

ANOKA COUNTY NEWS

Volume 3-2016



Anoka County Parks
partners with the U of M
School of Architecture
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What's more fun than a horse-drawn hayride? Call Bunker Park Stable in Andover at 763-757-9445 to schedule one today!



BEGINNING AGAIN

Anoka County was in the throes of an alarming methamphetamine epidemic in 2005. Staff and resources in law enforcement, courts, community corrections, and child protection were stretched to the limit responding to ever increasing methamphetamine production and use. At the county's medium security facility, most of the women guilty of meth-related offenses had lost custody of their children, were unemployed, and did not have a stable place to live. Many were victims of domestic violence. The traditional 28-day treatment model was proving ineffective in helping women overcome their addiction to meth. What was needed, county officials realized, was a program that not only addressed the women's addiction, but also gave them the tools they needed to be better parents, build healthier relationships, and regain their self-sufficiency.

A FRESH APPROACH

Such a program didn't exist, so a team from Anoka County Corrections and Social Services joined forces to develop one. The resulting *Enhanced Treatment Program* (ETP) was launched as a two-year pilot with funding by a grant from the state Department of Public Safety, Office of Justice Programs. In May of this year, ETP marked 10 years of extraordinary success helping women overcome their addiction to meth and other drugs and alcohol. Of the 98 women who successfully completed the program, 94 percent have jobs; 95 percent were reunited with their children; 96 percent found stable housing; and 97 percent had no new criminal charges at graduation.

HOW IT WORKS

ETP takes a holistic approach to treating chemical abuse, offering 12 months of intensive case management that includes mandatory

THE TRADITIONAL 28-DAY TREATMENT MODEL WAS PROVING INEFFECTIVE IN HELPING WOMEN OVERCOME THEIR ADDICTION TO METH.

meetings three times a week, random drug tests, individual and group counseling, parenting education, mental health support, and help transitioning to sober living. Women are court-ordered to ETP or are referred by child protection workers or probation officers. Successful graduates are invited to attend monthly alumnae groups.

(ETP continued on page 4)



(ETP continued from page 3)

ACCOUNTABILITY IS KEY

Amanda Gardas credits ETP with helping her overcome her addiction to meth and other drugs. Faced with a fifth degree drug possession charge, Gardas was given a choice of jail time or ETP.

"The drug charge was a big wake-up call for me," she said. "Most addicts are used to manipulating and making excuses but with ETP, there is no room for lies. It really teaches you to take responsibility for your own life."

Graduates point to ETP's high expectations and emphasis on accountability as key to its success. "I was always pointing the finger at someone else when I knew the issue was with me," said Jesse Lenard, who graduated from ETP in March 2016.

Julie Forslund, a veteran of six treatment programs before ETP agrees. "I was so caught up in self-pity, but they really called me on my crap," she said. "I looked at ETP as a second chance to get my life right."

SUPPORT FOR PARENTS

Graduates say the positive parenting skills they learn in ETP are key to de-

veloping healthier relationships with their children. "I'm way more present as a mother now," Gardas said. "I don't lie to my kids anymore. It's made me more accountable."

For Tabitha Zieman's children, the hardest thing about her addiction was never being able to rely on her. "I didn't realize until I was sober that

"I LOOKED AT ETP AS A SECOND CHANCE TO GET MY LIFE RIGHT."

ETP graduate Julie Forslund

I was very absent and I really neglected them," she said. "Now they say the most important thing is the quality time we spend together. Our relationship is completely restored."

Many of the women entering ETP are initially skeptical, put off by the rigor and length of the program. "I didn't think I'd make it," said Stacy Glad. "I was scared because accountability and being on time were not my strong suit. And I'm not good at expressing my feelings; it was hard to dig deep and find myself again."

The 12-18 month length of the program was key for Gardas. "You get to

experience a whole year's worth of life changes with the accountability you need to really change," she said.

Anoka County's success with ETP has not gone unnoticed, garnering awards from the Association of Minnesota Counties and the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota.

"While it's gratifying to have our programs recognized for innovation and excellence, the real reward is seeing these women achieve sobriety and reunite with their children," said Rhonda Sivarajah, chair, Anoka County Board.

