

A young boy with short brown hair, wearing a blue and white plaid short-sleeved shirt and tan cargo shorts, stands barefoot on a wooden dock. He is holding a fishing rod with a blue handle and a silver reel. The background is a lush green field of tall grasses, slightly out of focus. The overall scene is bright and sunny, suggesting a summer day.

# ANOKA COUNTY NEWS

Volume 2-2015

## SUMMERTIME FUN IN ANOKA COUNTY PARKS

- Fish • Canoe • Hike
- Bike • Birdwatching
- Swim • Golf • Camp
- Disc golf • Geocaching
- Horseback riding
- Archery • Kayak
- Picnic • Playgrounds

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Canoe by the light of the moon



Fresh, homegrown vegetables for sale at the farmers market in Andover.



**Anoka County**  
MINNESOTA

Respectful. Innovative. Fiscally Responsible

# BUMPER CROP

**T**he sun is shining and temps are rising. That can mean only one thing: it's summertime – growing season in Anoka County!

It's the time of year when backyard gardeners keep a watchful eye on the sky and count on skill and hard work, along with the right mix of fertilizer, sunshine, and well-timed rainfalls, to produce a bumper crop of vegetables or prize-winning flowers.

But we're growing more than blue ribbon begonias in Anoka County. We're growing jobs by nurturing new and established businesses using two highly effective programs: *Open to Business*, which targets new or emerging companies; and *Economic Gardening*, which focuses on more established businesses.

Helping Anoka County businesses grow and prosper is good for all of us. More than 70 percent of Anoka County residents who are employed travel out of the county to get to their jobs. Helping businesses succeed will result in more jobs close to home for county residents. A shorter commute not only saves time and money, it broadens Anoka County's tax base too. Clearly, a win-win! (See pages 4-6 for more on the Open to Business and Economic Gardening programs.)

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Summer also means it's road construction season in Anoka County. Anyone traveling westbound Hwy. 10 through Anoka and Ramsey on a

Friday afternoon has experienced the extreme congestion and backups that stretch for miles at times. A project now underway to remove the traffic signal and build an interchange at Armstrong Blvd. is an important first step in a major redo of a four-mile stretch of Hwy. 10 from the Rum River in Anoka to the Ramsey border with Elk River. The goal is to reduce congestion and improve safety. (See page 7 for photos and a project update.)

Other major projects nearing completion are the reconstruction of University Ave. from 109th Ave. to Main St.; Foley Blvd. from Hwy. 10 to Egret Blvd.; and Centerville Rd. from Birch St. to Main St. in Centerville and Lino Lakes. For more information on Anoka County's highway construction program, go to [anokacounty.us/highway](http://anokacounty.us/highway) and click on "Construction Projects."

Anoka County is also working with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and the City of Columbus to address serious deficiencies with the bridge at I-35 and CSAH 23 (Lake Dr.) and Trunk Highway 97. Anoka County and Columbus are advocating for construction of a new, four-lane interchange with turn lanes to accommodate growing demand and improve safety. A transportation study has been completed and county and city officials are working to secure state and federal funding for the project.

# GROWING UP

**P**atriot Converting was established by Brian Stilwell in 2003 and by all measures, was thriving 10 years later, with a well-earned reputation for offering outstanding customer service at its state-of-the-art facility in Anoka. Executive Vice President Michael Stilwell, Brian's son, grew up in the industry and it was his challenge in 2013 to take this already prospering business to the next level. But where to start?

"I know what it took to get to this point," Stilwell said, "but getting to the next level – expanding, hiring more employees, dealing with more regulations – there's a lot you don't know. Frankly, there's a lot you *don't know* you don't know."

A chance meeting at a Small Business Administration luncheon led Stilwell to the Economic Gardening Program, a partnership of Anoka County Community Development and the Edward Lowe Foundation. The program offers



Michael Stilwell, executive vice president of Patriot Converting, Inc.

small to mid-size companies the tools and support they need to propel them to the next phase of growth. CEOs work with advisors to identify and respond to issues unique to their individual companies. At monthly roundtables, up to 15 CEOs, all who lead businesses similarly poised for growth, address common issues: finding qualified leads, structuring the next financing deal, responding when a competitor moves to town, finding quality workers, succession planning, and more.

"We all have the same problems and none of us have all the answers, but we feed off each others' ideas and best practices," Stilwell said.

The roundtable discussions were intimidating at first, Stilwell said. "I realized that if I'm going to get value from this, I have to bare our reality and share things I'm not happy about or even embarrassed about," he said. "But the Economic Gardening facilitator did a great job breaking down barriers and helping everyone get comfortable."

