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## News Nook

[Veterans Services expands no-cost tax preparation services through September 30](#)

[Department of Roads announces more than \\$100 million in road, bridge, and traffic projects and urges motorists to help keep work zones safe](#)

## Message from Mark



Hello and welcome to the April edition of Macomb Matters, our employee newsletter covering the accomplishments and activities of the County workforce.

Let me begin by asking: Do you know an employee deserving of recognition within this space? Perhaps they received an accreditation or certificate? Or maybe they welcomed a new addition to their family?

It could even be someone who went above and beyond serving the public in their role. No matter the reason, we want to hear from you! From our employee accolades section, to employee focus, we've got special spots to highlight our County workforce in a number of ways. So if you have an idea, reach out. Contact Tom Lehrer at [tom.lehrer@macombgov.org](mailto:tom.lehrer@macombgov.org) with your feedback and your story may appear in an upcoming edition of Macomb Matters!

Now, we just celebrated National Administrative Professionals Day on April 24, so I would like to give special thanks to all county administrative professionals who are often the unsung heroes behind the scenes keeping everything running smoothly in our departments.

We also just marked National Work Zone Awareness Week, so our Macomb County Department of Roads team announced some tips which are helpful reminders for all of us as we travel our roadways:

- **Plan ahead.** Expect delays, plan for them, and leave early to reach your destination on time. When you can, avoid work zones altogether by using alternate routes.
- **Obey road crews and signs.** When approaching a work zone, watch for cones, barrels, signs, large vehicles, or workers in bright-colored vests to warn you and direct you where to go.
- **Slow down.** Look for signs indicating the speed limit through the work zone. Keep a safe distance from the vehicle ahead of you and follow the posted speed limit.

[Macomb County Health Department to host Infant Safety Expo](#)

## Blog Log

[Top 5 things to do outside downtown Detroit during the NFL Draft](#)

[Ask the expert: WM offers tips on recycling the right way](#)

## Events



### [Stepping Out With The Stars](#)

Saturday, May 2; 5:30 p.m. - 11 p.m.



### [May the 4th Adoption Event - The Shelter Barks Back](#)

May 4, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
Macomb County Animal Control



### [Macomb Business Awards](#)

Thursday, May 9, 2024



- **Move over.** Most state move-over laws apply when passing work crews and official vehicles parked on the shoulder with flashing warning lights.
- **Avoid distractions.** Keep your eyes on the road and off your phone at all times.
- **Watch for sudden stoppages.** Don't make sudden lane changes in front of trucks that are trying to slow down.

In closing, as we're all aware, it's been a beautiful start to spring - with plenty of sunny days and some warm weather. In my opinion, there's no better time to experience all that Macomb County has to offer. From our [parks and trails](#), to our [fun local events](#), there's something for everyone. So join me in getting out and connecting with your community this season. You'll find out why Macomb is a great place to call home.

Mark

## Employee News and Accolades



### Chelssee Swarthout welcomes twins

Chelssee Swarthout, event coordinator for Macomb County Planning and Economic Development, welcomed Spencer and Simon Swarthout in late December. Spencer was 4lb 12oz and Simon was 5lb 3oz upon arrival. Three months later they are happy and healthy. Congratulations to Chelssee and her husband, Matt.



### Macomb County Department of Roads honored with three statewide awards from the County Road Association

The Macomb County Department of Roads (MCDR) received three statewide IMPRESS Awards at the 2024 County Road Association (CRA) Highway Conference held March 19-21 in Lansing, Michigan. The annual CRA IMPRESS Awards recognize county road agencies that demonstrate innovative strategies and tactics on notable projects in the categories of collaboration, communications, and operations.

"The team at the Department of Roads is committed to delivering a safe and efficient transportation system, superior public service and timely information that enhances the traveling experience for all Macomb County road users," said Macomb County Executive Mark A. Hackel. "Macomb County takes a comprehensive, strategic and mindful approach to enhancing our roadways and community. I'm proud of the work and everything the Department of Roads does to strengthen the connectivity of our region, helping make Macomb County a desirable place to live, work and experience."

**Macomb Community Action  
60th Anniversary Event**

Saturday, May 18; 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.



