areas upon which we need to focus our efforts and attention to keep it that way.

LIVING A HEALTHY LIFE

The following indicators describe the state of health of the Oshkosh area:

Indicator #1	Childhood Immunizations	page 1
Indicator #2	Tobacco Use	page 2
Indicator #3	Health Insurance Coverage	page 3
Indicator #4	Births to Teen Mothers	page 4
Indicator #5	Low Birth Weight Babies	page 5
Indicator #6	Prenatal Care	page 6
Indicator #7	Communicable Diseases	page 7
Indicator #8	Preventable Hospitalizations	page 8
Indicator #9	Suicide	page 9
Indicator #10	Lead Exposure	page 10

In general terms, we meet or exceed state or national averages or goals in all of the health indicators except for three of the ten.

For Tobacco Use, one third of high school youth smoke which is equal to the Wisconsin average as is the use by middle school youth at 9%. But in two categories, adults and pregnant women, Winnebago County residents exceed the rate for Wisconsin. This is an area in which we need to improve given the negative health effects associated with smoking, particularly during pregnancy.

The national and state goal is to have less than 5% Low Birth Weight Babies. For two of the past four years for which we have data, we have not met that goal by having over 6% low birth

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weight babies, which can lead to many health complications.

We have also exceeded state and national averages for Suicide for the past four years.

Issues to Watch are health and dental care accessibility and affordability, which are related. As the cost of health care rises, more and more people and employers cannot afford health care insurance. As such, the ranks of the uninsured grow.

Recent national attention on the issue of obesity and its relationship to preventable health problems will also need to be reviewed for our next report.

LIFE AT SCHOOL

The Oshkosh area has an excellent school system of public and parochial schools where students routinely score above state and national averages on most indicators of student and school achievement. We have identified the following seventeen indicators to chart the success of our schools.

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Indicator #12	Third Grade Reading Comprehension.....	page 12
Indicator #13	High School Drop-out Rate	page 13
Indicator #14	American College Test (ACT)	page 14
Indicator #15	Post-Secondary Education	page 15
Indicator #16	Extra and Co-curricular Activities	page 16
Indicator #17	Free and Reduced Price Lunches	page 17
Indicator #18	School Sponsored Community Activities	page 18
Indicator #19	Habitual Truancy	page 19
Indicator #20	Youth in Co-op and Apprenticeship Programs	page 20
Indicator #21	Oshkosh Area School District Expenditures	page 21
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Indicator #23	Children at Risk for Academic Failure	page 23
Indicator #24	Special Education Data	page 24
Indicator #25	Oshkosh Standardized Testing 4 th Grade	page 25
Indicator #26	Oshkosh Standardized Testing 8 th Grade	page 26
Indicator #27	Oshkosh Standardized Testing 10 th Grade	page 27

We meet or exceed standards or averages on thirteen of the seventeen indicators. There are five in which we could focus more effort to do better.

The number of students that qualify for Free and Reduced Price Lunches is measured each year in October and is an indicator of poverty within the school district population. While it is good that Oshkosh ranks almost 20% below the state average on this indicator, almost one in four students qualify and that number has increased almost 9% between 2000 and 2002.

As a community, we could provide more opportunities and encouragement for voluntary School-Sponsored Community Activities. Engagement by students with their school and community is an important indicator of future success.

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Oshkosh Area School District Expenditures is an indicator in which we both lag the state and the trend is worsening. The gap between Oshkosh and the Wisconsin average spending per pupil has grown from \$393 in 1996/7 to \$2,055 less per student in Oshkosh in 2002/3. We have grown from spending 5.6% less per pupil to spending 19.7% less in just 6 years. Whether this is good or bad for the quality of education should be a focus of community discussion.

While we rank below the state Expulsion Rates for the three years reported, we saw an increase in the last year that suggests that this is an area to watch.

Children at Risk for Academic Failure is an area which needs attention since the figures have not only grown to about 500 students, but also because we have more children identified at-risk than are enrolled in special programs for at-risk students. These are children identified as at-risk of not graduating from high school for a variety of reasons. When the job market increasingly requires a more educated work force and when our democratic society needs an educated population to survive, we cannot accept any growth in numbers of young people that have not graduated from high school.

Issues to Watch relate to funding of education. Due to the recession and state budget crisis, funding for public education and higher education is facing decreases.

LIFE AT WORK

Since a community's employment environment plays such a fundamental role in underpinning so much of the rest of a community's life, we want to be successful in these six indicators.

Indicator #28	Income	page 28
Indicator #29	Employment Growth	page 29
Indicator #30	Unemployment.....	page 30
Indicator #31	Women in the Workforce	page 31
Indicator #32	Tourism	page 32
Indicator #33	Public Transportation.....	page 33

Of the six indicators, three of them deserve further attention although some of what we face is a product of state and national economic policies and circumstances.

While we rank well in median and per capita personal Income, as of 2000 we have slipped below the state average in median income as well as per capita personal income.

The news on Unemployment is mixed. The good news is that Oshkosh and Winnebago County rank below the state average unemployment rate. The bad news is that the trend since 1999 is a rise in the unemployment rate.

There has been a decline in usage of the Public Transportation system since 1999.

Issues to Watch include the effects of the recession and stagnant growth of the economy on job growth.

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LIFE AT LEISURE

The Oshkosh area is blessed with excellent cultural resources and recreational opportunities. The presence and vibrancy of these activities are often what people think of when they think of quality of life in a community. The Committee will be adding to these four indicators for the next edition to better cover recreational activities as well as adding more performing arts venues.

