

# ANOKA COUNTY NEWS

Volume 1-2025

## MANAGING OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUNDING



ANOKA COUNTY  
OPIOID SOLUTIONS INITIATIVE



# Combating the Impacts of Opioid Abuse

## Anoka County Opioid Solutions Initiative



Starting in August 2021, the Office of the Minnesota Attorney General joined a \$26 billion multi-state settlement agreement with more than a dozen companies that manufactured, sold, or distributed prescription painkillers for their roles in fueling the opioid crisis.

As part of this settlement, Anoka County anticipates receiving about \$18 million in disbursements over the next 18 years to address the opioid crisis and prevent opioid deaths in our community.

The Anoka County Opioid Solutions Initiative (ACOSI) was established to respond to the misuse of opioids in Anoka County. This group, which is composed of people with lived experience and professionals from organizations throughout the community, has a mission to “improve health, save lives, and reduce the impact caused by opioids and other substances in Anoka County by managing Opioid Settlement funding and supporting strategic partnerships.”

Settlement funding is allocated exclusively for initiatives focused on treatment and prevention within the areas of public health, human services, and public safety. This presents a chance to support approaches that not only tackle mental health and substance use requirements but also prioritize community-based primary prevention strategies aimed at enhancing the well-being of children and families.

“Establishing ACOSI has been integral for determining the most impactful ways to spend Opioid Settlement funding,” said Mike Gamache, chair, Anoka County Board of Commissioners.

“We’ve already experienced positive community engagement due to the efforts of ACOSI, and we plan to keep seeking innovative ways to help both those dealing with opioid addiction and providers offering addiction services.”

Scan for more info about ACOSI and resources



The following pages will focus on the early work of ACOSI and its partners, future plans of the group, and community resources for those dealing with opioid addiction.

ACOSI and its community partners hosted a free, open-to-the-public spotlight on opioids and overdose event Nov. 2, 2024, at Columbia Academy in Columbia Heights.

The event, which was well attended by the public, featured presentations by experts on opioids and addiction and more than 30 vendors. The day was filled with insightful education, discussions, informative sessions, networking opportunities, and more.

“It was great to see the public turnout for this event — the gymnasium was filled pretty much the entire day with people talking to the vendors, and several of the education sessions in the school’s library were filled to capacity as well,” said District 7 Anoka County Commissioner Mandy Meisner. “People shared their stories of addiction, recovery and hope. And there was even free naloxone and training on how to use this medication, which is administered to reverse the effects of opioid overdose. This event definitely helped raise awareness about overdose prevention, and it provided support for individuals and families affected by substance abuse.”



## Naloxone Soon Available at Anoka County Libraries

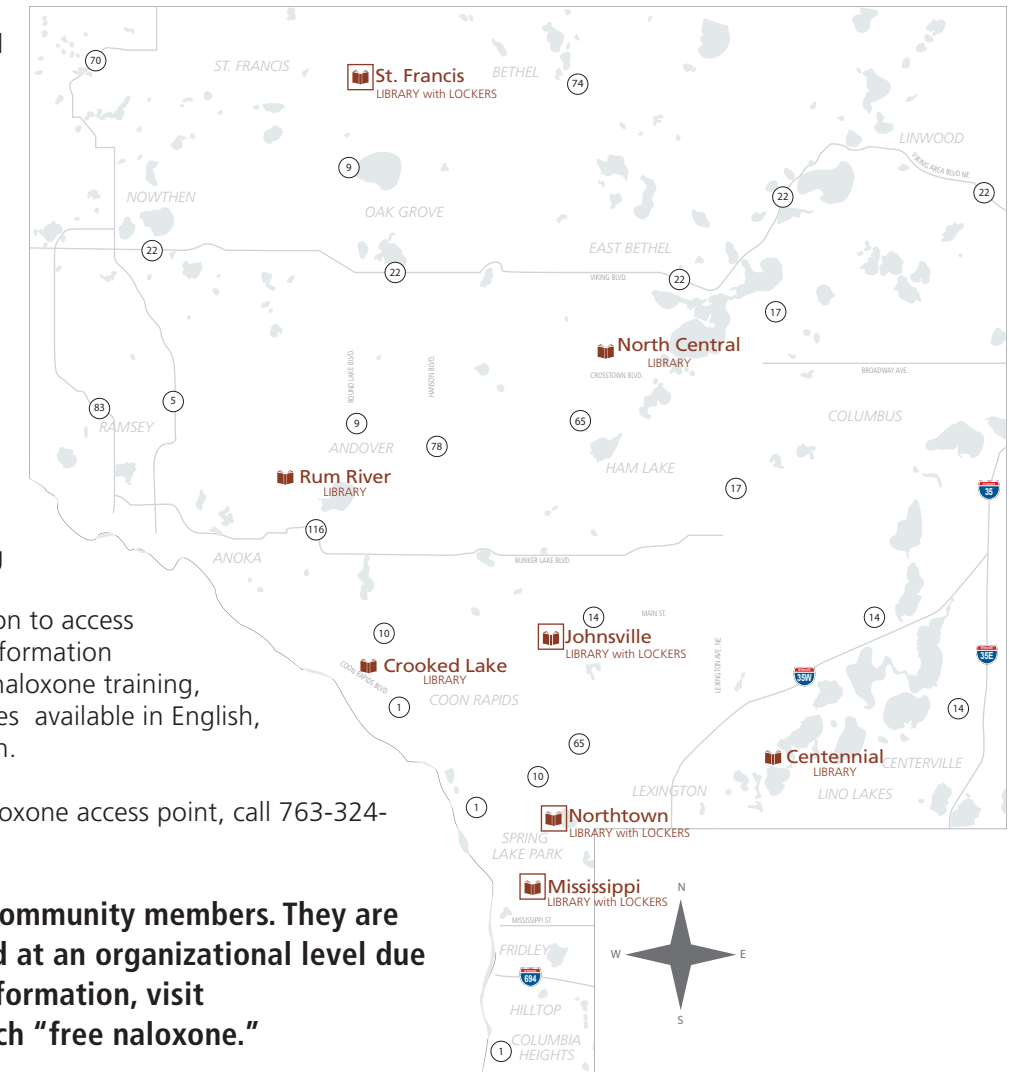
Naloxone, which is used to treat the effects of opioid overdoses, will soon be available at the following Anoka County Libraries:

- Centennial Library (Circle Pines).
- Crooked Lake Library (Coon Rapids).
- Johnsville Library (Blaine).
- Mississippi Library (Fridley).
- North Central Library (Ham Lake).
- Northtown Library (Blaine).
- Rum River Library (Anoka).
- St. Francis Library (St. Francis).

Visit [steverummlerhopenetwork.org](http://steverummlerhopenetwork.org) for a list of access points near you where free naloxone is available. In addition to access point locations, this site includes information on opioid addiction, chronic pain, naloxone training, and more. It has translated resources available in English, Spanish, Somali, Hmong, and Karen.

For information on setting up a naloxone access point, call 763-324-4334.

**Naloxone kits are meant for community members. They are not intended to be distributed at an organizational level due to limited supply. For more information, visit [anokacountymn.gov](http://anokacountymn.gov) and search “free naloxone.”**

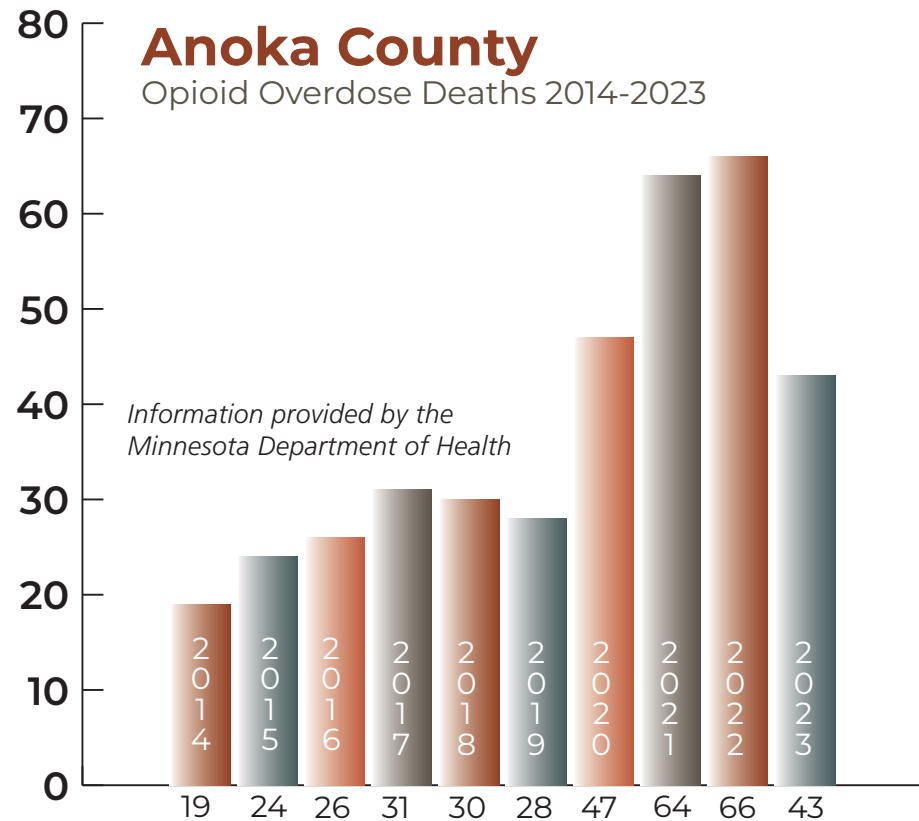


## Funding to be Allocated to Address Opioid Crisis in County

Multiple area organizations completed request for proposal forms through Anoka County Public Health and Environmental Services, on behalf of ACOSI, to receive Opioid Settlement funding to address the opioid crisis in local communities.