*(Patriot continued page 6)*

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**WE ALL HAVE THE SAME PROBLEMS AND NONE OF US HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS, BUT WE FEED OFF EACH OTHERS' IDEAS AND BEST PRACTICES.**

*Michael Stilwell  
 Patriot Converting, Inc.*

# BUILDING SUCCESS

**I**t seemed pretty straightforward to Paul Johnson, president and CEO at Aggressive Hydraulics. In 2009, the company was growing and needed a larger facility to consolidate its three buildings in Blaine into one larger facility. After an exhaustive search for an existing structure yielded no results, Johnson and his team found a site along Hwy. 65 in East Bethel and drew up building plans. But things came to a grinding halt when the appraisal for the building loan came in significantly lower than the actual construction cost.

"Our appraisal was based on what buildings were going for at the time, right after the recession, and included a lot of foreclosures and short sales, many of which were located 20 or 30 miles away," Johnson said. "It brought our appraisal down, leaving us with a financing gap of \$850,000."

Johnson and his staff made design changes to cut costs and worked with the City of East Bethel to establish a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district but still were \$300,000 short. At the suggestion of his banker, Johnson contacted the Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers (MCCD), which provided a \$300,000 loan through the Open to Business Program to seal the deal.

"We never would have been able to move into the new building and create this opportunity if it weren't for that loan," Johnson said. "It's meant the difference between surviving and thriving. It provided more job security for the employees we had before moving and put us in the position to create additional jobs for more employees down the road."

Keeping the business in Anoka County was key for Johnson, who was born and raised here. "I've worked all over the Midwest and we find the work ethic and education availability are very sound in the north metro," he said. "Our business was founded in Anoka County and we were able to retain all our employees as well as recruit new workers."

The new facility increased Aggressive Hydraulic's floor space by 50 percent and made possible the addition of needed infrastructure including cranes, a paint booth, wash system, and more.

*(Aggressive continued page 6)*



Paul Johnson, president and CEO, Aggressive Hydraulics

## Open to Business

- Targets new or existing entrepreneurs;
- Offers free one-on-one counseling with a business advisor;
- Gives CEOs help with financial management, marketing, loan packaging, real estate analysis, strategic planning, professional referrals, developing a business plan, and more.

The Open to Business program is offered by Anoka County in partnership with the Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers (MCCD).

To learn more, call Business Advisor Kathleen DuChene at 763-438-7315 or email her at [kduchene@mccdmn.org](mailto:kduchene@mccdmn.org) or visit [opentobusinessmn.org](http://opentobusinessmn.org).

(Patriot from page 4)

Soon after Stilwell joined the Economic Gardening program, he was approached by one of his largest customers about opening a second plant in Iowa. "That's a big transition for a small company," said Stilwell. He turned to his Economic Gardening CEO roundtable for advice and together they compiled a list of issues to consider. That support was invaluable, Stilwell said. "I'm no longer the strongest and weakest link," he said. "I have 12 other solid, established minds in the room helping me navigate these unknown waters."

The Economic Gardening program provides CEOs with up to 50 hours of free research, the type often only available to Fortune 500 companies. That research component helped Stilwell determine if opening a second plant was the right move. "Economic Gardening gave us the right information at the right time," he said. "Without it, we might have missed our window of opportunity."

Stilwell recommends Economic Gardening to any business that's looking to grow. "It's one thing to have a great vision or great idea," he said. "Economic Gardening helps you develop a plan and connect the dots. Where the rubber meets the road is where Economic Gardening comes in. That's what really helped launch us forward."

Go to [youtube.com/anokacountymn](https://www.youtube.com/anokacountymn) to hear more from Patriot Converting Executive Vice President Michael Stilwell.

## ECONOMIC GARDENING

Economic Gardening aims to give "second stage" companies – those that have moved beyond the start-up phase but haven't yet reached maturity – the tools they need to grow.

### Join an Economic Gardening Group

A new Economic Gardening group begins in September. Eligible businesses must:

- Employ 10-99 full-time employees;
- Generate annual revenue between \$1 million and \$50 million;
- Be profitable at least two of the last five years;
- Have a motivated CEO committed to joining roundtables for nine months.

### What is the cost?

There is no cost to individual businesses. Fees are covered by the Anoka County Housing & Redevelopment Authority.