Indicator #34 Attendance at Performing Arts	page 34
Indicator #35 Museum Attendance	page 35
Indicator #36 Library Expenditures and Usage	page 36
Indicator #37 Park Expenditures	page 37

While usage and financial support of these institutions remains strong, there are slight declines during the most recent years in overall museum and performing arts attendance. Those are largely due to decreases at the EAA Museum, Paine Art Center, the Grand Opera House and Oshkosh Symphony.

Issues to Watch primarily involves funding. These agencies and organizations are being threatened with decreases in revenues due to threats to property tax support (state budget deficit) and the recession's affect on investment income and ticket sales.

LIFE IN OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

This area proved to be a challenge for members of the Committee since it was felt many of the indicators we need are not readily kept for the Oshkosh area. The Committee will redouble its efforts for the next edition to try to identify reliable and replicable indicators for this important component of our community.

Indicator #38 Energy Usage.....	page 38
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Indicators such as air and water quality; solid waste; lead poisoning and others will be pursued. If necessary, there may need to be substantial focus on identifying ways in which measures of environmental quality and public health measures can be established and maintained.

Issues to Watch include both the trend in increased energy usage as well as the trend toward increased prices which can certainly affect both residential consumers and economic development. Another issue identified to watch relates to land use conflicts and the threats of urban sprawl.

LIFE AT HOME (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

In general terms, life for children and families in our community is good. Poverty levels for Winnebago County are half that of the United States and almost a third less than Wisconsin's rate. But there are some trends within four of these eight indicators that need renewed focus.

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Indicator #39	Poverty	page 39
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Indicator #41	Family Households	page 41
Indicator #42	Regulated Child Care in Winnebago County	page 42
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Indicator #44	Child Abuse and Neglect	page 44
Indicator #45	Domestic Abuse	page 45
Indicator #46	Elder Abuse	page 46

Meals served to Winnebago County residents 60 and over have increased slightly each year since 1997 as one indicator that Hunger has a presence in our community.

A single parent heads almost 20% of the Family Households in Winnebago County. We need to make sure there is an adequate support system in place to serve the needs of these families.

The reports of Child Abuse and Neglect have increased for Winnebago County from about 1,600 to 1,900 between 1997 and 2001. This is a trend we should focus on reversing.

Reported Domestic Abuse incidents in Winnebago County had been trending downward until a sharp increase between 1999 and 2000. This bears close scrutiny to see whether an increasing trend is emerging.

Issues to Watch include the aging of the population and the continued adequacy of support services for them.

LIFE AT HOME (HOUSING)

In general terms, the housing stock in our community seems to have grown sufficiently to keep up with the growth in population and that housing stock seems to remain affordable for those of moderate income and above. Of the eight indicators for this area, one emerges as indicating a growing problem.

All of the trend data for Unmet Housing Needs indicates that there is a growing need for programs of subsidized rental assistance and that the waiting lists for this type of housing assistance are growing larger and longer with waits of 1-2 years not uncommon.

Indicator #47	Unmet Housing Needs.....	page 47
Indicator #48	Home Owners and Renters	page 48
Indicator #49	Fair Market Rent	page 49
Indicator #50	Number of Housing Units	page 50
Indicator #51	Age of Housing Stock	page 51
Indicator #52	The Cost of a Home	page 52
Indicator #53	Building Permits	page 53
Indicator #54	Housing Inventory.....	page 54

An Issue to Watch is the growing Age of our Housing Stock. As of 2000, more than half of the

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housing units in Oshkosh are more than 50 years old. This can contribute to higher energy and maintenance costs.

LIFE TOGETHER (PUBLIC SAFETY)

In general, the Fox Valley area has consistently been ranked as one of the safest areas to live in the United States. Some reasons for that may include the fact that our Solved Crime rates exceed the average for Wisconsin and the fact that the Delinquent Offense rate has been declining.

Indicator #55 Alcohol and Drug Arrests	page 55
Indicator #56 Traffic Crashes	page 56
Indicator #57 Property Crime	page 57
Indicator #58 Violent Crime	page 58
Indicator #59 Proportion of Solved Crimes.....	page 59
Indicator #60 Delinquent Offenses	page 60
Indicator #61 Probation and Parole.....	page 61

There are four indicators for which the trends suggest a community focus.

A significant trend to monitor in Alcohol and Drug Arrests is that underage and adult drug arrests in Oshkosh increased more than 100% between 1998 and 1999.

It is also important to note Traffic Crashes in Oshkosh involving alcohol increased between 1999 and 2000 to now exceed the rates for Winnebago County and Wisconsin.

While overall Property Crime rates have declined since 1997, the number of thefts in Oshkosh increased by 15% between 2000 and 2001.

In terms of Violent Crime, the number of robberies in Oshkosh increased by 62% since 1999.

Issues to Watch include whether the numbers for alcohol and drug abuse continue to grow and whether state budget cuts have an affect on programs designed to address these issues.

LIFE TOGETHER (CIVICS AND DIVERSITY)

Most of the five indicators in this area exhibit trends and numbers very similar to many other communities. The most noteworthy indicator trend is in Cultural Diversity where minority populations grew by over 20% between 1990 and 2000.

Indicator #62 Voter Participation	page 62
Indicator #63 Political Races	page 63
Indicator #64 Civil Rights Complaints	page 64
Indicator #65 Housing Discrimination.....	page 65
Indicator #66 Cultural Diversity	page 66

An Issue to Watch is the continued growth of minority populations and how well the community integrates them into the mainstream of social and economic life.