Qualified organizations that are committed to prevention efforts that address the root causes of opioid initiation, use, misuse, overdose, and death, especially in communities most disproportionately impacted by the opioid crisis, are being awarded funding. This is just the first round of funding allocations — more will be provided to qualified organizations in the future.

“We had many requests from organizations looking to mitigate the impact of opioid misuse in our area — it’s great that so many community partners are stepping up and approaching the county with plans that will have a positive impact once they’re implemented,” said District 3 Anoka County Commissioner Jeff Reinert.



Scan for more county opioid overdose data.

## PulsePoint Responders Needed

Anyone trained as a first responder is invited to download the PulsePoint app on their phone.

PulsePoint is a 911-connected mobile app that alerts CPR/AED-trained individuals to someone nearby having a sudden cardiac arrest.

The aim of this initiative is to have capable and trained citizens respond to nearby medical issues until emergency services arrive.

PulsePoint is also a simple yet sophisticated tool to record and share AED location information. Once AEDs are identified, their locations can be viewed by anyone using the PulsePoint AED app or the PulsePoint Respond app in PulsePoint connected communities. ACOSI is currently working on having naloxone emergency kits available in every public-facing AED in the county, so when responders arrive, whether it’s via traditional emergency calls or by prompts from the Pulse Point app, they’ll soon have easy access to life-saving naloxone that can be used in the event of an opioid overdose.

**NALOXONE**  
EMERGENCY KIT



Scan to download the PulsePoint apps.

## HELP

### Anoka County Opioid Solutions Initiative

Address opioid misuse in our communities

#### ACOSI representatives can:

- Partner with communities, schools, and other organizations.
- Conduct presentations.
- Staff tables at events.
- Provide naloxone trainings.
- Offer other prevention tools.

[anokacountymn.gov/ACOSI](http://anokacountymn.gov/ACOSI)



Contact Patti Constant, Senior Program Specialist, at [Patti.Constant@anokacountymn.gov](mailto:Patti.Constant@anokacountymn.gov) or 763-324-4334, for more information.

## Property Tax Assistance for Seniors and People with Disabilities



SCAN ME FOR MORE INFO!

Trained volunteers are available to help senior citizens and people with disabilities apply for their Minnesota Homeowner’s Homestead Credit Refunds (M1PR) form. This program is offered on a first-come, first-served basis. Any changes to this schedule will be announced on the property tax line, 763-324-1480.

June 24 - 9 a.m. to noon	Mary Ann Young Center	9150 Central Ave. NE, Blaine
June 25 - 8 a.m. to noon	Coon Rapids Senior Center	11155 Robinson Dr., Coon Rapids
July 10 - 2 to 4 p.m.	Murzyn Hall Columbia Heights Senior Center	530 Mill St., Columbia Heights
July 14 - 8 a.m. to noon	Coon Rapids Senior Center	11155 Robinson Dr., Coon Rapids
July 17 - 10 a.m. to noon	Ham Lake Senior Center	15544 Central Ave. NE, Ham Lake
July 22 - 9 a.m. to noon	Fridley Community Center	6085 7th St. NE, Fridley
July 23 - 9 a.m. to noon	Mary Ann Young Senior Center	9150 Central Ave. NE, Blaine

# Medlink Provides Rides and Friendship



Medlink volunteer driver Marie Putnam has been offering her time and vehicle for nearly two decades and has no intention of stopping anytime soon.

The Anoka County Medlink program is billed as a transportation safety-net when family and friends cannot get you to your medical appointment. It provides rides to passengers from volunteers in the community. The drivers donate their time and use of their own vehicles to pick up passengers at their homes, take them to their non-emergency medical, dental, or social service appointment, and then return the passengers to their homes.

Putnam became involved in the program after she needed the service when she broke her ankle. "I was still working at the time and needed transportation," she explained. "I looked into transportation services and found this one."

When Putnam retired from her job, she knew she needed something to fill her time.

"I knew I liked to drive, and I knew how needful people can be if they lose the ability to drive," she said. "I signed up to volunteer as soon as I retired, and I've been very pleased with it. It's also a great way to learn different areas and city streets by driving through them."

Nearly 18 years later, Putnam has appreciated the camaraderie that has come with volunteering with the service. "I've enjoyed meeting new people, and they are always so gracious when they learn you are volunteering to drive them," she said. "You find yourself associating with them more than once on occasion and catch up like old friends."

Medlink passengers often include seniors (60 years and older), veterans, and clients of Anoka County. Putnam urges those who have the time to get involved, too, as driver schedules are very flexible.