### Learn more

Contact Karen Skepper at 763-323-5709 or [karen.skepper@co.anoka.mn.us](mailto:karen.skepper@co.anoka.mn.us).

## Hwy. 10/Armstrong Blvd. project moving forward

The project to build a new interchange on U.S. Hwy. 10 at Armstrong Blvd. in Ramsey is on target for completion this fall.

It's just the first step in plans to improve the stretch of Hwy. 10 from Ramsey's border with Elk River to Ferry St. in Anoka. Preliminary future plans call for improvements that will remove the signals on Hwy. 10 at Thurston Ave., Sunfish Lake Blvd., Ramsey Blvd. and Fair oak Ave.

Motorists who regularly travel Hwy. 10 will agree this redo is sorely needed. The Hwy. 10 corridor has crash and severity rates higher than the metro-wide average for similar highways. With 33,500 to 61,000 vehicles traveling the roadway each day, traffic backups are commonplace.

For up-to-date information on the Hwy. 10/Armstrong Blvd. interchange project, go to [highway10andarmstrong.com](http://highway10andarmstrong.com) or Twitter #Hwy10.



(Aggressive from page 5)

Since the move, 10 more employees have been hired, revenue is up more than 20 percent, and Johnson expects business to double in 5-10 years.

The company recently received a Small Business

Excellence Award from the U.S. Small Business Administration, Minnesota Small Business Development Centers, and the SCORE Association. The award is based on response to adversity, service to the community, longevity, and innovation of products and services.

"We thought we were on a dead-end road, but then this opportunity opened up and we saw there were other financing options available, especially if it's going to help create or retain jobs," Johnson said. "We knew it was a good risk, but we wouldn't have been able to do the deal had we not had this opportunity."

Go to [youtube.com/anokacountymn](https://www.youtube.com/anokacountymn) to hear more from Aggressive Hydraulics President and CEO Paul Johnson.



New name, same service

# ANOKA COUNTY MEDLINK

A Transportation Safety Net for Seniors and Veterans

The Anoka County Volunteer Transportation Program has a new name: **Anoka County MedLink**. The change was made to more accurately represent the mission of the program, which is to provide rides to medical and dental appointments for seniors, veterans, and county social services clients.

### Passengers

Program eligibility guidelines remain the same: you must be a veteran, or a senior age 60 or older, or a social

services client of Anoka County. Roundtrip transportation is provided to clinics, Anoka County facilities, and Veterans Administration medical facilities in the Twin Cities and St. Cloud. (Social services client appointments must be in Anoka County.) There is no charge for the service, but donations are accepted. Register for the program by calling 763-422-7087.

### Volunteer Drivers

Volunteer drivers make Anoka

County MedLink possible. Volunteer drivers receive mileage reimbursement and the personal satisfaction of helping others. Volunteer drivers must have:

- A valid driver's license
- A good driving record
- Current automobile insurance
- A safe, reliable vehicle

To learn more about becoming a volunteer driver, call 763-422-7075 or visit [anokacounty.us/transit](http://anokacounty.us/transit).

# SPEND SUMMER ON THE WATER!



## ● INTRODUCTION TO KAYAKING

WHERE East Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park  
WHEN July 25; 2 – 4 p.m.  
August 15; 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

WHERE Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve,  
Centerville Beach  
WHEN August 24; 12 – 2 p.m.

**Ages 15+** During this flat water course we will cover basic strokes, kayaking safety, and boat/equipment selection. Most of our time will be spent out on the water paddling and getting comfortable in the boats. No experience is necessary and pre-registration is required. **\$25**

## ● VOYAGEUR CANOE

WHERE East Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park  
WHEN August 8; 2 – 4 p.m.

**All Ages** Join us as we step back in time and travel like fur traders in a 30-foot, Thompson-style Voyageur canoe. Participants will have the unique opportunity to paddle this big boat with up to 15 other paddlers. Pre-registration is required. **\$10**

## ● MISSISSIPPI RIVER PADDLING TRIP

WHERE East Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park  
WHEN July 18; 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

**Ages 15+** The Mississippi River is a wonderful place to canoe or kayak. We will meet at East Coon Rapids Dam and shuttle up to the put-in at Mississippi West Regional Park, stop for lunch (please bring your own), and enjoy a beautiful afternoon on the river paddling to East Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park. Canoes and kayaks are available for rent. Pre-registration is required.

**\$15 (\$8/per additional family member)  
\$15/per canoe or kayak**

## ● RICE CREEK PADDLING ADVENTURE

WHERE Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve  
WHEN July 24; 12 – 4 p.m.

