



# **Staying alive with ElderTree:**

**Design, use & effect of a computer system for older adults.**

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# Staying Alive: The Elder Tree Story



Milwaukee County

Richland County



Dave Gustafson.  
Speaking for many,  
many other  
colleagues



Waukesha County



**Major Funding by the  
Agency for Healthcare  
Research and Quality**

# Agenda

- How did we do CBPR? (successes & screw-ups)
- What did we produce? (ElderTree)
- How is it different for older adults?
- How did we evaluate it?
- What are we learning?
- New developments
- How are we disseminating?

**Our job:**



**Use CBPR to:  
keep older adults  
active and independent;  
& use technology to do it.**

# CBPR



## **Asset-Based Community Development**

Assets & challenges identified

Associations; not institutions

Geographic areas selected

Strategy team & community engagement

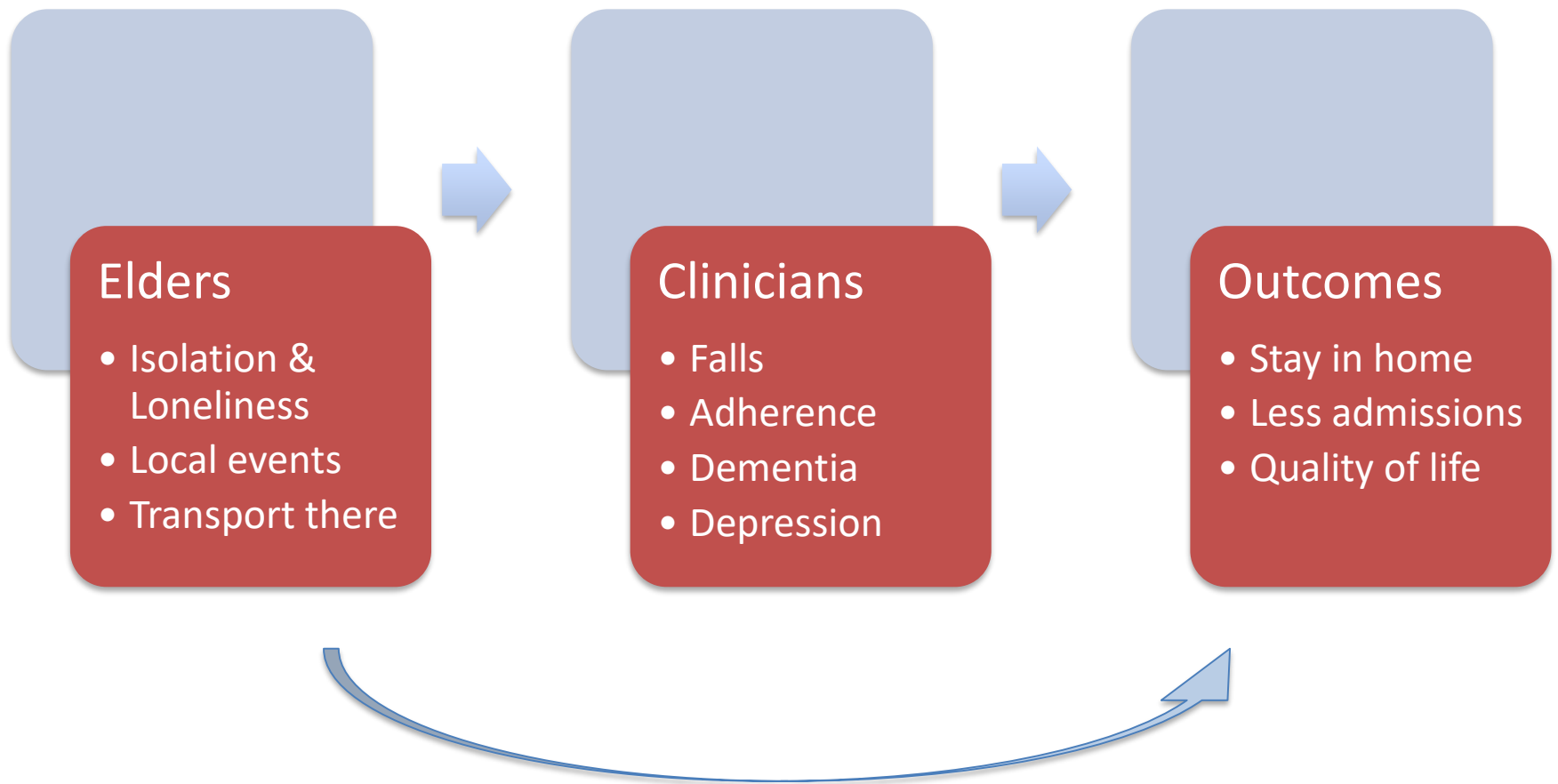
300 Conversations & asset-mapping

# **Screw-ups**

Competing expectations

Efficiency

# Everyone is right





**Elder Tree**



# ElderTree Features

## Conversations

- Public Discussion:
- Private Messages:
- Family and Friends

## Information

- Local Resources:
- Bulletin Board:.
- Active Living WIKI Tips

## Falls Prevention

- Falls Assessment
- Tailored balance exercises

## Transportation

- Monitor driving
- Map Your Trip

## Personal

- Member Directory:
- Games and Ice breakers
- To-Do List:
- My Health Tracker:

## For Clinicians (new)

- Clinician Report

# Adaptations for elderly

– Meet us where we are (senior centers)

- Our hands tremble
- Coordination diminishes
- Our eyes are dimmer

– So:

- Large screen; no mouse (touch screen instead)
- Keep it simple
- Anytime training
- Minimal data collection