"When you volunteer, you get back more than you give," she said. "You feel good about yourself, and the people you meet also feel good because you are filling a need for them. They will voice their opinion about how appreciative they are. As long as I'm physically and mentally able to do it, I don't intend to quit."

Rides are provided 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday. While donations are not required, they help sustain the program. Suggested donations are \$5 for trips in Anoka County, \$10 for trips in the metro area, and \$20 for trips to the St. Cloud VA. Call requests are accepted up to three weeks in advance. To learn more, visit [anokacountymn.gov/335/Medlink](http://anokacountymn.gov/335/Medlink) or call 763-324-3255.

Despite the weather, it's essential to continue picking up after your dog, even in your backyard. Dog waste contains harmful bacteria, like E. coli, and excess nutrients that can wash into storm drains during the winter. These drains carry the waste into our lakes, ponds and streams, where it can make the water unsafe for activities like fishing and swimming and can harm aquatic life. To help minimize these impacts, dog waste should be disposed of properly in trash bins or designated pet waste stations. This information was provided by the Coon Creek Watershed District: [cooncreekwd.org](http://cooncreekwd.org), 763-755-0975.

## A REMINDER to Dog Owners



**ANOKA COUNTY**  
**Law Day**



**MAY 2nd**  
**9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.**

\*Limited appointments available for family law in addition to walk-ins, but expungement and housing law will both be walk-in appointments only.

**County Government Center and Courthouse:**  
2100 3rd Ave., Anoka

Free legal advice will be available in the areas of criminal expungement, family law, and housing law.

# Board of Commissioners Transitions to 'Committee of the Whole' Structure



The board gathers with staff for a committee of the whole Human Services meeting Jan. 21.

Starting this year, the Anoka County Board of Commissioners is adopting a "committee of the whole" structure for internal meetings that concern county business.

This is a departure from the multi-committee structure of the past, where one commissioner would serve as chair of a committee, one as vice chair, and another commissioner or two might also serve. These meetings were where the "meat" of issues were hashed out in areas like Human Services, Public Safety, Parks, and Transportation. Those who served on the committees with various county staff would study and discuss topics and then report back to the full board, and then actions could be taken on the recommendations at regular board meetings.

While there are certain advantages to this structure — such as commissioners becoming experts in certain areas of government, and non-board chair or vice chair commissioners getting experience in smaller scale leadership roles — there are disadvantages, as well. Since there are many meetings with this structure, it can lead to commissioners who are not on certain committees asking for more information during regular County Board meetings, subsequently making those meetings longer; members of the public who are interested in multiple topic areas of county governance might find it

difficult to attend several separate meetings to get that breadth of information; more staff and commissioner time is often required with this structure, which allows less time for commissioners to participate in community and professional meeting opportunities; and separate committees can sometimes get board members too involved in administrative detail and take them away from their roles as policy makers.

The committee of the whole structure seeks to simplify the process for county staff and allows all commissioners to study and discuss county business at the same time. All commissioners are present for committee of the whole meetings, and in some cases multiple department needs will be addressed during a single meeting, reducing the need for several smaller meetings. And although there are no longer chairs and vice chairs for committee of the whole meetings, there will be lead commissioners who are well versed in specific subject areas who can help run those portions of the meetings.

"This is a huge change in terms of the construction of how we conduct our business," said District 6 Anoka County Commissioner Julie Jeppson. "We are all going to be there as a board, getting the same information and being able to ask our questions. I'm very optimistic about it."

# REAL ID

May 7



On May 7, any person 18 years and older who plans to fly domestically or visit certain federal facilities will need a Real ID or another acceptable form of identification. Anoka County License and Passport Services is prepared to assist with applications for Real ID-compliant drivers licenses and state ID cards and/or passport applications. Customers will need appropriate documentation to apply.



[www.dhs.gov/real-id](http://www.dhs.gov/real-id)

[www.tsa.gov/real-id](http://www.tsa.gov/real-id)

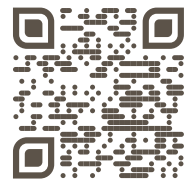
# ANOKA COUNTY PARKS

## SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE!

Parks offer something for everyone and extend a warm welcome to all. Whether you're an outdoor enthusiast seeking recreation, an eager learner looking for environmental education programs, or passionate about making a positive impact, parks provide a space for every interest. Parks ensure that everyone can find their place to connect, grow, and contribute.

