

# OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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## Mark's Message

**Mark A. Hackel, Macomb County Executive**

I can't believe it's that time already, but our sixth annual State of the County Address is taking place in just a few weeks.

I would like to invite every one of you to attend as you have all played an instrumental role in Macomb County's successes. The speech will give a broad overview of the county's past accomplishments while also highlighting some upcoming exciting opportunities.

The event is at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 7 (seating starts at 5:30 p.m.) at the Macomb Center for the Performing Arts, 44575 Garfield Road, Clinton Township. Business attire is encouraged. After the speech, there will be the annual Taste of Macomb Afterglow where complimentary hors d'oeuvres and refreshments will be served by many of your favorite Macomb County restaurants. Please reserve a spot ASAP to attend the event by clicking on the registration graphic below.

I hope to see you there! Have a wonderful Thanksgiving!

## **Giving Thanks**

**Compiled by Sarah Cormier, Macomb County Executive Office**

With Thanksgiving this week, it's the perfect time to reflect on what we are all thankful for. Some of the county's leaders have weighed in on the subject:

### **Steve Gold, Director of Health and Community Services**

On the personal side, I'm thankful that my son has come back to southeast Michigan after five years on the West Coast for school and work, so now both my kids and my granddaughter will all be here for Thanksgiving. And so will my wife's mother, who saw her 100th birthday arrive at the end of October.

On the professional side, I'm thankful for the fine new staff persons who recently came on board at both Macomb Community Action and the Health Department, and that OneMacomb is making great progress in moving forward with a strategic plan in cooperation with many community partners.

### **John Paul Rea, Director of Planning and Economic Development**

I'm thankful to have the wonderful opportunity to work with such a respected and celebrated group of professionals that help change the county for the better every single day.

### **Richard Wooton, District 11 MSUE Coordinator**

As the district coordinator for Macomb County Extension programs, I am very grateful for the support we receive from the county and especially the support we receive from the director of the

Health and Community Services Department. Steve Gold has been fantastic to work with and really sees value in Extension programs for residents in Macomb County.

### **Barbara Caskey, Director of Community Corrections**

I am incredibly thankful for the great team we have at Community Corrections!

### **Rhonda Westphal, Director of Juvenile Justice Center**

I am so thankful for love and the family and friends that I am surrounded by every day. I am thankful for the compromise, care, kindness and consideration we share and the support we give unconditionally.

### **Lynn Arnott-Bryks, Director of Facilities and Operations**

What I am most thankful for is the fact that I still have both of my parents (91 and 92 years old) who are still in fairly good health and continue to live in their own house.

I am also thankful that I have a wonderful daughter that makes me proud every day.

### **Mark Hackel, County Executive**

I'm most thankful for my health, family and friends. All I really ever ask for is another day. Life is that simple.

## **Bill Ridella, Director of Health Department**

During this Thanksgiving holiday and throughout the year, I am grateful for the support and kindness from my wonderful wife, family, friends and coworkers, and most thankful for my mother's longevity and continued good health.

## **Employee Focus**

### **Rachel Simons – Veterans Services**

**By Sarah Cormier, Macomb County Executive Office**

Rachel Simons has served in the United States Coast Guard, volunteers in eight different organizations and works in the Macomb County Veterans' Services Department.

When you think about it, nearly every part of Simons' life has been dedicated to the service of others.

As a veteran's service officer, Simons' works with Macomb County's veterans to help them apply for benefits available to them through the United States Department of Veterans Affairs office. Simons spends her day sifting through claims related to pensions, disability, housing and employment, among other things, to try to connect veterans with as much help and support as is available to them.

"It's a really rewarding job," said Simons. "You're helping a lot of the vets who before struggled getting the benefits they are entitled to and ... you can help them get back on their feet."

Simons began working for the Veterans' Services Department officially just last year, although she had been an intern prior. From 2004-2009, Simons was an E5 rank, serving as a machinery technician onboard coast guard cutters.