**Ages 15+** The Rice Creek flows 22 beautiful miles on its way to the Mississippi River, but we will be paddling seven of the wildest and most scenic miles of the creek. Bring your own boat, or rent one from us. Pre-registration is required. **\$20 (includes shuttle)  
\$15/boat**

## FOR LAND LOVERS

### ● NORDIC WALKING CLUB

WHERE Bunker Hills Regional Park  
(Meet in front of the Activities Center)  
WHEN August 15; 10 - 11:30 a.m.

**Ages 15+** Join us for a monthly walk through the woods and along the shorelines of Anoka County Parks! Poles are provided or bring your own! Trekking/hiking poles and Exerstriders are all welcome. Wear comfortable shoes with good tread. Pre-registration is required. **\$5**

### ● STAND UP PADDLE BOARDING

WHERE Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve,  
Centerville Beach  
WHEN August 11; 1 – 2:30 p.m.  
August 11; 6 – 7:30 p.m.

WHERE East Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park  
WHEN July 25; 12 – 1:30 p.m.

**Ages 15+** Fun, easy, cool, and a great workout! Class sizes are very small and the instruction is short and easy, so most of our time will be out on the water. Pre-registration is required. **\$20**

### ● CANOE AND KAYAK BY THE LIGHT OF THE MOON

WHERE Wargo Nature Center  
WHEN August 29; 7:30 – 10 p.m.

**Ages 15+** The Rice Creek Chain of Lakes makes for a perfect setting to paddle under the light of a full moon. We will get out on the water and let Mother Nature entertain us with an abundance of wildlife, a beautiful sunset, and a spectacular full moon. Space and boats are limited. Pre-registration is required. **\$15 (includes canoe or kayak rental)**



## LAKE GEORGE REGIONAL PARK BEACH IMPROVEMENTS

The beach at Lake George Regional Park in Oak Grove is a popular summer destination for families and young adults. The beach was recently redeveloped to better accommodate the thousands of visitors drawn to Lake George during the summer. The beach itself was doubled in size to 26,000 square feet. In addition, a new retaining wall was installed to better separate the beach and lawn areas and improve accessibility to the beach.

Lake George visitors are also enjoying the new restroom building, which includes men's and women's restrooms, two family restrooms, which also serve as changing rooms, and a new patio area.

Funding for the beach project was provided through the Regional Parks Capital Improvement Grant Program and the Metro Regional Parks and Trails Legacy Program.

## RICE CREEK CHAIN OF LAKES PARK RESERVE CENTERVILLE BEACH IMPROVEMENTS

The beach at Centerville Lake in the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve was last redeveloped in 2000. Like the beach at Lake George, it has become a popular choice for summer fun. A project to provide better access to the beach included removing a retaining wall and regrading the area. Visitors now more easily reach the sandy beach from any point. A new shower tower was also added along with improvements to sidewalks.

Funding for the Centerville Beach project was provided through the Metro Regional Parks and Trails Legacy Program.

REGISTER AT ANOKACOUNTYPARKS.COM OR CALL 651-429-8007

## New tool for Sheriff's Office: mobile digital forensics lab

by Anoka County Sheriff James Stuart

We live in a world that is increasingly dependent on electronic devices in almost every aspect of everyday life. We use tablets, laptops, and smartphones to pay bills, maintain our calendars, look up information, get directions, and stay in touch with friends and family through email and social media. Most of us are aware that electronic devices leave digital evidence – virtual fingerprints – of our whereabouts and activities. So it should come as no surprise that these devices are among the first things investigators want to look at in criminal investigations.

The number of smartphones and other electronic devices examined by the Sheriff's Office has tripled in the last three years. That's why I am especially excited about a new tool the Sheriff's Office acquired recently that is making it faster and more convenient to conduct digital forensics. An ambulance donated by Allina Emergency Medical Services has been converted into the state's first mobile digital forensics lab. The mobile lab travels to the scene of a crime

or missing person's home or job and investigators can copy potential evidence – photos, texts, emails, calendar entries, videos, and more – from devices on the spot. There is no need to take phones and computers back to the main lab at the Sheriff's Office in Andover, saving both time and inconvenience for witnesses who may otherwise have to give up their devices for a day or more. In some instances, speed is critically important. When two 13-year-old girls from Andover went missing last fall, investigators found clues to their whereabouts on their iPods and phones. The girls were located in the basement of a Burnsville home less than 24 hours after being reported missing. The man responsible for taking them there is now serving an 11-year sentence for felony criminal sexual assault and kidnapping.