- MAPLE SYRUP FESTIVAL (MARCH 22 • FREE)
- EARTH DAY CELEBRATION (APRIL 19 • FREE)
- KIDS FISHING CLINIC (MAY 3 • FREE)
- ADAPTIVE & INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING
- FOREST KIDS CLUB
- HOMESCHOOL PROGRAMS
- AND MORE!**

REGISTER ONLINE AT  
**ANOKACOUNTYPARKS.COM**  
 OR CALL 763-324-3350



## JOIN THE PARKS TEAM

- PARK MAINTENANCE
- NATURAL RESOURCES
- PARK SERVICES
- CHOMONIX GOLF COURSE
- BUNKER BEACH WATER PARK
- WARGO NATURE CENTER



APPLY ONLINE AT  
**ANOKACOUNTYMN.GOV/**  
 HIRING



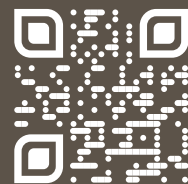
### CAMP TOPICS FOR AGES 4-14:

- Wild Wonders
- Nature's Palette
- Wacky Weather Week
- Survival Adventures
- Floating and Fishing Camp
- and More!

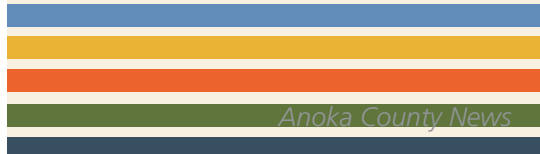
### CAMP LOCATIONS:

- Bunker Hills
- Coon Rapids Dam
- Lake George
- Rice Creek Chain of Lakes
- Wargo Nature Center

Registration is  
 now open



Register online at  
**anokacountyparks.com**  
 or call Wargo Nature Center  
 at 763-324-3350.



**CHOMONIX**  
 GOLF COURSE

18 HOLE, PAR 72 COURSE • TOURNAMENTS • SMALL GROUP RATES • BLUE HERON ROOM  
 PLAYERS CLUB • MEMBERSHIPS • LESSONS • DRIVING RANGE  
**700 AQUA LANE, LINO LAKES // 763-324-3434 // CHOMONIX.COM**



**BUNKER BEACH**  
 WATER PARK

OPEN DAILY  
 11 AM - 7 PM  
 JUNE 7 - AUG. 24



**BUNKERBEACH.COM**





## READ LOCAL Featured Authors

16 local authors are selected each year to be highlighted in our community. Read about these authors and their experiences as Minnesota authors [tinyurl.com/ReadLocalACL](http://tinyurl.com/ReadLocalACL)

Attend Featured Author programs - check the event calendar: [tinyurl.com/acIFaevent](http://tinyurl.com/acIFaevent)

Love to READ LOCAL authors? Get recommended titles delivered straight to your inbox. Select the genre **Minnesota Creators** [tinyurl.com/acIRecommends](http://tinyurl.com/acIRecommends)

Find MN authors, illustrators, and music in the library catalog: [tinyurl.com/acIMNcreators](http://tinyurl.com/acIMNcreators)

### YOUTH FICTION



**Chad Corrie**  
*As the Sparrow Flies*



**Wes Erwin**  
*Fire and Ashes: A Boy and an African Proverb*



**Minda Gomez**  
*The Island Rescue*



**Chris Norbury**  
*Little Mountain, Big Trouble*



**Jake C. Rudquist**  
*We're All Dead Here*

### YOUTH NONFICTION



**Sandra Hisakuni**  
*The Northland Beckons: An Illustrated Haiku Journey*

### ADULT FICTION



**Laura Ashwood**  
*Summer at Bluefin Bay*



**Tasha Coryell**  
*Love Letters to a Serial Killer*



**Brian Lutterman**  
*Incel*



**Sherry Roberts**  
*Up There*



**Tara Vasser**  
*Shadow Unveiled: Reapers Book 1*



**R. F. Whong**  
*Prestige of Hearts*

### ADULT NONFICTION



**Heidi Barr**  
*Collisions of Earth and Sky*



**Lee Burtman**  
*Waiting in the Wings: Arming the Bomb in a World Gone M.A.D.*



**Stanley Kusunoki**  
*Social Studies: Poetry as History, Ethics and Journalism*



**Paul Rousseau**  
*Friendly Fire: A Fractured Memoir*

Use your library card for a 2025 full of ideas, information, and inspiration! Need a card?

Apply online for immediate access to books, movies, games, and more: [tinyurl.com/GetACLcard](http://tinyurl.com/GetACLcard)



As of January 1, 2025, we no longer charge daily fines for items returned past the due date. If an item is damaged or is kept 30 days past the due date, the replacement cost for the item will be charged.



### Friends of Anoka County Library Book Sale

Saturday, May 11, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Centennial Library

Gently used books, movies, and music priced from .25 to \$2. All proceeds donated back to the library for programs and services like Summer Reading and Book Club in a Bag. Recently published popular titles in good condition can be donated for the sale 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Friday, May 10 at the Centennial Library. We cannot accept textbooks, encyclopedias, or similar items.