**Walk for Warmth**

Saturday, May 18, 2024



**Selfridge Air Show/Open  
House**

June 8 and June 9; Free admission



**County launches Peregrine Falcon EarthCam**

Peregrine Falcons have returned to the top of the Old Macomb County Building in downtown Mount Clemens. Four eggs have been spotted, and the parents are protecting the nest. Want to see the action live? You can tune in [24/7 to the live EarthCam streaming the scene](#). And, in just a few

weeks time, those eggs may turn into hatchlings! So visit the webcam and get an up-close look at these stunning birds of prey. And shoutout to the County employees responsible for the EarthCam logistics. It's a complex job, but their work makes it all possible.



**HRLR promotes job openings at the County**

Representatives from Macomb County Human Resources and Labor Relations recently attended a Macomb Community College Career Services south

campus on April 18. Jennifer Bruzzese and Robyn DiCristofaro are hard at work to promote the County as an outstanding employer and to recruit the next generation of our workforce.

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 [Megan.Ochmanek@macombgov.org](mailto:Megan.Ochmanek@macombgov.org) with the details.

**Employee Focus: Megan Smith**



As the County welcomes more people into our workforce, the Macomb Matters team would love to spotlight the IT Department's very own, Megan Smith. Keep reading to see what she has to say about her new job and life outside of work!

**What is your current position and what do you do?**

As a Security Administrator with the IT Department, my main goal is to protect our organization from cyber threats. This involves implementing security measures, identifying weaknesses, and preparing for potential security incidents. I also contribute to establishing

security policies, conducting audits, and providing educational resources to ensure our systems remain secure. Additionally, staying updated on the latest cybersecurity trends is essential to maintaining our proactive security approach and staying ahead of potential threats.

**What led you to this career and what are some of the challenges you face?**

I first entered the field of Information Technology with technical focus and grew an interest in cybersecurity along the way. I enjoy the challenge of staying ahead of cyber threats and protecting information. Everyday brings new puzzles to solve and an opportunity to make a positive impact by safeguarding individuals and our organization from harm. It's a field that demands continuous learning and adaptability, which keeps me motivated and engaged.

**What attracted you to a career at Macomb County?**

The chance to grow professionally drew me to Macomb County, and I've been fortunate to progress in my career here for nearly 12 years. It's truly rewarding to collaborate daily with a fantastic team that shares a common vision of enhancing County business processes and delivering top-notch service to our customers. We're all about using innovative technologies to meet our objectives and provide great services to all of the County departments, customers and communities.

**What was your alma mater?**

I graduated from Walsh College with a Bachelor degree of Business Administration.

**Tell us about your family. Do you have any pets? Any new additions?**

Married for almost 3 years now, my husband John and I are proud parents to our soon-to-be two year old son, Parker, come July! Time flies fast when you're having fun, and it's easily been the best two years of our lives.

**What do you like to do outside of work?**

I really enjoy staying active, whether that's spending time at the gym or attending an Orange Theory or Pure Barre class. Additionally, I spend a lot of time with friends and family outside of work. My husband and I have a great friend group with growing families. We enjoy organizing playdates at the park, having dinner parties, and planning fun activities to hang out together.

**Is there anything you're passionate about? For example, a philosophy or belief that matters greatly to you.**

While I may sound a bit traditional, I think this is incredibly important in today's world. A while back, I might not have felt this way, but my dad has always said, "all you have is your word, your work ethic and your integrity". These principles were grinded into me when I was young, even though I may not have fully grasped them then. Now, as I've grown older, what not quite long ago is no longer confusing and a philosophy I strive to uphold.

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## Retiree spotlight

**Beth Naftaly Kirshner**

The Macomb Matters team would like to congratulate Beth Naftaly Kirshner, assistant prosecuting attorney and chief for the Family Support Division in the Macomb County Prosecutor's Office, on her retirement in January. Beth worked for the County for more than 30 years and was an integral part of many programs and initiatives.

**How many years have you been with the County?**

I have been employed for over 30 years. I started in 1993.



### **What will you miss most about working for Macomb County?**

My coworkers. I work with a committed and talented group of people at the Prosecutor's Office.

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

For the last 18 years, I have worked in the Family Support Division establishing paternity and child support orders. Over that time, the division has become a leader in the state in providing timely order establishment and felony nonsupport prosecutions. I am proud of the work that I have done to help the division exceed the standards required from the Office of Child Support and being a point of contact for other Prosecuting Attorney's Offices.