Simons said she loved being in the Coast Guard.

"I was really good at my job, so I had a lot of job satisfaction. The military lifestyle and mentality suited me quite well," she explained, adding she still serves in the Coast Guard Auxiliary, which is the volunteer section of the Coast Guard.

When she's not working for Veterans' Services or volunteering for the Coast Guard, Simons donates her time by managing websites for the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers, the Michigan Veterans Action Collaborative and the Macomb Homeless Coalition. She is also a member of the Veteran Community Action Plan and a representative for Lutheran Military Support Group.

In fact, just this past month, Simons was honored with the Barbara Bauman Homeless Advocate Award, which is given to an individual who goes above and beyond to assist the homeless.

In her spare time, the Macomb Township resident who has a 9-year-old son Henry, likes to play tennis and golf.

Laura Rios, chief Veterans Services Officer for Macomb County, said the group Simons connects with the most is veterans.

She is an excellent Veterans' Service officer who cares about the veterans in our community," explained Rios. "She loves volunteering for local veteran events and giving of her time. She loves the challenge of connecting veterans to their benefits."

"The biggest thing is the veterans," agreed Simons. "It's a group of people that have really unique challenges and that are really close to my heart because I appreciate the struggles they have. The nature of the conditions a lot of them have make it hard to have stability and these are people who have done their duty to the country and we should be doing everything we can to help them."

## **Macomb County creates resource to help shoppers connect with county's 1,600 independent retail businesses**

This holiday shopping season, Macomb County is making it easier than ever to support local businesses.

Inspired by the popular Small Business Saturday 

(<https://www.americanexpress.com/us/small-business/shop-small/promote>) campaign heralded by American Express, the Macomb County Department of Planning & Economic Development has created an online interactive resource for shoppers to find and connect with the more than 1,600 independently-owned retail stores located within the county.

This new resource is a mobile-friendly interactive map that displays local shops by 16 different categories, highlights the location of the retailers within a specific area, and has a pop-up with additional information on individual shops. This new resource is available to shoppers on the award-winning Make Macomb Your Home website at [www.MakeMacombYourHome.com/Shop](http://www.MakeMacombYourHome.com/Shop) (<http://living.macombgov.org/living-thingstodo-shop>).

"We work hard to provide every business in Macomb County with as many advantages as possible, and this holiday season we are excited to help drive consumer traffic to our strong network of local retailers," said John Paul Rea, director of the Macomb County Department of Planning & Economic Development. "Many of these local businesses are very active in our communities. Supporting our main streets benefits everyone."

In Macomb, the retail industry employs more than 42,500 workers and has a \$2.29 billion annual economic impact. Locally-owned independent retail establishments make up more than 1,600 of the roughly 2,400 retailers in Macomb County.

## **For your benefit: Dealing with stress during the holidays**

**By Macomb County Human Resources and Labor Relations**

Today people seem to be faced with many stressful situations, especially during the holiday season. These stressors have a significant impact on people both at home and at the workplace.

In our fast-paced society, we often look for quick fixes to things that may be bothering us. However, stress management is something that needs to be planned, thought about and worked on.

According to tips provided by the Cleveland Clinic, you should ask yourself if your expectations are realistic. This may be the first step to managing holiday stress. Make a list of what you expect from yourself and your loved ones and, under each item, write down any changes you could make to reduce or prevent stress.

There are many ways to reduce stress in some situations such as asking what people want, buying prepared foods or cooking ahead of time and, possibly one of the most important, take some time to enjoy the fruits of your labor.

Here are some other suggestions for managing stress from Ulliance, our new Employee Assistance Program:

Self-management:

- Set priorities on how you spend your time and stick to them.
- Schedule time for yourself.
- Organize!