### PROGRAMS

Register at [tinyurl.com/acIEventCalendar](http://tinyurl.com/acIEventCalendar)

**Photography Basics: Bring Your Own Smartphone**  
Saturday, March 15, 2 p.m., Mississippi Library

**Adaptive Program: Line Dancing Together at the Library - Can't Stop the Feeling**  
Tuesday, March 18, noon, Rum River Library

**Paint a Book "Quilt" with Rumriver Art Center**  
Thursday, March 20, 5 p.m., Northtown Library  
Thursday, April 24, 4:30 p.m., Centennial Library  
Saturday, May 10, 11 a.m., St. Francis Library

**Storytime Training for Childcare Providers**  
Monday, March 31, 5:45 p.m., Rum River Library

**Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's Music, Life, and Legacy**  
Thursday, April 3, 6 p.m., Northtown Library

**Get to Know Your Muslim Neighbor**  
Saturday, April 12, 2 p.m., Northtown Library

**Resume Workshop for Teens**  
Monday, April 14, 5 p.m., St. Francis Library

**Blank Verse: Prose and Poetry Showcase**  
Thursday, April 17, 6:30 p.m., Northtown Library

### COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Monthly Events at the Library

**Consult with the Law Librarian**  
2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday, 5 to 7 p.m., Northtown Library

3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Mississippi Library

4<sup>th</sup> Thursday, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., Columbia Heights Public Library

**Expungement Clinic - Supported by Central Minnesota Legal Services**

3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday, 1 p.m. check in, sessions begin at 1:30 p.m.  
Mississippi Library

**Meet the Social Worker**

3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday, 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., Crooked Lake Library

## Anoka County Employee Spotlight: Francine Mocchi

More than 30 years ago, Francine Mocchi started her career at Anoka County, and while many people may look back in time when discussing the work they've accomplished, Mocchi focuses primarily on the future.

Mocchi began her career at Anoka County in 1994 as an administrative law specialist. From there, she worked as an assistant county attorney in the family law division, focusing on child support cases. Later, she spent more than a decade in the civil division, working on civil commitment and guardianship cases. She's been in her current position as family law division chief since 2017.

Leading a team of attorneys and legal support staff in representing Anoka County and child support services on child support matters, Mocchi and her co-workers represent the county in legal actions to establish parentage and the creation and enforcement of child support orders.

"With three decades under her belt, Francine has seen a myriad of changes to the work she has been involved in, and she's been able to change and adapt as needed," said Mike Gamache, chair, Anoka County Board of Commissioners. "She's certainly an asset to our county."

When it comes to what drives Mocchi's passion for her work, she puts it simply: the people of Anoka County.

"It is a privilege to be able to combine my interest and passion in legal work with a career that enables me to serve people and do work that helps ensure that children are supported financially," she said.

She also credits her parents for their support growing up and involvement with their community, which inspired Mocchi to want to do the same.

Those who work alongside Mocchi are thankful to have her in their corner, too.

"Francine is a true believer — she believes in the good work of government, the good people of Anoka County, and in the good fight to ensure families have what they need to raise their children," said Chief Deputy County Attorney Bethany Fountain Lindberg. "She is tireless in her pursuit of what is right and her efforts to reduce bureaucracy. Francine is someone you both want and need on your team."



Francine Mocchi, center, is recognized for her years of service by the Anoka County Board of Commissioners at the Oct. 8, 2024, board meeting.

*Anoka County*

# 2025 Senior EXPO

Open to seniors and their families  
HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE!

## SATURDAY April 5

9 a.m. to noon  
Lord of Life Church, 14501 Nowthen Blvd. NW  
Ramsey, MN 55303

- Information booths
- Mini massages
- Free pancake breakfast
- Entertainment
- Blood pressure checks
- Todd "Elvis" Anderson
- Eyewear repair & cleaning

Sponsored by Anoka County Human Services

Questions: Please call Gayle at 763-324-1609 or Janet at 763-324-1457

## Growing Need for Foster Care Pa

Anoka County needs foster care parents for children in the community. Foster families provide homes for children whose families are unable to care for them. Foster parents are asked to take someone else's child or children into their home, care for them, and treat those children as members of their family.

Foster care families will also work with the children's biological parents to help support them during difficult times. Children may continue to visit their biological families until they can be reunited. Types of foster care include:

- Family foster care: Treated as family members, these children and teens receive full-time care, either short or long-term.
- Kinship foster care: Relatives, family friends, and those with a significant relationship may be licensed to provide care.
- Respite care: Respite care provides a break for birth parents or foster parents from caring for children on a scheduled basis.
- Concurrent/pre-adoption foster care: Foster parents assist and support reunification with the child or children's birth family while committing to provide a permanent home for the child or children if they cannot return to the parents or other appropriate family.

Foster care orientation provides those interested with an opportunity to learn more about the children in foster care, the licensing process, foster care policies, and the responsibilities of being a foster parent. To learn more about becoming a licensed child foster care provider, visit [anokacountymn.gov/foster](http://anokacountymn.gov/foster).