### **What are your post-retirement plans?**

I have accepted a full-time teaching position at Macomb Community College teaching for their Law Enforcement-Legal Department. While I am very sad to be leaving the Prosecutor's Office, I am very excited to join MCC. I have been teaching in person and online for over 15 years. I also hope to be able to travel more and spend time with my two adult children who currently live out of state.

Congratulations on your retirement Beth! It is well deserved!

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Click here for a [list](#) of retirees

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## **In Memoriam**



### **Sandra Wolff**

Sandra (Sandie) Wolff, a Macomb County Head Start teacher aide, passed away on March 18, 2024 after a lengthy battle with cancer.

Sandie began working for Macomb Community Action Head Start as a substitute teacher aide in 2009. She was promoted to a full-time teacher aide in 2021. Her work in Head Start spanned 15 years.

Linda Azar, division director with Macomb Community Action shared: "Sandie was dedicated to serving the Head Start program, our families and children. Her dream was to be a Head Start teacher and she obtained her bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education from Rochester College. Sandie was dedicated to doing the best to support the classroom teacher and the children each and every day. She used her dream to motivate herself to get well and returned during each of her times in remission."

Our hearts go out to Sandie's husband, family and the Head Start family.

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## **Did you know?**

**Macomb County employees are eligible for Public Service Loan Forgiveness**



There are plenty of benefits from working in government, one of them being this:

Those who have worked in public service for 10 years or more (not required to have been consecutively) can qualify to have their entire student debt canceled!

(Source: [The White House](#))

This includes those who have worked in federal, state, tribal government, the U.S. military and even at a non-profit organization. Those who do not qualify include those who have worked for labor unions, partisan political organizations and for-profit organizations, including for-profit contracted organizations.

According to the [Federal Student Aid website](#), the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program forgives the remaining balance on Direct Loans when one of the following conditions are met:

- After eligible participants have made the equivalent of 120 qualifying monthly payments under an [accepted repayment plan](#), and
- While working full-time for an [eligible employer](#).

To be considered for the program, you must still be working for a qualifying employer at the time you submit your PSLF form, which can be found here: <https://studentaid.gov/sites/default/files/public-service-application-for-forgiveness.pdf>

To learn more about PSLF and how to qualify, visit the [Federal Student Aid website](#). For help filling out the form, check out their [PSLF Help Tool](#).

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## Get involved!



**Macomb Community Action's 2024 Walk for Warmth**

During colder days, many of us kick up our thermostats and stay cozy indoors. But for some families and individuals in Macomb County, this isn't an option. We've heard from parents who have to choose between putting food on the table and paying utility bills. Then there are elderly and disabled individuals who cannot afford to fix their furnaces. It's heartbreaking.

Macomb Community Action works to combat this issue through emergency grants and assistance (utility bills, furnace repair and replacement) that keep heat running in hundreds of homes - but we also need your help too. Our 34th annual Walk for Warmth is one way you can pitch in. Join us for this pet-friendly 5K Fun Walk on Saturday, May 18th. Everyone is welcome!

Here are the details:

Date: May 18, 2024 – Rain or Shine

Time: Registration starts at 8:30 a.m.; walking starts at 9 a.m. – enter Door C

Place: Robert A. VerKuijen Building (West parking lot)  
21885 Dunham Road  
Clinton Township, MI 48036

Cost: \$25 per walker

To register prior to the event, go to [W4W2024.eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/walk-for-warmth-2024-tickets-71234567890)

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## A message from Andy McKinnon



In brainstorming/researching this article, I was searching for a good definition of my idea of civility.

Ultimately, I found this definition from Merriam-Webster:

- civilized conduct, especially : COURTESY, POLITENESS;
- a polite act or expression;
- archaic : training in the humanities

And this through one of the Google pull down menus:

Civility is the act of showing regard for others by being polite, like the civility

you showed in speaking kindly to someone who has hurt your feelings. Civility comes from the Latin word *civilis*, meaning "relating to public life, befitting a citizen," in other words, being friendly and nice to everyone.

While I liked both, they just didn't encompass my understanding of civility. Further, the use of the word in the sentences provided, seemed to always focus on the lack of civility. That's not where I believe our focus should be.