While digital forensics give law enforcement access to a great deal of personal data, there are limits to how data can be collected and used. Our mobile lab is not a surveillance vehicle;

in fact, it is well-marked and easily identified as a Sheriff's Office vehicle. Our investigators cannot tap into phone conversations and there is no video camera mounted on the outside of the vehicle. We are very mindful of our responsibility to preserve the privacy rights of innocent people.



Just as technology has created new opportunities for criminal activity, the Sheriff's Office is fighting back, using that same technology to keep citizens safe and out of harm's way. I invite you to take a look at our new mobile digital forensic lab at the Sheriff's Office open house in September. (See below for details.)



You are invited!  
**Anoka County Sheriff's Office**  
**OPEN HOUSE**

September 15, 2015 • 4-7 p.m.

Tours • Demonstrations • Displays • Free!

Learn more about YOUR Sheriff's Office!

## Safely dispose of household hazardous waste

The Anoka County Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Facility offers residents a place to properly dispose of household wastes that cannot be managed at home or other collection sites. The permanent year-round facility is located at 3230 101st Ave. N.E. in Blaine. From April through October, the facility is open Monday, Friday, and Saturday 9 a.m.-3 p.m. and Wednesday 2-8 p.m. (Closed Labor Day, September 7.)



Please bring proof of county residency, such as a driver's license. There is no charge to drop off materials.

For more information or directions, call 763-323-5730 or visit [AnokaCounty.us/HHW](http://AnokaCounty.us/HHW).

### Products accepted include:

- aerosol cans with product remaining
- drain cleaner
- driveway sealer
- fluorescent bulbs
- liquid paint
- liquid mercury
- mercury thermometers
- motor oil
- oven cleaner
- paint stripper and thinner
- pesticides
- pool chemicals
- stains, varnishes, and wood preservatives.

### Products not accepted include:

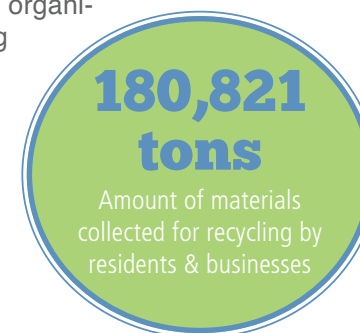
- ammunition
  - appliances
  - batteries
  - dried paint
  - electronics
  - empty containers
  - medical wastes
  - radioactive wastes
  - railroad ties
  - tires
- (Businesses, organizations and schools may not bring hazardous waste to the facility.)

## KUDOS FOR RECYCLING EFFORTS

Anoka County residents and businesses collected **180,821** tons of materials for recycling in 2014. This represents 42 percent of the total waste generated in the county!

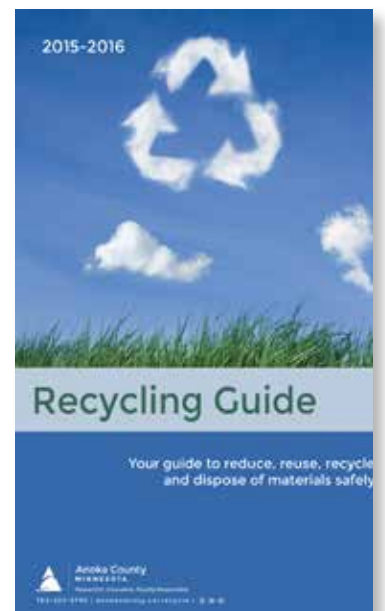
Those efforts were acknowledged recently at the annual Anoka County Recycling Recognition Awards ceremony. Several cities were recognized for increasing the amount of recyclables collected at municipal drop-off sites by more than 30 percent: Bethel, Circle Pines, Columbia Heights, East Bethel, Fridley, Hilltop, and Lexington.

In addition, several individuals and organizations received special "Recycling Champion" awards for extraordinary efforts to reduce, reuse and recycle: the Anoka Lions Club; Woodcrest Spanish Immersion School in Fridley; Kevin Eldstrom, Oak Grove; Michelle Ferreira, Columbia Heights; Bill and Genny Powell, Columbia Heights, and Doris Miller, Coon Rapids.



## It's in the mail!

Check your mail for the new **Recycling Guide** featuring information on how to reduce, reuse, recycle and dispose of materials safely.



# BOOKAWOCKY

Anoka County Library's summer reading experience is a celebration of summer reading!