# Typical CHES: too complex



# Keep it simple



## Conversations



Private  
Messages



Public  
Discussions



Family and  
Friends



Ask a Coach

 [Back to Conversations](#)

## Discussions

Clear new message counts



Just Chatting

1 new



Health & Wellness



Milwaukee County



Preventing a Fall



Religion / Spirituality

1 new



Caregiving Support



ElderTree Help



Peace Tuesday Bible Study  
Group

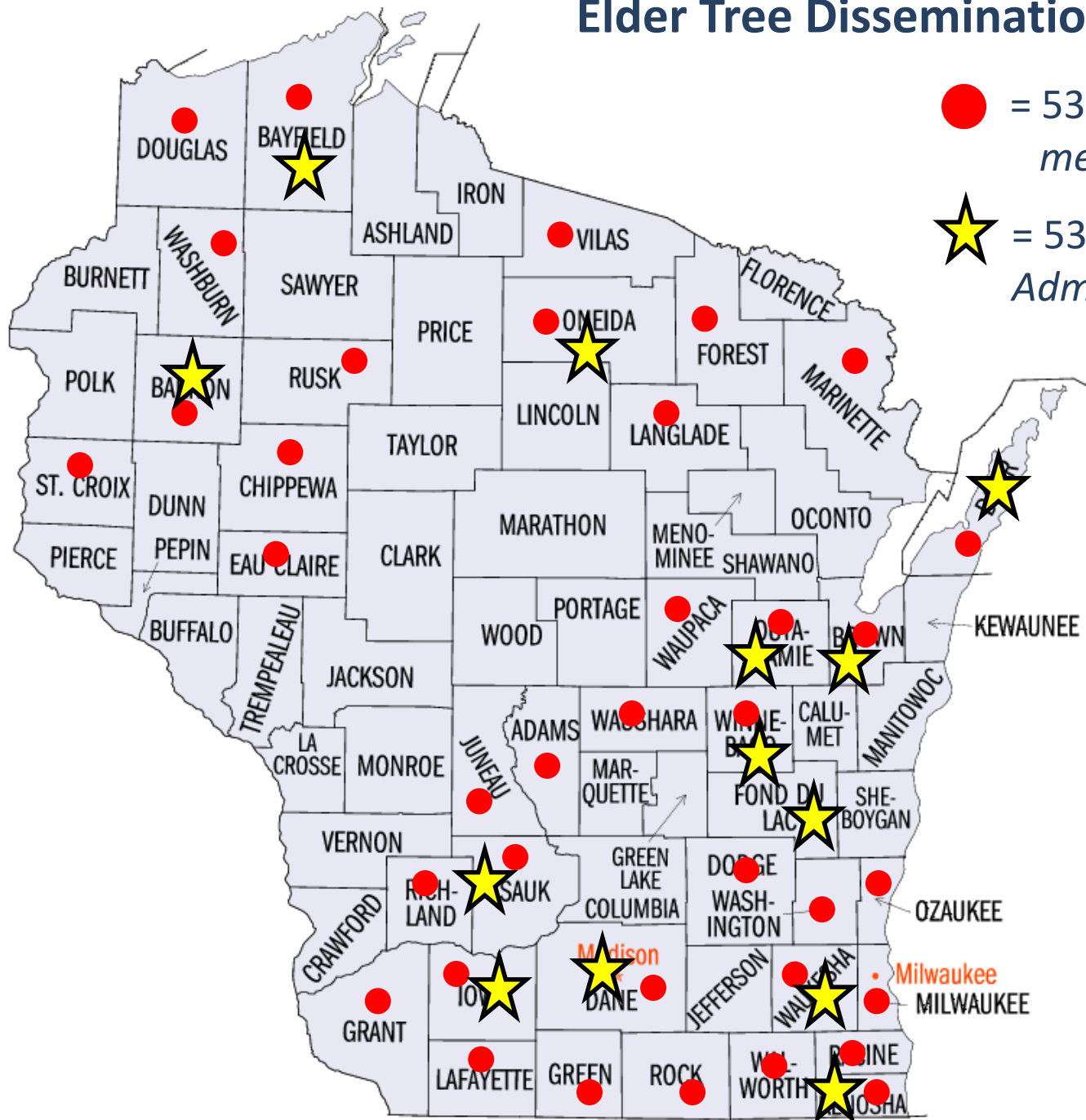
# What have we learned?

1. **Volunteers are great; clear expectations are essential.**
2. **ABCD increases engagement & may benefit dissemination.**
3. **ABCD & research have different agendas to reconcile**
4. **Focusing on assets—on strengths—can be very helpful.**
5. **ABCD is expensive and time-consuming**
6. **Communication is key**
7. **Link to the health care system**
8. **Deeply understand your customer (like Tech Team did)**

# Dissemination



# Elder Tree Dissemination



● = 53 Counties with 600  
members & growing

★ = 53 Counties w *Community Administrators* & growing

# What's the purpose of Elder Tree *Community Administrators*?

- An Elder Tree **champion** in the community
- Trained and given **admin rights** to activate new users and create custom groups
- They provide a **human touch** to the technology

## Who are they?

- Senior Center Directors
- Librarians
- Aging professionals
- Church secretaries
- Civic group volunteers
- Social workers
- Meal program staff & volunteers
- Older adult volunteers



# Next Steps

- Multiple Chronic Conditions
- Link to clinical team
- American Family – No advertising still
  - Provide Chromebooks and Hotspot
  - Agents give ET to customers.
  - IL, MN, IA and WI.
- United Healthcare????
  - Dual Eligibles
  - WI, OH, AZ, Tx, KS