http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/coronavirus-nurse-tired-s5.jpg



Sen. Smith writes about the people in our lives we can be thankful for, and shares tips from the Trempealeau County Health Department for Wisconsinites to have a safe Thanksgiving this year.

EAU CLAIRE, WI - Every year, we gather around our dining room table with our loved ones for Thanksgiving dinner and reflect on the past year. We think about all that we're thankful for: our family and friends, our job and an excitement for what's yet to come. This year is different. It's been an incredibly difficult year for so many of us as we deal with the stress, loss and isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As we prepare for the Thanksgiving holiday, you might just wonder what there is to be thankful for in this challenging year we've been through. Distractions, including politics, the latest weather event or the increasing threat of COVID-19 make it even harder to find a reason to be thankful.

We can still find something to be thankful for despite all of the obstacles we have faced in an unprecedented year. We'll realize how this past year has revealed all that we have to be thankful for. By celebrating Thanksgiving safely this year, we can look forward to creating more memories and cherishing future holidays spent with our whole family.

Think back to the spring when COVID-19 first came to our state. We all put aside our differences and stepped up to stop the spread of COVID-19. We stayed home, posted encouraging messages on our windows, opted for drive-thru birthday parties and virtual graduation ceremonies or weddings instead of in-person celebrations.

There's no doubt about it: Wisconsinites have made a lot of sacrifices this year. We've made changes to our lifestyle and our day-to-day routine. We've gained perspective and it's helped us realize how grateful we are for the people supporting our communities through this crisis.

Our farmers continued to work hard to grow and harvest the food necessary to sustain our communities. Grocery store clerks, truckers and delivery drivers also provided an essential service to make sure we're getting fresh, healthy food to feed our families safely.



Our teachers, school staff and faculty went above and beyond to educate children in these unprecedented times. Teachers were determined to teach and support Wisconsin students despite the challenges of virtual learning or the risk of a COVID-19 outbreak in schools.

Poll workers and election officials across our state stepped up and delivered a safe, organized election for voters to participate in even with historic voter turnout.

We are very fortunate to have dedicated public servants to keep us safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 testers, National Guard members and contact tracers have been here to help us better understand the outbreak and control the spread of the disease. We can be very grateful for the scientists responsible for diligently working on a COVID-19 vaccine that we hope to see in the very near future.

In the past several weeks, Wisconsin has seen a dangerous surge of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths. Our healthcare workers have been heroes saving lives during this pandemic; they're still working their hardest to keep more people alive.



We can show gratitude to Wisconsin's healthcare workers by staying home for Thanksgiving. The Trempealeau County Health Department shared great ideas to enjoy your holiday while keeping you and your loved ones safe: Have a classic Thanksgiving dinner with members of your own household. Prepare traditional family recipes and deliver them to your family to avoid contact. Host a virtual dinner and watch the Thanksgiving football games from home.

Generations before us have lived through tumultuous times. They faced starvation, war and complete economic ruin, and yet, Americans still found reasons to be thankful. In those times, folks wondered if they would survive. People came together to feed and look out for each other in those trying times. Now it's our turn to do the same.

I saw a friend recently post, "This is not the year to get everything you want. This is the year to appreciate everything you have." As we prepare for Thanksgiving, let's remember this year has still shown us there is much to be thankful for, even if it's not obvious at first glance.