Tabitha Zieman was court-ordered to ETP as a condition of her probation. She graduated in May 2016 and has this advice for women beginning their recovery journey: "You are going to hit roadblocks and you're going to want to give up," she said. "You're going to really believe you don't want to do this anymore. And in that place of discomfort is where you're going to change the most. Trust in the program, trust in the staff, don't give up, and change will happen."

For more information about ETP, go to anokacounty.us/ETP.

Go to anokacounty.us/videos to hear graduates discuss their experience with ETP.

OF THE 98 WOMEN WHO COMPLETED ETP (AT GRADUATION)



STEERING CLEAR

A recovery and accountability program for offenders with multiple DWIs.

Anoka County's *Steering Clear* program provides enhanced supervision for offenders with multiple DWIs. Its overall treatment philosophy aligns closely with that of the highly successful Enhanced Treatment Program (ETP) for women fighting addiction to methamphetamines and other drugs. (See story pages 3-4.)

The goal is to promote positive changes in behavior and accountability using chemical dependency treatment, cognitive behavioral programming, mandatory group meetings, and remote electronic breath testing.

"We want people to be successful," said Stacy Steil, Anoka County probation officer who manages *Steering Clear*. "Our intention is to hold people accountable using support, not just punishment."

Repeat DWI offenders are court-ordered to the program. Typically, they have been convicted of felony DWI or certain gross misdemeanor DWI offenses (e.g., three DWIs in three years

or a second DWI in five years but with a blood alcohol content over a .20) or have been identified as being at high risk to commit a future drunk driving offense.

Steering Clear has three components:

- Chemical dependency treatment;
- Project SAVE (Specialized Alcohol Violation Enforcement);
- Cognitive programming.

OUR INTENTION IS TO HOLD PEOPLE ACCOUNTABLE USING SUPPORT, NOT JUST PUNISHMENT.

Chemical dependency treatment programs are typically outpatient programs that include group meetings 2-4 times a week.

With Project SAVE, clients undergo 30 consecutive days of remote alcohol monitoring at least once in every year of their sentence. They are also

placed on probation for 2-6 years for a gross misdemeanor and 5-7 years for a felony DWI.

Female offenders complete a cognitive program called *Moving On* that works to encourage personal responsibility and motivate individuals to change; expand personal connections and build healthy relationships; maintain and build skills; and develop positive relaxation and stress management strategies.

The cognitive program for men at-risk to re-offend is called *Moral Reconation Therapy*. The program helps offenders improve their "moral reasoning" by working on issues such as honesty, trust, acceptance, awareness, goal-setting, commitment, and more.

There are varying fees for the chemical dependency and cognitive behavior therapy as well as the electronic alcohol monitoring.

For more information, go to anokacounty.us/SteeringClear.

A Room for Change

Several Anoka County probation officers recently converted a storage room at the Rum River Human Service campus into a free used clothing exchange they've dubbed *A Room for Change*. The probation officers found some of their clients didn't have winter coats or clothing suitable for job interviews so they began collecting coats and other clothing, shoes and boots, and basic household supplies. Offenders ordered to complete community work service painted the room, built shelves, installed closet rods, helped sort and organize donated goods, and also contributed items.

A Room for Change is open by appointment to anyone who is on probation in Anoka County. Donations from the public are accepted Mon-Fri from 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. at the main reception desk of the Fahr Bldg. (#10) at the Rum River Human Service Center, 3300 4th Ave., Anoka. To drop off donations after hours, call Probation Officer Stacy Steil at 763-712-2726 or email stacy.steil@co.anoka.mn.us to arrange a drop-off time.



Commissioners re-elected to county board

All four incumbents were re-elected to the Anoka County Board of Commissioners November 8.



Matt Look retained his seat on the county board in District 1, which includes Ramsey, Nowthen, St. Francis, Oak Grove,

and a portion of Anoka. Look currently serves as vice chair of the county board and also chairs the Anoka County Regional Railroad Authority and the county's Finance and Capital Improvements Committee.



Julie Braastad was re-elected in District 2, which includes Bethel, East Bethel, Ham Lake, and portions of Andover

and Blaine. Braastad is chair of

the county's Intergovernmental & Community Relations and Public Safety Committees.

Robyn West was re-elected in District 3, which covers most of Blaine and a portion of Spring Lake Park. West is currently

chair of the county's Management and Benefits and Compensation Committees.