## READ!

For every book read over the summer, kids can enter Read Write Draw for a chance to win a book, a family 4-pack of passes to Bunker Beach, tickets to the State Fair and Twins tickets. Teens can enter Best Book Ever for their chance to win.

## EXPLORE YOUR INTERESTS

Anoka County Library has programs for all ages and interests. Many pro-

grams are hands-on, creative and, most importantly, a whole lot of fun. Visit [anokacountylibrary.org](http://anokacountylibrary.org) for a full schedule.

## CONNECT WITH OTHER READERS

Connect online through [bookawocky.org](http://bookawocky.org) where you can create your own booklists, find more great books to read, and earn virtual badges for reading, exploring, and connecting to your community.

## STORYWALKS

Celebrate reading while enjoying the outdoors. Stroll leisurely through the park while following the pages of a children's story. Visit [anokacountylibrary.org](http://anokacountylibrary.org) for details and dates.

## STEM ACTIVITIES

Explore Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) with short hands-on activities. Visit your local library for details.

Bookawocky programs supported by:



## Songwriting workshop for kids

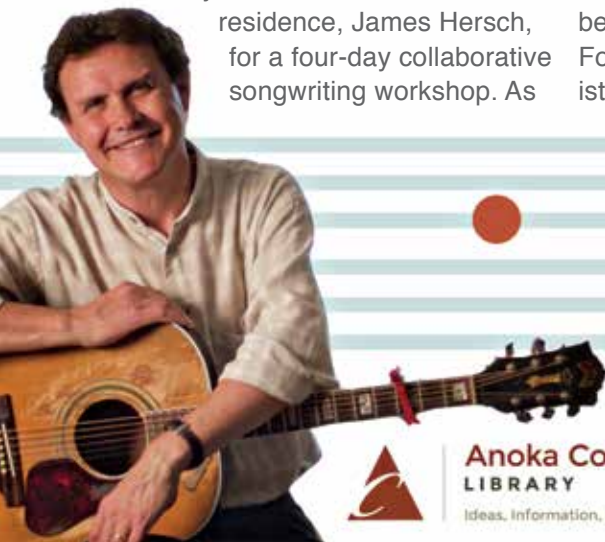
Do you have a song hidden inside you? Join our musician-in-residence, James Hersch, for a four-day collaborative songwriting workshop. As

a group, you'll compose, arrange and record original music. CDs will be distributed to all the participants. For kids entering grades 3-5. Register at [anokacountylibrary.org](http://anokacountylibrary.org) or

by calling any library. This program is offered in partnership with Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts.

- **St. Francis Library** (Rum River North Park Shelter) July 20-23, 1-2:30 p.m.
- **Centennial Library** July 27-30, 1-2:30 p.m.
- **Rum River Library** August 17-20, 1-2:30 p.m.

A CD release party will be held at Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts in Fridley September 19 from 1-3 pm.



## Give your business a technology boost

Want to harness the power of social media for your small business? Anoka County Library regularly offers free classes for job seekers, business owners, and others wanting to develop skills with Microsoft Office, social media, and other technology-related topics. Classes are free but registration is required. Register online at [anokacountylibrary.org](http://anokacountylibrary.org) or call 763-717-3267. Classes are presented by the Science Museum of Minnesota and the Twin Cities Media Alliance and funded by the Metropolitan Library Services Agency (MELSA). Below is a sampling of class offerings. Check [anokacountylibrary.org](http://anokacountylibrary.org) for a schedule of times and dates.

THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT!

So many apps, so little time! Discover which applications can help improve your productivity. You'll learn how to use and organize apps on your device.

Facebook is a great tool to connect with family, friends, and customers. But where to start? Learn how to set up a Facebook page, post information consistently, grow your followers, and set up an editorial calendar.

FACEBOOK 101

TWITTER 101

What is Twitter, and how can you use it effectively to connect with friends, colleagues, or potential customers? Go from being a novice to a power user.

Optimize the Facebook presence of your businesses or organization. This session covers strategic approaches you can take for marketing on Facebook based on your audience and your organizational or business goals.

FACEBOOK 201

## Dreaming of owning your own business? Here's help!

Anoka County Library offers several online resources that can help you achieve your dream of starting your own business or make your existing business stronger. Resources are available 24/7 and all you need to connect is a library card. Go to [anokacountylibrary.org](http://anokacountylibrary.org).

### BUSINESS INSIGHTS: ESSENTIALS

Corporate and investment reference sources and periodicals providing company histories, Reuters investment reports, financials, rankings/market share, product, industry, and trade association information.

