

# **Creating Communities of Belonging**

## **A Cologne Community and Public Health Initiative**

### *A Collective Journey Toward a Better Tomorrow*

## **Why Communities of Belonging?**

- Communities are not about the individual. They are a collection of individuals who together create what makes each community in Carver County unique. The stronger and more unified that collection of individuals is, the stronger the community will be.
- Communities of Belonging is based on that concept—that a community should be a place where people are truly connected and know each other, care about each other, and take care of each other – even if everyone does not agree on very many issues. The result of that interaction is a stronger and better community that benefits *everyone* living in it.
- A Community of Belonging welcomes all people, at all times – no matter their age, gender, race, ethnicity, language, faith traditions, income, occupation, sexual orientation, political ideology, physical ability, or anything else that makes them the unique individual that they are.
- All people seek a sense of belonging and the resulting sense of security and safety. Whether someone is a senior who often experiences social isolation, or someone who lives with physical or emotional challenges, or a newly arrived immigrant family, it is in the interest of fellow residents to ensure that everyone in a community has equitable opportunities to live and work, and to feel that they belong.
- Creating a sense of belong in a community benefits everyone through stronger social and emotional ties and a feeling of wellbeing by living in that community. Those ties, in turn, make communities safer, economically stronger, more resilient, more able to tackle future challenges and more unified around doing whatever it takes to benefit the overall community.
- Conversely, a lack of that sense of belonging results in residents not readily willing to spend their time and effort strengthening a community's economy, its safety and addressing its challenges.
- In Carver County recently, we saw residents come together to volunteer to help support their fellow residents who were isolated or unemployed as a result of the pandemic. Businesses, churches, individuals, law enforcement and community organizations worked together to create and provide emergency food boxes. The effort served more than 4,500 households/families and more than 16,000 individuals.
- This successful pandemic-related effort showed what is possible in Carver County at the local community level, if we set aside our differences to work together to create communities of belonging that have their foundation rooted in the belief that the whole is truly greater than the sum of its parts.