Scan for info on becoming a foster parent

## RAMSEY GATEWAY Construction Continues

Construction on the Highway 10 Ramsey Gateway Project will resume this spring.

In 2024, construction was completed on the Sunfish Lake Boulevard interchange, Riverdale Drive, and the new northeast frontage road. The next phase of construction will begin this spring and focus on the Ramsey Boulevard interchange and completing the frontage road on the north side of Highway 10. Anoka County appreciates the public's support and understanding as we work to provide better traffic flow and accessibility in the area.

There will be several road closures during 2025 construction:

- Ramsey Boulevard will be closed between Riverdale Drive and Sunwood Drive. Detours on Sunfish Lake Boulevard and Bunker Lake Boulevard will provide access to Highway 10.
- Riverdale Drive will be closed between Traprock Street and Ramsey Boulevard. Both closures will be fully open by the end of fall 2025.



- The Mississippi West Regional Trail will be closed through fall 2025.
- Construction on the frontage road on the north side of Highway 10 will be done under traffic and will be fully open by fall 2025.

Please email [info@hwy10ramsey.com](mailto:info@hwy10ramsey.com) or call the project hotline at 763-400-3877 if you have any questions or concerns.



**MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

**FOOD WASTE Prevention Week**

April 7-13, 2025

Become a food waste hero!

Anoka County  
RECYCLING & RESOURCE SOLUTIONS

Anoka County is thrilled to announce our partnership with Food Waste Prevention Week, taking place April 7-13, 2025!

Joining forces with more than 600 public and private organizations, we are proud to support the mission of reducing food waste in our homes, workplaces, and communities. Together, we can inspire action and create meaningful change.

**WHY FOOD WASTE PREVENTION MATTERS**

- **SAVE MONEY:** A family of four can save an average of \$1,500 annually by reducing food waste.
- **CONSERVE RESOURCES:** Wasted food means wasted labor, land, water, and energy used in its production and transportation.
- **IMPROVE FOOD SECURITY:** Safe, nutritious food currently being discarded could help feed those in need

Let's make a difference together! For more information scan the QR code or visit: [anokacountymn.gov/Food-Waste-Prevention-Week](http://anokacountymn.gov/Food-Waste-Prevention-Week)

## Anoka County Workforce Groups Receive Promising Practices Award

The Anoka County Job Training Center (JTC) and the Anoka County Regional Economic Development (ACRED) group received a Promising Practices Award from the Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards (MAWB) for organizing a successful event last year that had broad regional impact.

The award was given to the JTC and ACRED for their innovative practice of hosting an economic and workforce development summit at Bunker Hills Event Center. More than 130 businesses attended the event to engage in collective conversation and to learn about talent attraction and hiring opportunities, retention strategies focused on a diverse, equitable, and accessible workforce, and the future of work.

"The success of this event is proof the workforce organizations in Anoka County are hard at work helping those in the job market to be more successful," said District 4 Anoka County Commissioner Scott Schulte, who serves as chair of the MAWB. "Their commitment to inclusivity and fostering a more accessible workforce for all is honorable, and they are well deserving of this recognition."

JTC administers services to meet the needs of people in Anoka County, including, but not limited to, youth, laid off workers, seniors, and unemployed and underemployed adults. They also provide business services to those in need.



Anoka County Economic Development Director Gregory Frahm-Gilles presents at the workforce development summit.

## 'Bike to the Fair' Program Wins Big

The Anoka County Fair, in partnership with Anoka County Commute Solutions, won a first place Community Impact Award at the 2024 International Association of Fairs and Expos Virtual Awards Ceremony for its "Bike to the Fair" program.

The Anoka County Fair's entry was up against more than 2,000 entries worldwide. This program tackled traffic congestion by encouraging attendees to bike to the fair, offering free entry in exchange. A valet service ensured bikes were securely stored, while maps, sunscreen, and bike locks were provided. With 246 tickets redeemed, the program saved an estimated 123 parking spots and generated more than \$2,300 in gate admissions, which was covered by Commute Solutions.

"This program eased traffic, reduced costs for families, and promoted eco-friendly transportation," Fair President Michael Ahlers said. "We are honored to receive this award, and we're excited to expand the program for 2025."

District 2 Anoka County Commissioner Julie Braastad commended the organizers of the program.

"I think so many people took part in the Bike to the Fair program because it was expertly organized by the Anoka County Fair and Commute Solutions," Braastad said. "They made it easy for cyclists by providing them with clear directions on how to use side streets to get to the fair, and they ensured their bikes were safe when they were enjoying the fair food and entertainment. It's great that the Anoka County Fair and Commute Solutions were recognized for innovation with this award."



Anoka County residents taking part in the program in 2024.

## John Heinrich Elected to Anoka County Board of Commissioners



John Heinrich won the special election for the District 1 Anoka County Board of Commissioners seat and will fill out the rest of the term, which ends Dec. 31, 2026.

