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News Nook

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Message from Mark



Happy holidays! I can't believe we're just days away from the end of 2023, and that 2024 is upon us. We've accomplished so much together this last year. From community programs to road projects and everything in between, this has been a great 12 months in Macomb County. If you were able to attend or watch the livestream of my [State of the County address](#), you likely heard all of the incredible things underway. So let me say thank you. None of this would be possible without the hard work and

dedication of our County employees. Please know - I'm grateful for all that you do, and for our collective efforts that make Macomb County a great place to work and call home.

I'm going to keep this message brief, but before I sign off, I'd like to remind you that [makemacombbyourhome.com](#) and our Make Macomb Your Home [Facebook](#) and [Events](#) pages are the best places to find festive fun and other regular updates for the coming winter months. Whether this means bundling up and getting out of the house to visit a local ice rink or sledding hill, or finding a new brewery to try with friends, our team works hard to gather the information you need to enjoy winter in Macomb County. Please feel free to share with your family and friends.

Thank you again and happy holidays to you and your family. Here's to a restful end of year and a fresh start in 2024!

Mark

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Employee News and Accolades

Department of Roads employee, family gifted trip to Disney World

Last month, Matt Akers and his family received a surprise phone call. Jay Towers from 100.3 WNIC reached out to let them know that they were selected as one of Jay's Juniors, a program that gives chronic or terminally ill children the chance to escape the hospital and doctor appointments and go to Disney World. Matt's 11-year-old daughter Adrienne has medically refractory epilepsy. It's a very complex case and she has had five brain surgeries to help reduce her seizures and give her a better quality of life. Despite all of the doctor visits, surgeries and therapy, she's a happy girl who loves her sister and her family.

February 24, 2024

VerKuilen Building, 21885

Dunham Road, Clinton Township.

More details available soon.

The Jay's Junior program completely sponsored the trip to Disney World in early December. To learn more and to listen to the special announcement phone call, [click here](#).



MSU Extension wins big

Carolyn Doak wins Outstanding Performer at the District 11 annual district wide meeting

Carolyn Doak, office manager for Macomb County MSU-Extension, was given the 2023 Outstanding Performer Award for her leadership in administrative support in MSU-Extensions District 11, which covers Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties. In their

remarks about Carolyn's achievements and management style, district leadership recognized her for going above and beyond what is expected of an office manager since she assumed the role in April 2022, stating: "She has displayed excitement and enthusiasm for her position and the department."

Carolyn was honored to receive the award, and thanked her coworkers for nominating her. "Coming into work every day is a great joy. I look forward to it because I work with an incredible team, and I am continually motivated by their own dedication to the mission of MSU Extension – helping people improve their lives. It is at the heart of what we do,." She added: "To me, every day is Christmas because of all the people we get to meet, teach, coach and assist. Their smiles at the conclusion of our programs are confirmation that our work is relevant and needed in the community."



Seth Martin wins Meritorious Service Award

Seth Martin, a 4-H Program Coordinator for MSU Extension, received the Meritorious Service Award at MSU Extension's Fall Extension Conference. Seth is an integral part of the 4-H team in Macomb County. He oversees the animal project areas, numerous 4-H Clubs, shooting sports and the Armada Fair partnership. He typically takes the lead on County reports, financial accounts and Exploration Days. He also launched a new partnership at Parkway Christian High School in Sterling Heights. It was his first-time hosting his Embryology program for high school students, and it was a great success! It was also Seth's idea to create a 'Kickstart' 4-H Club. This was

for first time 4-H'ers who were just learning about 4-H.

One of his most engaging activities was being a member of the Wild Spartans program team. Now in its third year, the program sees diverse speakers engage with homeschool groups, teachers broadcasting in their classrooms, afterschool programs and out-of-state families. Additionally, Seth teamed up with the St. Clair

4-H for their Lake to Table event. 4-H volunteers as well as community partners worked with youth to catch, filet and cook fish. For many, it was their first time on a boat.

Congratulations to Carolyn and Seth for their outstanding achievements!

Is there someone in your office who deserves a “pat on the back” for an outstanding achievement? If so, please let the Macomb Matters committee know about it! Email Maria.zardis@macombgov.org with the details.

Retiree spotlight



Catherine Krueger

The Macomb Matters team would like to congratulate Catherine Krueger, a grant management specialist with the Community Development Block Grant program, on her retirement this December.

How many years have you been with the County?

My first day was November 18, 2013.

What will you miss most about working for Macomb County?