There are times where we do not need to be "friendly and nice to everyone.", but it doesn't excuse us from our obligation to practice civility. We often hear stories where an employee goes into their boss's office to ask for a raise that has been legitimately earned and they are spoken down to or belittled. In that situation it

would be a disservice to all to continue to be “friendly and nice to (that boss)” as the person who has not acted civilly may have no understanding that their words and actions were out of line or harmful. I looked on.

Finally, of all places, I found the Ontario Medical Associations (“OMA”) *Five Fundamentals of Civility*. (For those of you who know my preference for fishing walleye on the Ontario side of the Detroit River, I didn’t find this while out fishing) Those fundamentals are as follows:

1. Respect Others and Yourself.
2. Be Aware.
3. Communicate Effectively.
4. Take Good Care of Yourself.
5. Be Responsible.

When I read that, I thought it was perfect. It also brought to mind our County wide Dignity Campaign and the reasons it was initiated. It seems like such a long time ago, but we initiated the Dignity Campaign in 2020 to speak to the expectations of all of us as county staff. That we must aim to demonstrate dignity at every level and in every interaction, even though we may often fall short. It is the same with civility.

If you look towards the five fundamentals provided by the OMA there is space there to be firm. You are not practicing element #1 in its entirety if you allow yourself to be degraded and spoken down to. Further, you aren’t demonstrating your personal dignity by allowing that. However, it would be equally violative of our expectation to demonstrate civility and dignity for that person to start yelling and screaming in response to the individual who threw the proverbial first punch.

Over the next few weeks, we hope to re-energize our dignity campaign. In my opinion there is no better time for it. With the divisiveness within our country and the unstable nature of current world affairs, I believe the only answer is to practice dignity and civility on a personal level. That’s how tides are turned, how cultures are changed for the better and how we can create a more perfect community, county, country and world if we start with ourselves.

Thanks as always for the work you do for this county. We are fortunate to have you and appreciate you working alongside us in our practicing civility and dignity in every interaction.

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## Healthstyles

Health Styles is pleased to provide employees with two exciting events:

- Cooking Demo//Healthy BBQ Sides with Amy Ervin, RDN  
Amy is a public health educator with the Macomb County Health Department. In this workshop, learn how to make healthier side dishes for the BBQ season! Join us Wednesday, May 15 from Noon to 1 p.m. at the Central Health Center (43525 Elizabeth Rd Mt. Clemens, MI 48043). Please RSVP by May 10 to [Healthstyles@macombgov.org](mailto:Healthstyles@macombgov.org) In person attendance is limited, but you can also join virtually.



- Six week yoga series

Instruction from Maria Marino's Fitness Pros. All Levels of Experience are welcome! Join us Wednesdays from April 17 to May 22, 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the Verkuilen Building - Senior Services Auditorium. Advance registration is required. Contact [Sandy.Birkenshaw@macombgov.org](mailto:Sandy.Birkenshaw@macombgov.org). You must bring your own mat and a \$48 payment is due on your first day of class. Cash or check only.

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## Providing support by keeping it casual



The Board of Commissioners has announced the continuation of the Macomb County Casual Day Charitable Collections Program. Participating employees (with department leader permission) may wear casual clothing to work on Fridays (or other designated

day), if they donate at least a dollar. Participating departments will be monitored, and donations are sent in a timely fashion. Collected donations are then sent by the Board Office to the assigned charities.

Earlier this year, the BOC announced the [full list of programs](#) it will support in 2024. Stay tuned for additional announcements on the topic, and in the meantime, if you are able, please participate in the upcoming Casual Days that will help:

### **Live Rite Structured Recovery Corp**

Dedicated to helping residents of Macomb County and the surrounding area by addressing substance use and mental illness.

**May 3, 10, 17, 24**

### **Anchor Bay Community Giving Tree**

Provides assistance to local families around the holidays.

**May 31**

### **Susie Q's Kids**

Provides comfort bags to kids in need that are tailored to the needs of the kids in various nonprofits.

**June 7, 14, 21, 28**

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## Meet Jessica Braboy, HRLR Training Assistant

Human Resources and Labor Relations would like to introduce employee Jessica Braboy, the new training assistant.

Jessica started her position as the Macomb County Training Assistant in December 2023. In this role she supports all countywide training and development activities.

Jessica has been a key member of the HRLR team with assisting the implementation of the new Learning Management System (LMS) Workday Learning. Prior to joining Macomb County Jessica was a social media manager, responsible for digital marketing in Arizona for local companies.