Heinrich was ceremoniously sworn into office at the County Board meeting Nov. 12, 2024, and officially began serving after the Anoka County Canvassing Board certified election results the next day. He replaces Matt Look, who left the board last year to become the city administrator of East Bethel.

Heinrich grew up in Coon Rapids, lives in Anoka, and is married with three children. He served as a state legislator for two terms in district 35A, representing the cities of Anoka and Ramsey. Heinrich is a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, having completed two tours of duty in Iraq in 2003 and 2004. He helps run a local asphalt paving and concrete company and has enjoyed volunteering for various local organizations over the years including Stepping Stone Emergency Housing, Haven for Heroes, the Anoka County Community Mission, and he takes part in various church initiatives.

"I'm proud to be elected to the Anoka County Board of Commissioners, and I look forward to working with my fellow commissioners and county staff to ensure the wise use of tax dollars to support our county's transportation infrastructure, public safety, human services programs, and more," Heinrich said. "I am committed to serve, and I plan to represent the community's needs and values effectively."



Commissioner John Heinrich, left, attends his first board meeting Dec. 3, 2024.

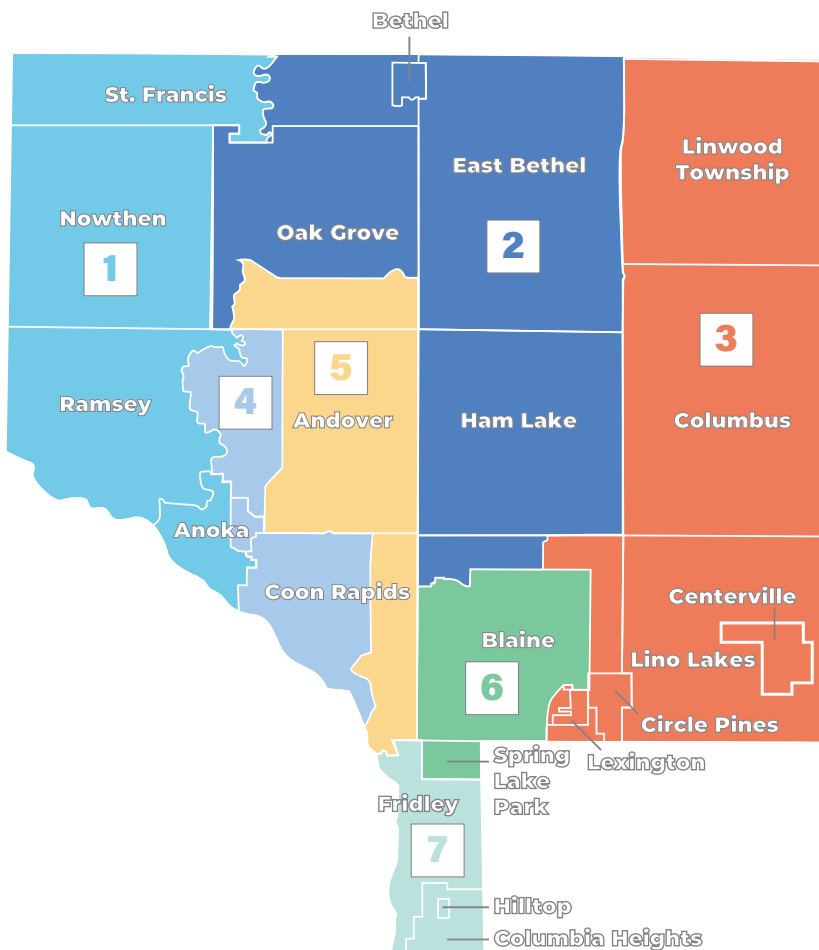
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## ANOKA COUNTY LEADERSHIP

763-324-4700




**John Heinrich**  
 DISTRICT 1  
 COMMISSIONER



**Julie Braastad**  
 DISTRICT 2  
 COMMISSIONER



**Jeff Reinert**  
 DISTRICT 3  
 COMMISSIONER



**Scott Schulte**  
 DISTRICT 4  
 COMMISSIONER



**Mike Gamache**  
 DISTRICT 5  
 COMMISSIONER



**Julie Jeppson**  
 DISTRICT 6  
 COMMISSIONER



**Mandy Meisner**  
 DISTRICT 7  
 COMMISSIONER



**Brad Wise**  
 COUNTY  
 SHERIFF



**Brad Johnson**  
 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 [anokacountymn.gov](http://anokacountymn.gov). "Anoka County News" is produced by Anoka County Communications, Erik Thorson, Chief Communications Officer, 763-324-4612 [publicinfo@anokacountymn.gov](mailto:publicinfo@anokacountymn.gov) • [anokacountymn.gov/newsletter](http://anokacountymn.gov/newsletter)  
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