Rhonda Sivarajah

was re-elected in District 6, which includes Centerville, Circle Pines, Columbus, Lexington, Lino Lakes, Linwood Township and a portion of Blaine. Sivarajah currently serves as chair of the county board and also chairs the county's Human Services and Airport Committees.



Anoka County has an online tool to help you understand how we spend and receive money. Using the **OpenGov Budget Explorer** tool, you can find current and historical information about revenues and expenditures using multiple search filters. There's even a brief tutorial video to get you started. Find it at: anokacounty.us/opengov.

BOOSTING BUSINESS. GROWING JOBS.

Open to Business program offers help for budding entrepreneurs

Lisa Fahey works full time at her family's business, Graphic Finishing Services, in Coon Rapids. She's also pursuing her passion to promote health, nutrition, and sustainability by growing microgreens through her second business, Sissy's Fresh Farms. Fahey began growing microgreens – peas, sunflower, broccoli, kale, kohlrabi, arugula, radishes, cauliflower, and cilantro – because they pack 40 percent more nutrition

than a mature plant. Microgreens also open her up to a niche market that can earn a higher profit. Fahey sells directly to restaurants that pay a premium for her unique, quality product.

While Fahey's first year of business has been challenging, she's found help through Anoka County's *Open to Business* program, which offers free, one-on-one consulting to help entrepreneurs grow or launch their business. That support has been critical, says Fahey. "It's important because when you're starting a new business, you don't have money to pay consultants," she said.

Fahey advises new entrepreneurs to let their passion fuel their patience. "Starting your own business is a huge struggle," she said. "It's hard to find the perseverance to keep going. My motivation is that I feel like I'm meant to do this."

Learn more about the Anoka County's *Open to Business* program by contacting Business Advisor Kathleen DuChene at 763-438-7315 or kduchene@mccdmn.org or by visiting opentobusinessmn.org.



Providing support for crime victims

In July 2013, James and Ilene, both in their mid-70s, were conned by a stranger claiming to be a decorated Army veteran wounded in the Iraqi war.

He told stories of business investments and government fines, and smooth-talked his way to accessing their money. In the end, he swindled the couple out of \$52,000.

The couple struggled with the criminal justice process, reluctant to believe they'd been had and frustrated with the myriad agencies and moving pieces involved in righting the situation.

This scenario, which is not uncommon, highlighted the need for services tailored to the unique challenges and vulnerabilities of victims based on age and capacity.

The Anoka County Attorney's Office has long been a leader in the fight against elder abuse. But as the county's population continues to age, the need for advocacy and protection of our vulnerable citizens increases.

To that end, the attorney's office was awarded a grant from the U.S. Office of Justice Programs in September to bolster victim services for underserved populations.

The Victim Witness Program of the Anoka County Attorney's Office used the grant funds to add two additional staff members, who focus primarily on two victim groups: elderly and

non-English speaking. The grant also supports increased outreach and education efforts.

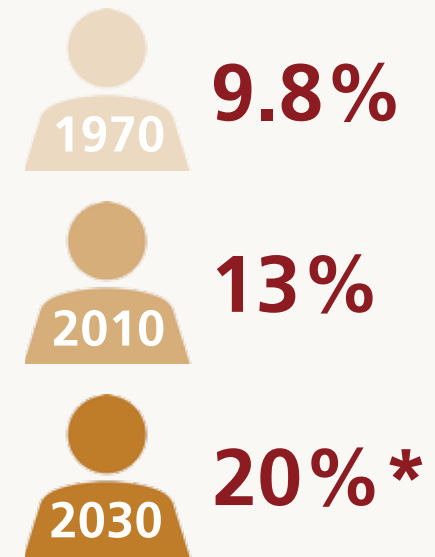
The expanded services build on the great work already being done by the county attorney's office, which does more than just prosecute criminals. We stand up for the rights of victims and we help them understand what those rights are while guiding them through a confusing – and sometimes emotionally difficult – criminal justice process.

The nine-member Victim Witness team works alongside attorneys, community service providers, law enforcement, and other agencies to provide guidance, support, and real-time information to victims, witnesses, and families who find themselves involved with the criminal justice system.