I will miss working with and being inspired by my coworkers and friends who I made along the way during my time with the County. I will miss seeing my old coworkers at Macomb Community Action and getting to know my new coworkers in Planning & Economic Development better. Our Community Development team has assisted Macomb communities with projects that will leave a positive impact for years to come. I will very much miss being a part of those efforts.

What are you most proud of during your career with Macomb County?

I very much appreciated being given the opportunity to help to administer several Community Development projects in my hometown of Eastpointe, as well as in several other communities. These included multi-unit rental housing, parks improvement, streets repavement and extensive housing rehabilitation and homebuyer projects. I will often be reminded of these projects on my drives through the city and in the County.

What are your post retirement plans?

I'm looking forward to spending more time with family and friends. Since I like to keep busy, I plan to work part time and spend more time volunteering in my Church. Exploring new destinations in our beautiful Country and enjoying our property up north will be more easily accessible.

Do you have any words of advice?

Work hard of course, but take the time for those chance encounters with people that occur throughout the work day which makes it all worthwhile.

Congratulations on your retirement Catherine! It is well earned!

Click [here](#) for a list of New Hires/Retirees

Macomb County employees give back

Employees from departments across the County celebrated the holiday season through acts of kindness and generosity. Below is a sampling of some of the ways our teams gave back to the community this year.

Note this does not include every department that participated in a holiday giving effort.

Planning and Economic Development

The team at PED adopted a family through Turning Point, a local organization that empowers survivors of domestic and sexual violence through comprehensive services, resources and advocacy. Together, employees were able to fulfill a wish list for a mother and 5 young children.

Equalization

The generous staff of Equalization have made it their Christmas project each year to give back to the community. Money is collected throughout the year towards this goal. Over the years, Equalization has adopted families and provided Christmas gifts to the entire family. They also donate to DHS projects, including back to school supplies, Easter baskets for foster children, coat drives and senior stocking stuffers.

This Christmas, the department chose to support the Macomb County Foster Closet in their effort to supply foster children with pajamas and underwear. The team collected \$800. That sounds like a nice amount, but they have a secret weapon, Jeanette Makowiec, shopper extraordinaire. Jeanette can double the donation money with her shopping expertise. Black Friday, Cyber Monday, Kohl's cash, Meijer bucks, Sam's and Costco. She starts early and hits every sale. With the money collected, she purchased 188 sets of pajamas, 63 pairs of underwear and 20 pairs of socks. Sadly, for Equalization, this was Jeanette's last shopping trip, as she retired in November.

"Our job may be to appraise and value property for the County, but our goal is to give back to the needy citizens of Macomb County," the team shared.

MSU Extension

The staff of MSUE is holding their 2nd annual Give Back campaign to benefit the Macomb County Animal Control operations. Donations and items are being accepted from now until January 29, 2024. All goods and funds raised will be delivered to animal control on January 30, 2024. Find more information [here](#). (insert MSUE flyer)

Macomb Community Action

MCA assists families or individuals with housing while they are homeless. They work with them to find a house of their choice and assist them with a security deposit and three months rent so they can gain some financial stability while they are working toward other goals or an action plan. Once they are in the place of their own choice, MCA does a referral to Humble Design, who works with the client on a 'Deco Day.' On that day, the designers get the keys to the house and volunteers come and work to make improvements. Later on, the client returns for a reveal, which is the most amazing experience, especially for children who have been at shelters or sleeping on the floor. They now have beds and books to read.

MCA staff volunteer for these opportunities. Here are a few quotes from recent projects:

"They were so appreciative of everything. (The client), who is deaf and mute, kept calling his dad and his aunt to show them the place and he kept showing his family his bed and curtains and the dresser (via interpreter). It was great to experience that excitement from him. He hadn't had a bed to sleep since the day that they signed the lease."

"John called his grandma and showed her the place and grandma was so thankful for the organizations who provided this opportunity."

"Both cousins before we left stated: 'Now this is a home where we can sit and watch TV and not have to hide in our rooms because we didn't have a place to sit.'"

Senior Services

The team at the Office of Senior Services donated items to Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers to help seniors in need. The Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers program relies on the generosity of the local community to provide assistance to older and disabled neighbors

For your benefit



This time of year celebrates the season of giving, which for many means showering those we love with gifts. But it can also be a time of financial hardship to those most in need. An unexpected car or home repair can cause a person to fall behind. Fortunately, our Ulliance Life Advisory has provided a list of local resources for those that need a helping hand.