Ask yourself:

- Do I have control over the source of my stress? (i.e., “road rage”– do I have control over other drivers on the road?)
- What can I control? (I can’t control how other people drive, but I can control how much I let it get to me.)
- How can I change MY behavior/response in situations that I have no control over?

Boundary and goal setting:

- Are you letting others control your day?
- Do you know how to say “No?”
- This takes practice, as well as knowledge of your priorities in life so you know WHY to say no.

Take care of yourself:

- When was the last time I had a decent meal or a decent night’s sleep?
- Have I really had any fun lately?
- Have I had at least 10 minutes of quiet and solitude today?

For any support you may need, please call and speak with a Life Advisor consultant at (888) 333-6269 or visit their website at [www.LifeAdvisorEAP.com](http://www.LifeAdvisorEAP.com)   
(<http://www.lifeadvisorEAP.com/>).

## **Macomb County has volunteer opportunities available**

Macomb County currently has a need for volunteers for either the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) or Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) programs or Macomb Community Action’s Meals on Wheels program.

***Volunteers for Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) or Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) programs:***

Volunteers will receive training to provide free tax help for low-to-moderate income families

who need assistance preparing their tax returns.

Macomb County Veteran Services, a IRS VITA partner, assists Macomb County and surrounding communities. In 2016, 28 volunteers prepared over 1,000 tax returns which brought back more than \$1,166,490 in total refunds to the area. Across the country, over 90,000 people said “yes” to making a difference during the 2015 filing season and prepared over 3.7 million returns at thousands of tax sites.

“The IRS and its partners like, Macomb County Veteran Services, are once again looking for

volunteers who are interested in taking a little time to learn about taxes and then helping others by preparing federal income tax returns for free,” said IRS Spokesman Luis D. Garcia. “Volunteers are certified to prepare simple tax returns for people whose incomes are \$54,000 or less. People of all ages and backgrounds are welcome to volunteer. There is a role for anyone who is interested and wants to help.”

Volunteers can help in two separate capacities: return preparer or greeter. Greeters will generally also answer simple questions and distribute forms.

No tax preparation experience is necessary, but you do need basic computer skills and the ability to work independently. Volunteers must complete a training session on basic tax law and TaxSlayer software in December or January. They must also pass an IRS-certification exam through Basic.

The first of three training classes will be from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Dec. 3. Additional training on software will take place from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Dec. 6 and from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. on Dec. 10.

Tax classes and tax preparation will be located in the Macomb County Family Resource Center on 196 North Rose Street, Mount Clemens, 48043.

For additional information and to sign up for volunteer training, call Laura Rios at (586) 469-6507.

More information about the IRS volunteer tax preparation program can be found at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)  (<http://www.irs.gov>), keywords “tax volunteer.”

***Volunteers for Meals on Wheels emergency food delivery:***

Macomb Community Action’s Office of Senior Services is seeking more than 100 volunteer drivers to deliver emergency food boxes to homebound seniors on Saturday, Dec. 3. The food boxes contain shelf-stable meals for Meals on Wheels participants in the event weather or other circumstances prevent them from receiving normal food delivery.

Boxes will be picked up between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. at a Macomb County warehouse located near Hall Road and Groesbeck Highway. Volunteer drivers must be at least 18 years old, or accompanied by a parent or authorized adult, and have a valid driver’s license and vehicle insurance. Volunteers must use their personal vehicles when delivering. Groups and organizations are strongly encouraged to participate. Each route takes approximately two hours to complete.

The Meals on Wheels program allows seniors to remain in their homes and live with dignity while receiving regular, nutritious meals. Volunteers not only deliver a nutritious meal, but they also connect with what otherwise may be an isolated older adult. In Macomb County, more than 1,500 seniors receive meals through the program.

To register as a volunteer, contact the Macomb Community Action's Office of Senior Services at (569) 469-5228 or visit the Meals on Wheels volunteer (<http://mca.macombgov.org/MCA-Seniors-MOW-Volunteer>) webpage.