In 2015, the Victim Witness Program had 25,262 contacts with victims and witnesses of crimes prosecuted by the Anoka County Attorney's Office, marking a 20 percent increase from contacts in 2014, and a 53 percent increase from 2013. About 140 of last year's contacts were with victims 65 or older. Eight cases were specifically charged as Financial Exploitation of a Vulnerable Adult; up from three such cases in 2014.

According to 2015 census estimates, more than 12 percent of Anoka County residents are 65 and older, compared to about 15 percent nationwide.

U.S. Population Age 65+



*Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Approximately one in 10 seniors has experienced elder abuse in their own home, according to the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life. But elder abuse is known to be underreported; some research shows less than 5 percent of elder abuse cases are reported.

Now armed with grant funding for increased services and outreach, our Victim Witness Program will work diligently – and with renewed resolve – to advocate for one of our most vulnerable victims and to get information into the hands of the people who need it.

Mark your calendar! Storytimes begin January 10



Baby, toddler, and family storytimes kick off at every library the week of January 10. At each storytime, children – and their caregivers – learn five important early literacy skills:

- talking
- singing
- writing
- playing
- reading

January also brings special storytimes and programs at the library in partnership with the Anoka County Highway Department and their snowplow, *Plow Bunyan*. We'll have fun learning Minnesota snowy facts and fiction through February.

New year, new learning resolutions

We all have lofty goals and ideals when we make New Year's resolutions, whether it's to exercise more, be a better friend, or learn a new skill. Fortunately, the Anoka County Library has databases like *Transparent Language* to channel your passions.

Transparent Language is an online language learning resource that builds listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills. More than 80 languages are available, as well as English as a Second Language for Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese, Korean, Chinese, and Japanese speakers.

Access to *Transparent Language* is free with your library card and is available anywhere, even from the comfort of your home. Whatever goal you're working toward this year, the Anoka County Library has you covered.



anokacountylibrary.org

Read Across America

All Anoka County readers are invited to join millions of families across the country for the 17th annual National Education Association's *Read Across America Day* to celebrate Dr. Seuss's birthday and the joys of reading. Look for events such as *Dr. Seuss on the Loose* for preschoolers and Cosplay Mask Design programs for teens. For more details, visit anokacountylibrary.org.



Later in March, when we all have spring fever, the Friends of Anoka County Library will host the annual mini golf fundraiser at the Rum River Library. This year's theme is Fairy Tales, with each hole decorated to depict a different story. Funds raised support book giveaways for summer reading and youth programs throughout the county.

Your pass to museums, concerts, and more!

The library has long provided access to theater, art, and music through our print and media collections and exhibit space. Now you can experience them live and in person with **smARTpass**, the arts access program available exclusively to metro public library users! If you have an Anoka County Library card or one from the seven other public library systems in the Twin Cities, you can reserve free and/or discounted admission to a wide range of arts experiences.



The Bell Museum of Natural History, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Mu Performing Arts, and the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts are among the more than 20 organizations participating.

Visit anokacountylibrary.org for more information or to reserve your seats.

Anoka County is in urgent need of foster homes for children of all ages. Can you help? Go to anokacounty.us/childfostercare or call 763-422-7144 to learn more.

TOYS FOR JOY DRIVE

Drop off new, unwrapped toys at:
 all Anoka County License/Passport Centers
 Bunker Hills Activity Center
 Anoka County Government Center
 Blaine Human Service Center

November 28 - December 21

Help bring holiday joy to kids in need!

Anoka County launches #LastTag in response to recent overdose cases

Anoka County is responding to the recent wave of heroin overdose cases in the county by redoubling efforts to raise awareness about the danger of its use, particularly since the purity and condition of the drug are unknown to the user.

A public service announcement (PSA) called #LastTag, aimed at young adults, will air in several movie theatres throughout the county in the coming weeks. The spot features stark imagery of a body in a morgue, with a toe tag that lists the cause of death as overdose. In addition, an online campaign offering the same message will target county residents via mobile phones, tablets, or desktop computers.

“While the image in the PSA is disturbing, we can’t hold back in communicating the deadly consequences of using heroin – even trying it one time,” said Rhonda Sivarajah, chair of the Anoka County Board of Commissioners. “We are committed to working with schools and other community partners to raise awareness and protect our families from the scourge of heroin and opioids abuse.”