General:

Salvation Army – Clinton Twp.
34150 Southbound Gratiot Ave, Clinton Twp, MI 48035
(586) 791-0944
<https://www.salvationarmyusa.org/usn/home/#whatwedo>

The Right Connection- Utility Assistance Info
<https://connection.misd.net/utility.html>

Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan (no religious requirement needed to utilize services)
855.88CCSEM
<https://www.ccsem.org/contact/>

Utility Assistance:

State Emergency Relief (SER)

1. Apply for State Emergency Relief (SER) through the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services MDHHS one of three ways.

- In person at THAW's office at 535 Griswold Suite 200, Detroit, MI 48226. THAW has completed training with MDHHS to help you apply using the MI Bridges system.
- Online at newmibridges.michigan.gov.
- Mail or deliver paper application; available at your local MDHHS office, THAW's office or printed from the MDHHS website.

2. Complete THAW's application for an Affordable Payment Plan and/or Self Sufficiency Services which can help lower your monthly payments.

THAW's Utility Assistance Center is available 8:30a.m.-5:00p.m. M-F at 800-866-8429.

Other Energy Assistance:

St. Vincent DePaul Energy Assistance Program

St. Vincent de Paul Detroit offers an Energy Assistance Program to avoid an interruption in heating and lighting for Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Monroe, Lapeer or St. Clair counties.
313-393-2930

Other assistance:

Whether employees are struggling with depression, financial or family issues, substance abuse, harassment, or a myriad of other problems, thousands of employees seek support and solutions through Ulliance.

A message from Andy McKinnon



In this edition of Macomb Matters we wanted to restate an earlier message on our Workday implementation. However, it is the end of the year and we can't let go of 2023 without, once again, praising our team, asking anyone who has specific Workday challenges to reach out and finally wish everyone a happy holiday. So while the following may look familiar, we did this intentionally.

Workday Information

- **Each payroll has improved**

We have now run four payrolls and two retiree pension checks through

Workday. Every payroll and pension check has seen an improvement and the system and our team continues to become more efficient and able to foresee challenges before they arise.

- **Team members who have reached out about their challenges have been incredible**

Admittedly we have had several bugs that we have had to work out. I have been able to personally connect with numerous team members to troubleshoot these items. Working one-on-one with our staff throughout the County is probably my favorite part of my job. The reason for this is I always finish the conversation with my opinion of County employees reinforced. You are committed, sharp and talented folks. Possibly more important, you are kind and focused on what's good for the County. I have worked for several organizations and this one is special in that our staff seeks to find solutions and not exacerbate issues. If you have been here for your whole career or most of it, you may think it's normal, but I assure you it isn't. The positivity that radiates from so many of our departments is a testament to you. Thank you.

- **Please direct issues to us directly**

Maybe not the best segway, after the bullet above, but I have been forwarded several messages from social media about issues people are having. Unfortunately, it is a sign of the times that people will use negativity on social media to incite discontent or garner clicks (clout as the kids are calling it today). However, I don't look at social media and the only way we can address problems is if someone brings them to our attention. It doesn't matter how "small" you might think your item is, let us know. Early on we had an issue with rounding of time off accruals. It added up to single minutes over time and I am sure some folks considered it not a big deal. However, those are your earned benefits and

that is a big deal to us. I promise that all items that have been brought to our attention have either been solved, and our staff has been made entirely whole, or they are in the process of being solved and those staff who have brought the items to our attention are aware of the issue being worked on. Our teams in HR, IT and Finance are all County employees like all the rest of us and want every earned benefit they were promised and want the same for you.

A Personal Note

Next, there's an old Irish proverb that states: If you are lucky enough to be with your loved ones this holiday, you are lucky enough. (I couldn't find it on Google, just trust a guy with the last name McKinnon). I would ask, however, that you join me and take a moment to reflect on a few points. I'll refer to them as **remembering**, **thinking** and **appreciating**. All good things to focus on this time of year.

First, **remembering** those we have lost this year. I had mentioned in a previous post the passing of George Brumbaugh had hit me particularly hard. He along with all the other former retirees and the employees we lost this year, are a part of the tapestry that makes this such a special place.

Next, **thinking** of those who don't have a support system or loved ones to spend the holidays with. While it might seem like a dream as we sit around the table listening to uncle Bob argue with aunt Mildred about the proper way to brine a turkey, in reality it has to be incredibly isolating and tough. Please always remember if you find yourself in this situation or if you're struggling in any way this time of the year, our [EAP](#) is available 24/7.