In addition to supporting training and development programs for employees, she is a member of the HealthStyles Committee and the Macomb County Anti-Trafficking Task Force (MCAT). Jessica holds a bachelor's degree in nutrition and food service management as well as a diploma for Holistic Nutrition Wellness Practitioner. She also holds a Digital Marketing Certificate from Macomb Community College.

"I am excited to be helping with the implementation of Workday Learning as well as LinkedIn Learning," she said. "It means so much to me that I can be a part of Macomb County and can make a positive difference in our employee's lives and community."

For training related questions including Workday or LinkedIn Learning Jessica can be reached at 586-469-5468 or [jessica.braboy@macombgov.org](mailto:jessica.braboy@macombgov.org).

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## IT Download



### **A message from Jako van Blerk: Microsoft 365 email migration**

Along with the changes we all enjoy with the transition into spring, this year we have another big change – the migration from Gmail to Microsoft Outlook email. As the weather warms and becomes more agreeable, we hope this change follows that same pattern.

As you may imagine, this is a very large effort that impacts all of us. The Information Technology department would like to extend great thanks to everyone we have worked with for their migrations, as well as everyone we will be working with in the coming weeks. Your cooperation and patience are greatly appreciated as this is truly a group effort.

The decision to migrate from Gmail to Microsoft Outlook was weighed heavily with many factors considered. After much evaluation, the project was officialized by our

Executive Office and Board of Commissioners, both of whom recognized the value of moving to the Microsoft platform. Consolidating our email system to the Microsoft platform enables us to realize an ease of administration, and a much better user experience. After completing the migration to Outlook, users can enjoy the convenience of using the same login details for network and email access, eliminating the need for an extra password.

Additionally, Outlook integrates seamlessly with commonly used Microsoft Office products, enhancing productivity and security county wide. This consolidation not only streamlines operations, but also results in substantial cost savings of almost \$300,000 by eliminating the cost of Google mail and encryption tools.

As we draw closer to summer and all the wonderful events that brings, we hope you will be pleased with our migration from Gmail to Microsoft Outlook. For additional guidance, we have helpful how-to guides and educational videos available on Inside Macomb. And, as always, IT support is there to help you with your migration to our new email system.

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## Mark your calendar!



### **Macomb Community Action is having a party and you're invited**

Join Macomb Community Action on May 18 for a Community Action 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event. The entire community is welcome to the free family fun event. The event will serve as a celebration of community action in Macomb County and highlight the life-changing services that mean so much to so many in Macomb County.

The celebration will include food, fun, and games for all ages. Planned activities include:

- Bingo
- A Bounce House
- Lawn Games
- Music
- Raffle Prizes

Here are the details:

- Date: May 18, 2024 – rain or shine
- Time: 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.
- Location: Robert A. VerKuijen Building (back parking lot)  
21885 Dunham Road  
Clinton Township, MI 48036

In addition, Macomb Community Action is seeking volunteers to support a variety of on-site activities at the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event. Visit the [online sign-up sheet](#) for more details and to register as a volunteer.

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## Recipe Corner



### Avocado Breakfast Bruschetta

**Number of Servings:** 2

**Serving size:** 1 slice

**Start to Finish:** 10 minutes

**Cost per serving:** \$2.25

**Cost per recipe:** \$4.51

*Cost is an average for the state of Michigan*

#### Ingredients:

- 1/2 avocado
- 1 tomato
- 1 egg - hard-boiled or fried or scrambled
- 2 Tablespoons ricotta cheese
- 2-4 leaves of fresh basil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Lemon juice to taste
- 2 pieces of whole wheat bread

#### Directions:

Remember to wash hands and prepare food safely.



1. Wash your hands for 30 seconds with hot water and soap.
2. Sanitize all food prep surfaces and cooking utensils.
3. Rinse and scrub all produce.
4. Cut up half of avocado, tomato, hard-boiled egg and basil and add to bowl.
5. Add salt, pepper and lemon juice to bowl and stir together.
6. Toast bread and spread cheese on each slice.
7. Top with veggie mixture.
8. Enjoy!

Download a [PDF version](#)

**Recipe credit: Adapted from Produce for Better Health Foundation;  
fruitsandveggies.org**



www.macombgov.org

(586) 469-7001