Go to [youtube.com/anokacountymn](https://www.youtube.com/anokacountymn) to view the #LastTag PSA along with another PSA titled Heroin Kills.



ONLINE RESOURCES

- anokacounty.us/heroinkills
- drugabuse.gov
- teens.drugabuse.gov
- forjakesake.org
- anoka.k12.mn.us/substanceuse
- samhsa.gov/underage-drinking/parent-resources
- drugfree.org
- drugabuse.gov/parents-educators

Prescription Drug Take-Back Sites

Bring prescription drugs you no longer want or need to one of the Prescription Drug Take-Back sites listed. There is no charge and you can remain anonymous. Call individual sites for hours.

ORGANIZATION	LOCATION	PHONE
Anoka County Sheriff's Office	13301 Hanson Blvd. NW, Andover	763-323-5000
St. Francis Police Department	4058 St. Francis Blvd. NW, St. Francis	763-753-1264
Ramsey Police Department	7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey,	763-427-6812
Lino Lakes Police Department	640 Town Center Parkway, Lino Lakes	651-982-2300
Blaine Police Department	10801 Town Square Drive NE, Blaine	763-785-6168
Centennial Lakes Police Department	54 North Road, Circle Pines	763-784-2501
Fridley Police Department	6431 University Ave. NE, Fridley	763-572-3629
Columbia Heights Police Department	825 41st Ave. NE, Columbia Heights	763-706-8100
Spring Lake Park Police Department	1301 81st Avenue NE, Spring Lake Park	763-792-7200
Hennepin County Sheriff Patrol	9401 83rd Ave. N, Brooklyn Park	612-348-3777
Hennepin County Library/ District Court: Brookdale	6125 Shingle Creek Pkwy., Brooklyn Center	612-348-3777
Ramsey County Sheriff Patrol Station	1411 Paul Kirkwold Drive, Arden Hills	651-633-3279
Washington County Headwaters Service Center	19955 Forest Road North, Forest Lake	651-430-6655
Isanti County Sheriff's Office	509 18th Ave. SW, Cambridge	763-689-2141

New! Compost sites open in winter months

The Anoka County compost sites in Coon Rapids and Lino Lakes are open Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. from December through March. This is a change from previous years when the sites were closed during the winter months. The county began an organics recycling drop-off program for residents at each of the compost sites in May 2016. The new winter hours allow residents to dispose of their organic waste year-round. The yard waste sites will also accept leaves, grass, and brush throughout the winter on Saturdays. (Please do not dispose of tree and yard waste in your trash. Tree and yard waste has been banned from trash since 1990.)

BUNKER HILLS COMPOST SITE

13285 Hanson Blvd., Coon Rapids
December-March
Sat: 9 a.m.-1 p.m. ONLY

April-Nov. (weather permitting)
Mon-Fri: 10 a.m.-7 p.m. or sunset
Sat: 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sun: Noon-5 p.m.
Closed Thanksgiving

RICE CREEK CHAIN OF LAKES COMPOST SITE

7701 Main St., Lino Lakes
December-March
Sat: 9 a.m.-1 p.m. ONLY

April-Nov. (weather permitting)
Mon: closed
Tues: 10 a.m.-7 p.m. or sunset
Thur: 10 a.m.-7 p.m. or sunset
Wed & Fri: closed
Sat: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. or sunset
Sun: Noon - 5 p.m. or sunset
Closed Thanksgiving

Winter hours at Household Hazardous Waste Facility

The Anoka County Household Hazardous Waste Facility has changed to winter hours of operation as of November 1, 2016 and running through March 31, 2017.

The household hazardous waste facility is open Wed, 2-8 p.m. and Sat, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. The facility is closed Sun, Mon, Tues, Thurs, and Fri. The facility is located at 3230 101st Ave. N.E. in Blaine.

Please bring identification, such as a driver's license, as proof of residency.

Items accepted include:

- acids
- 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

Items NOT accepted include:

- ammunition
- appliances
- batteries
- dried paint
- electronics
- empty containers
- medical wastes
- radioactive wastes
- railroad ties
- tires

For more information or disposal options for wastes not accepted, call Anoka County Recycling & Resource Solutions at 763-323-5730 or visit AnokaCounty.us/recycle.