### BUSINESS PLANS HANDBOOKS

Available through the Gale Virtual Reference Library. The business plans are compiled by, and aimed at,

entrepreneurs seeking funding for small businesses. It includes examples of plans with templates for a wide variety of business types.

### REFERENCE USA

Find potential competitors, suppliers, distributors, and customers. The Business Directory includes sales figures, credit ratings, and business type. The Consumers/Lifestyle, and Residential Directory help target marketing efforts and identify potential customers.

For assistance with online resources or for more information, ask a librarian in person or online. Click on "Ask a Librarian" at [anokacountylibrary.org](http://anokacountylibrary.org).

## Staying safe online

by Anoka County Attorney Tony Palumbo

Smartphones are everywhere it seems. People are using them to capture moments on video, check their bank accounts, follow the news, and connect with friends. And they're not just for adults anymore: according to the Pew Research Center, 73 percent of American teens have a smartphone. In the same survey, 92 percent of teens reported they go online daily.

The Internet has undoubtedly changed our world in both good and bad ways. Information that was once hidden away in thick reference books is now just a few keystrokes away and we can easily keep in touch with friends across the globe. But all that freedom comes with responsibility as well. Just as in "real" life, there are predators waiting in the shadows of online life as well.



Talking to kids about online safety is an extension of the "stranger danger" lesson we already teach them; it's just as simple and just as important. In the same way that we teach children not to talk to a stranger at the mall or a coffee shop, they shouldn't engage with online

strangers either. One national survey found that 28 percent of children age 11-12 have had a stranger contact them online. Of these, 11 percent reported chatting online with that stranger.

Kids are inherently curious about the world around them and the Internet is a way to explore it. It feels deceptively safe. Adolescents

in particular are naturally moving away from the family circle and establishing outside relationships. Child predators know this and will seek to exploit them by whatever means necessary to achieve their goals. They will seem friendly, kind, and empathetic. They will know the latest music, TV shows, movies, and other interests of young people. They will leverage these things in order to take advantage of kids.

### What can parents do?

**iKeepSafe.org**, an online resource for communities, has three tips:

- **Keep current** with technology. Know the apps your children are using and understand how they work. Some networking sites or apps allow for stranger communications and others have a way to block unknown people from interacting with the user. Use the Internet to your advantage. Google search for answers to your questions.
- **Keep communicating** with your kids about what they do online. Talk with them about appropriate conversations and how to avoid potentially bad situations on the Internet. Show them how to use the reporting tools (blocking/flagging) that each social media site uses to keep its users safe.
- **Keep checking** your child's usage and activities. Some parents have a rule that if their child is going to use a social networking tool such as Facebook or Instagram, they have to allow the parents to follow them or "friend" them. Watch for clues and ask questions about the people your child is talking to.

If you have concerns about online activity or if you suspect that your child may be in danger, contact the local police or sheriff's office. They can help you determine what is happening, show you how to preserve any possible evidence, and assist you in taking next steps toward keeping your family safe.

in brief

### Stay free from flu in 2015

Stay Flu Free in 2015. Summer is here, but another flu season is around the corner. Influenza is a serious respiratory illness with potential serious complications. Lower your odds of getting sick by taking simple precautions to avoid germs and keep your immune system healthy. Anoka County Community Health will offer free flu vaccine for children age 6 months to 18 years at Fridley High School on October 27, 2015. For more information, call 763-323-6128.



### Safe place for pets

In case of a fire, tornado, or flood, Fido and Fluffy now have a safe haven in Anoka County.

An American Kennel Club pet disaster relief trailer, the first of its kind in the state, was recently donated to Anoka County by the Anoka County Minnesota Kennel Club and other kennel club partners. The trailer is equipped with enough supplies to care for up to 65 pets displaced by a fire, tornado or other type of emergency.

Staff from Anoka County Emergency Management will tow the 16 by 7 foot trailer to where it's most needed. Volunteers will care for the animals until they can be reunited with their owners.

### Serving you better

County license centers are using a new automated check-in system that is making it faster and more efficient to conduct business. Customers receive a time-stamped ticket at check-in that is tailored for the service they are requesting. The ticket lets customers know which forms and other information they'll need. The new system lets staff better monitor customer wait times and it also streamlines the training process for new employees.

Purchasing an "off the shelf" automated check-in system would have cost upwards of \$300,000 but county IT and license center staff worked together to develop a system customized for Anoka County at a fraction of the cost, around \$40,000.