Finally, **appreciating** those who sacrifice time with their loved ones to serve us. In times of weather or infrastructure emergencies our teams at Emergency Management, Public Works and Roads always stand ready. We also have our 24/7 operations at the Juvenile Justice Center, Sheriff's Office and Dispatch. Those teammates never get a day off and we are so fortunate to have them serving us as we don't know when something unfortunate might happen (like aunt Mildred taking a swing at uncle Bob) and we are fortunate to have them working on our behalf.

Have a very happy holiday season and a great new year!

Andy

Providing support by keeping it casual



The Board of Commissioners is pleased to announce the continuation of the Macomb County Casual Day Charitable Collections Program for 2024. With department leader permission, participating employees may wear casual clothing to work on Fridays/designated days if they donate at least one dollar.

Departments must collect and send their donations to the Board office in a timely fashion.

Written requests for 2024 charities were completed in early December. A list of charities that will benefit in the new year was announced this week.

The Casual Day program was first adopted by resolution of the Board of Commissioners in 1994 and it has continued to grow thanks to Macomb County employees' commitment to helping others. Since the program's inception, nearly \$713,000 has been generously donated to various charities.

If you have questions, or need more information about this program, please contact BOC staff at bocadmin@macombgov.org or (586) 469-5125.

Volunteers needed for Point-in-Time Count

Looking to give back to your community in the New Year? Macomb Community Action is currently seeking volunteers for its Point-in-Time (PIT) Count, a requirement of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for all Continuum of Cares (CoCs).



As background

The annual count takes place during the last ten days of January and it must accurately estimate and reflect the entire sheltered and unsheltered populations of homeless people in the CoC's geographic area. The Macomb Community Action CoC consists of the entire County of Macomb.

Shelters will count their participants and report the data to HUD as "sheltered homeless" - so Macomb Community Action must focus on the unsheltered people for the PIT Count. This is where volunteers are needed. They assist in canvassing the County to obtain the most accurate count available.

The HUD definition of being homeless is those people "with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designated for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, single family tent, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground" on the night designated for the count.

Here's what volunteers need to know

The 2024 count will be held on Wednesday, January 24 from 7 p.m. through 11 p.m. Volunteers must gather data on those encountered, including gender, race and ethnicity for all persons. Additional data will be gathered if the person interviewed voluntarily provides the information. This could consist of veteran status, age, whether the person is "chronically homeless" or if the person is experiencing homelessness due to domestic violence, disability status, HIV/AIDS or those who have a substance use disorder.

Groups of three to four volunteers per vehicle will canvass the County in search of those who, during the PIT count hours, are homeless. The volunteers will be

provided a geographic portion of the County to monitor. "Hot spots" - where homeless people are known to be - will be provided. Volunteers will complete forms on those they encounter to ensure data is collected appropriately. A bag of items will be provided to everyone they meet along with a sheet of resources including shelter information, health care information, etc.

How to volunteer

Those interested in volunteering with Macomb Community Action for the night of the PIT must complete a registration form and attend volunteer training. The registration form is available here: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdOyEf5ItlYXo-LNvyjnqpsBv8aar3iamfpqrfBusm0M9xug/viewform>

If you're unable to volunteer, but still wish to contribute, donations for the giveaway bags are needed. Organizers currently are seeking blankets, winter accessories like hats, gloves, socks, scarves, coats, grab-and-go packaged foods, and hygiene products. Contact Kristin DeFranco at Kristin.DeFranco@macombgov.org for more information.

IT Download



A message from Jako van Blerk: Convergence of end-user devices - Bridging the digital divide

In recent times, we've witnessed a remarkable convergence of end-user devices. The lines between smartphones, tablets, laptops and even wearables are creating an interconnected ecosystem that offers unprecedented convenience and flexibility. This convergence is not merely a technical transformation but a societal shift, influencing the way we work, communicate and live.

Security concerns in the era of convergence

While the convergence of end-user devices brings forth immense opportunities, it also raises significant security challenges. The integration of diverse technologies into a unified platform creates a larger attack surface for malicious actors. As data travels seamlessly across devices, the risk of unauthorized access, data breaches and cyber threats increases.

- **Data privacy concerns:** With the convergence of devices, the personal and professional spheres are becoming increasingly intertwined. This raises concerns about data privacy as sensitive information flows between different platforms.
- **Multi-vector threats:** Cybercriminals are quick to adapt to evolving technologies. The convergence of end-user devices opens new vectors for attacks, necessitating a comprehensive approach to cybersecurity that addresses vulnerabilities across multiple fronts.
- **Identity management challenges:** As users switch between devices, maintaining robust identity management becomes crucial. Ensuring that the right person has access to the right data on any device is a growing challenge that organizations must grapple with.