ANOKA COUNTY PARKS AND U OF M SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE CELEBRATE NEW PARTNERSHIP



Visitors to the Heritage Lab and Wargo Nature Center in Lino Lakes will notice something new among the woods and prairies of the magnificent 5,500 acre Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve.

The Anoka County Parks and Recreation Department and the University of Minnesota (UMN) School of Architecture formed a unique and innovative partnership to develop, design and build teaching stations at the Heritage Lab/YMCA Camp Heritage site in the park. The addition of learning kiosks was identified in the Wargo Nature Center Master Plan that creates a long-range vision for interpretive facilities and educational programs within the park.

University faculty, led by Professor John Comazzi, guided UMN architecture students during the spring and summer semesters in the design and building of four new "learning kiosks" that will be used for educational programming and day camps. The partnership provided graduate students with a "real life" project and was the first design and build class for students in the Architecture program.

The project was made possible through a Regional Park Legacy Grant from the State of Minnesota and Metropolitan Council, and from donations by Connexus Energy and the YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities. Materials and technical assistance were provided by Radius Track Corporation, MG McGrath, Inc., Mattson Macdonald Young, Inc., Twin City MetalFab, Inc., and Weekes Forest Products, Inc.

The new facilities will benefit the 5,000 children who visit the park each year for the annual YMCA Day Camp and for programs taught by Wargo Nature Center staff about Minnesota's cultural heritage.



AN ANOKA COUNTY PARKS GIFT CARD MAKES AN EXCELLENT GIFT FOR THE HOLIDAYS OR ANY OCCASION. GIFT CARDS CAN BE USED THROUGHOUT THE ANOKA COUNTY PARK SYSTEM INCLUDING CHOMONIX GOLF COURSE, BUNKER BEACH WATER PARK, AND WARGO NATURE CENTER. GIFT CARDS CAN BE PURCHASED IN ANY AMOUNT OVER \$10 AND CAN HAVE VALUE ADDED AS NEEDED. CALL THE PARKS & RECREATION OFFICE AT 763-757-3920 TO ORDER TODAY.

SPECIAL EVENTS AT WARGO

WINTER RECREATION SAMPLER

December 18; 1 - 3 pm
Wargo Nature Center

Get a taste of some of the many things to do outside in Minnesota during our colder months. You will be sampling a variety of recreational activities including kick sledding, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. This event is open to families and individuals of all ages. Pre-registration is required.
\$7/adult, \$5/child (+ tax)

SNOW DAY - 17TH ANNUAL

January 28; 1 - 4 pm
Wargo Nature Center

Come play in the snow! The Anoka County Parks & Recreation Department, in collaboration with the Cities of Lino Lakes and Blaine Parks & Recreation Departments, will be offering the 16th annual Snow Day event. Participants of all ages will have a chance to partake in a variety of activities including: snowshoeing, winter crafts, ice fishing, kicksledding, cross-country skiing, live animals and more. This is a free event, open to the public. **Free**

MAPLE SYRUP FESTIVAL

March 19; 2 - 4 pm
Wargo Nature Center

Come and celebrate spring! Learn about the tradition of gathering maple sap and cooking it down to make maple syrup and sugar. We'll go through the syrup process, do some maple crafts, participate in a spring scavenger hunt and taste some maple-y treats. Fun for the whole family! Pre-registration is required.
\$4/person (+ tax)

NEW ENRICHMENT CLASSES

VERMICOMPOSTING - COMPOSTING WITH WORMS

WHERE Wargo Nature Center
WHEN December 3; 1 - 3 pm

Ages 8+ Looking to reduce food waste and make compost year-round? Vermicomposting is an easy and inexpensive way to reduce the amount of food you throw away as well as make some of the very best compost available for your plants and gardens! Best of all, it can be done year-round and indoors with no bad smell, no escaping worms, and only a tiny amount of space. Come see an established bin and learn tips and tricks for creating a successful worm compost bin using red wiggler worms. We'll cover building the bins, obtaining and keeping worms, preventing odors, and harvesting of compost. Participants will make a vermicomposting bin they can take home! Worms not provided. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Pre-registration required.