### Loans for first-time homebuyers

More than \$5.8 million in low interest money is available to qualified first-time homebuyers in Anoka County through the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA). The loans may be used to purchase a new or existing home valued at up to \$307,300. Additional funds may be available to assist with closing costs and/or the down payment.

Buyers must use a MHFA-approved lender. (Go to [mnhousing.gov](http://mnhousing.gov) for a list.) The program runs through November 30, 2015, or until funds are spent, whichever comes first.

#### Homebuyers must:

- Be a first-time homebuyer or not have owned a home in the last three years;
- Qualify for a home mortgage from a MHFA-approved lender;
- Not exceed the following household gross income limits:
  - 1-2 person \$86,600
  - 3+ person \$99,500

Go to [anokacounty.us/cd](http://anokacounty.us/cd) or call Anoka County Community Development at 763-323-5764 for more information.

### Loans for well and septic fix-ups

Low interest loans are available to eligible property owners to repair or replace private well and septic systems under a program offered by Anoka County Community Development and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Best Management Practices Program (AgBMP). The program funds projects that prevent or reduce water pollution such as repairing or replacing failed or failing septic systems and/or private wells and sealing wells that are no longer in use.

AgBMP's loan program provides financing at below market interest rates. Loans will be repaid via a special assessment on the property tax statement through Anoka County. To learn more, call 763-323-5722 or go to [anokacounty.us/cd](http://anokacounty.us/cd).

Anoka County  
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Anoka MN 55303-5024

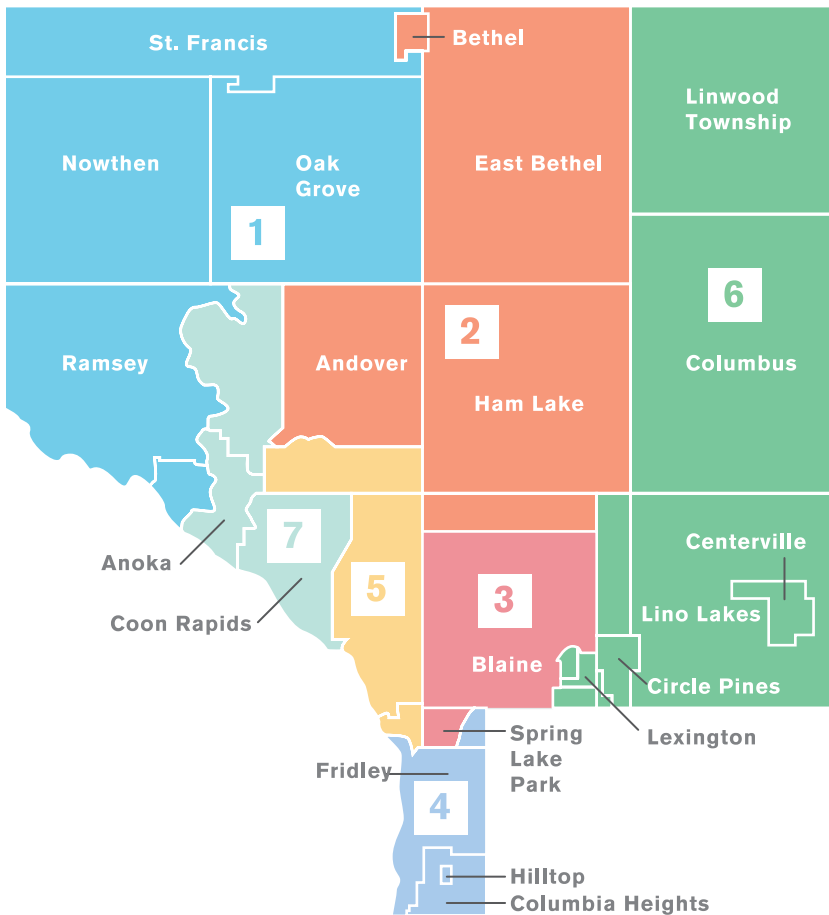
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*Robyn West*  
DISTRICT 3  
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*Mike Gamache*  
DISTRICT 5  
COMMISSIONER



*Rhonda Sivarajah*  
DISTRICT 6  
COMMISSIONER



*Scott Schulte*  
DISTRICT 7  
COMMISSIONER



*James Stuart*  
COUNTY  
SHERIFF



*Tony Palumbo*  
COUNTY  
ATTORNEY

County board meetings are generally held the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at 9:30 a.m. in Room 705 of the Anoka County Government Center in Anoka. Watch board meetings live at [anokacounty.us](http://anokacounty.us).

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