Impact on tomorrow: A secure and connected future for our County

This is not a trend that will just fade away, but rather a paradigm shift that will define how we live for years to come. To thrive in this digital landscape, we must prioritize security. What's in store for us?

- **Adopting zero trust frameworks:** Trust nothing and verify everything. We as a County have embarked on this journey in 2020. The Zero Trust security model is becoming increasingly vital in an interconnected world. By continuously validating user identities and device security, we can mitigate the risks associated with device convergence. Our goal is to gain access to our resources securely, from any device from anywhere in the world.

Over the next few years, you will see projects/technology like Identity Access Management, ZTNA, SASE, etc. come to fruition as this journey continues.

- **Investing in advanced threat detection:** Traditional security measures are no longer sufficient. Investing in advanced threat detection technologies, such as AI-driven solutions, helps identify and respond to potential threats in real-time. As an example, CrowdStrike, a cloud workload and endpoint security, threat intelligence and cyber attack response services solution has replaced our traditional antivirus solutions. There's more on the way.
- **Educating end-users:** Users play a pivotal role in maintaining a secure digital environment. Educating them about potential threats, the importance of strong passwords, and safe online practices is essential to building a resilient security posture. You've all experienced our phishing campaign, our LMS system, everyone emails & newsletters to raise awareness.

Conclusion: Embracing the future securely

These technological improvements bring unprecedented convenience and connectivity; however, they also demand a robust commitment to security. By embracing innovative technologies, implementing best practices and fostering a culture of cybersecurity, we can navigate this convergence with confidence.

Stay secure, stay connected and stay tuned.

Paw print



Greetings from Chief Randazzo!

The curtain is closing on 2023! During the holidays, it's common for people to reflect upon the year they are leaving behind and anticipate ways to welcome the new year. It's a time for nostalgia and memories, pride from past accomplishments and hopeful plans for the future.

At Macomb County Animal Control, we've got a lot to be proud of. Our mission, which you can read about on our [website](#), is to promote the humane and ethical treatment of animals while protecting the health and safety of our residents. Our "no-kill philosophy" drives us to do everything we can do to get sick animals well, house the homeless animals (of every variety) and provide resources to pet owners throughout the County.

We are particularly proud of our [resource programs](#). Unfortunately, every now and then, a family will fall on hard times, and may struggle to care for or keep their pet. It is heartbreaking to receive an animal surrender from a family in tears. We work to avoid that by putting resources in the hands of families who want to keep their pets. Eligible families can apply for assistance with medical costs for their animals through our pet retention grants. Our [pet food pantry](#) provides healthy food options for pets in need. And our free and low-cost vaccine clinics are always packed. We also partner with many [rescues](#) who are as passionate about animal care as we are.

We intend to bring our passion for this work into 2024 and beyond and are planning ahead. We were honored when Mark Hackel, Macomb County Executive, mentioned this in his 2023 State of the County address on December 6. He spoke about the County's commitment to improving overall quality of life in Macomb County, and pointed out that this includes the animals we live with and love. "We are fortunate to have already had the Board of Commissioners approve the funding for us to begin preliminary work on a new shelter, to replace the outdated facility,"

he said. "We are committed to building a modern facility that will meet the needs of our community and more importantly help us better care for our animals."

Great things are ahead, for us and we hope for you as well. Wishing you all the happiest of holidays, and the brightest start to the New Year!

Until next year ~ **Chief Randazzo**

Recipe Corner



Gingerbread Pancakes

Serving size: 2 pancakes

Servings per container: 4

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup whole wheat flour
- 1/2 cup all purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
- 1 egg
- 2 Tablespoons molasses
- 1 Tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 cup low-fat buttermilk

Pumpkin Pie Spice

- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon dry ginger
- 1/8 teaspoon cloves or nutmeg

Directions Wash hands and all food preparation surfaces.

1. Mix dry ingredients in a bowl
2. In another bowl, beat egg. Stir in molasses, oil and buttermilk.
3. Pour milk mixture into dry ingredients; stir together lightly.

4. Lightly spray a large skillet or griddle with non-stick cooking spray or lightly wipe with oil. Heat skillet or griddle over medium-high heat (350 degrees F in an electric skillet). For each pancake, pour about 1/4 cup of batter onto the hot griddle.
5. Cook until the pancakes are puffed and dry around edges. Flip and cook other side until golden brown.
6. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

Download a [PDF version](#)

**Recipe provided by: Food Hero, Oregon State University
Extension, foodhero.org**



www.macombgov.org
(586) 469-7001