\$12/person, \$5/additional family member (+tax). Includes 1 bin per registered family. \$12/additional bin (optional)

FRESH CHEESE MAKING

WHERE Wargo Nature Center
WHEN December 10; 1 - 3 pm

Ages 15+ Do you love fresh cheese? If so, learn how to make fresh mozzarella and ricotta! It is easier than you think and you'll come away with some tasty fresh cheese. We'll take you through the whole cheese-making process, introducing you to the ingredients and skills that you need to start making fresh cheese at home. Pre-registration is required.

\$20/person (+ tax)



REGISTER FOR CLASSES WITH WARGO NATURE CENTER TODAY!

651-429-8007

ANOKACOUNTYPARKS.COM

Cut Rx expenses with free discount card

Are you paying out-of-pocket for prescription medications? You could save money by using a discount drug card offered in partnership with Anoka County and ProAct, a pharmacy benefit management company.

The card is free to all Anoka County residents and can be used at most area pharmacies. There are no enrollment forms or age or income requirements. You could save 10-20 percent on brand name drugs and 20-70 percent on generics. In addition, you may receive discounts for

vision, LASIK, hearing services, and even pet medications when filled at participating pharmacies. The discount card cannot be used in combination with an insurance program to reduce copays or deductibles.

To get your card, go to ProActRxSavings.com or call 1-877-776-2285.



Looking for a way to make a difference in your community?



Join RSVP!

Join Anoka County's Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) and become part of a national movement to fill critical needs in our communities. RSVP connects people age 55 and up who want to volunteer with non-profit and social service programs in Anoka County. Read on for examples of how RSVP volunteers are making a difference:

*Trained RSVP volunteers helped *Ann fill out her renter's property tax refund form. She had almost given up on filing her return because a tax preparer was going to charge her too much. Ann is very grateful for the service provided free of charge by RSVP volunteers. "Living here (at a mobile home park) is the only place I can afford to live on social security," she said. "This return will almost pay for a month of rent!"*

*At The Gathering, an out-of-home group respite program for caregivers and care receivers, Family Caregiver Connection and RSVP volunteers go out of their way to make sure client needs are met. *Jim, who is legally blind, feels included thanks to the efforts of volunteers who made oversized bingo cards, playing cards, and reminiscing cards. With the larger cards, Jim can participate in games and brain enrichment activities with his peers. Volunteers also work with Jim one-on-one to provide instructions for all activities.*

Learn how you can make a difference by becoming an RSVP volunteer. Call Tricia at 763-422-7090 or email: Tricia.Lehti@co.anoka.mn.us.

**Names have been changed to protect privacy.*

How well is your water?

How safe is the water from your private well? Well water should be tested annually to determine the presence of coliform bacteria and the concentration of nitrate-nitrogen, which can seep into private wells from septic systems, nitrogen fertilizers, animal feedlots, and landfills. Unsafe levels can pose an immediate risk to infants and pregnant women.

Pick up a well water testing kit at the Anoka County Environmental Services Unit, Suite 600, in the Government Center in Anoka, or at the following city/township offices: Andover, Bethel, Blaine, Centerville, Columbus, East Bethel, Ham Lake, Lino Lakes, Linwood, Nowthen, Oak Grove, Ramsey, and St. Francis. Kits are also available at the Anoka Conservation District, 1318 McKay Drive NW in Ham Lake.

Submit water samples to the Environmental Services Unit for analysis every Monday from 8 a.m.-4:15 p.m. and Tuesday from 8 a.m.-noon. There is a \$30 charge for coliform bacteria and nitrate-nitrogen analysis. Additional water testing (arsenic, lead, etc.) is also available. Call the Environmental Services Unit at 763-422-7063 for more information.

Learn more at knowtheflow.us.



WINTER'S COMING: ARE YOU READY?

The last autumn leaves have fallen and the temperature's dropping. Prepare for the coming winter by doing the following:

- Winterize your vehicle and keep the gas tank full.
- Insulate your home by installing storm windows or by covering windows with plastic on the inside to keep cold air out.
- Clean and inspect your furnace and/or fireplace.
- Have rock salt on hand to take care of icy walkways.
- Check the condition of snow shovels or other snow removal equipment.
- If you are going away this winter, set your thermostat to no lower than 55° F.
- Your family may not be together when disaster strikes. Plan how you will contact one another and get back together in case there is an emergency.
- Assemble a supply kit that will take care of your family for three days during an emergency. Go to ready.gov for more information and help building a supply kit.

Beat the bug, get a flu shot!

Everyone age 6 months and older should get a flu shot every year. It's especially important for people who may suffer complications from the flu such as babies, pregnant women, the elderly, and people with chronic diseases.

A flu shot offers protection from influenza, a contagious disease that is different from "stomach flu" or the common cold. A cold generally stays up in the head while the flu brings body aches, fever, and extreme fatigue. It can cause mild to severe illness and can even lead to death.

Because flu viruses are constantly changing, the vaccine is updated each season, based on which viruses are making people sick, how those viruses

are spreading, and how well the previous season's vaccine worked. The nasal spray or "flu mist" is not recommended for anyone this year because it has proven ineffective in the last three years.

Getting vaccinated each year is the first and most important step in protecting not just yourself, but also the people around you. You can get a flu shot anytime during the flu season, but it takes about two weeks for the body to build up its full immune response from the vaccine.

To find out where to get a flu shot, call Anoka County Disease Prevention and Control at 763-422-6970 or call the Anoka County Immunization Information Line at 763-323-6100.

FIGHT FLU!

- Avoid being exposed to people who have a flu-like illness.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Clean your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Take special care to protect infants. Avoid close contact with sick family members or large crowds during flu season.
- Don't share drinking cups and straws.
- Clean doorknobs, refrigerator handles, phones, and water faucets often.
- Don't smoke around children.



Anoka County
 2100 3rd Ave.
 Anoka MN 55303-5024

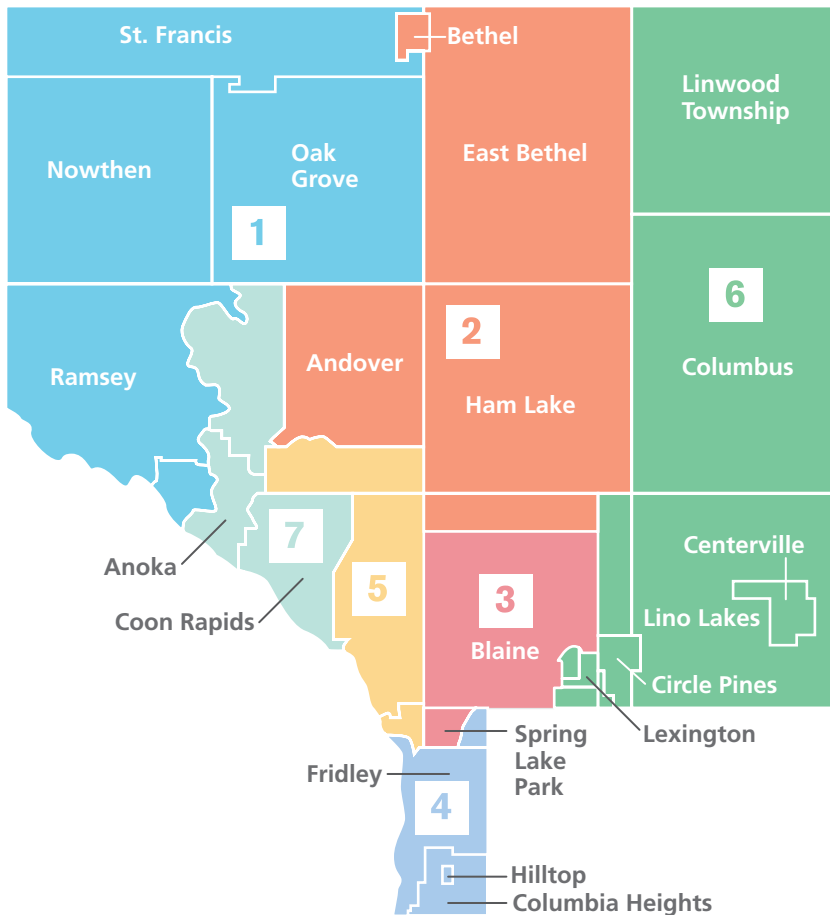
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As elected officials, the County Board, County Attorney, and County Sheriff set policy and direction for their areas of responsibility.

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.

Anoka County News is produced by Anoka County Public Information, Martha Weaver, Manager, 763-323-5744

publicinfo@co.anoka.mn.us • anokacounty.us/newsletter

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