

# FOCUS ON COUNTY GOVERNMENT

MONTHLY UPDATE FROM THE DESK OF WAUKESHA COUNTY EXECUTIVE  
DANIEL P. VRAKAS



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Dear Friends,

Wisconsin is facing a budget crisis. Governor Walker has proposed tools in the 2011-2013 budget bill to provide flexibility to local governments that will help protect taxpayer dollars while still permitting state and local governments to deliver high quality and essential services.

Though collective bargaining changes proposed by the Governor will bring significant savings and flexibility, there are still changes that can be made to allow local governments further flexibility, help cut costs and implement further efficiencies.

As a former State of Wisconsin lawmaker, I understand the difficult work our governor and legislators are faced with. Policymakers must look at state laws, statutes and mandates and examine what is best for local government. Changes to some of these policies will relieve the tension on the county tax levy and, ultimately, support the taxpayer. Here are some items that should be examined:

- As an alternative to removing all funding for recycling, the state should instead encourage cooperative recycling models and fund efficient recycling programs.
- As originally intended in the legislation, the Governor and legislature should redirect the cell phone 9-1-1 user fee back to dispatch operations.
- The state should eliminate the mandate requiring local governments to maintain a certain level of spending for emergency services and instead allow local governments to determine the appropriate level of funding for their citizens.

I know this will be a difficult session but I am confident our Governor and legislators will work hard to give local government the tools we deserve. I am confident Wisconsin's best days lie ahead.

Sincerely,



515 W. Moreland Blvd., AC320  
Waukesha, WI 53188  
262.548.7902 office • 262.896.8510 fax  
[www.waukeshacounty.gov](http://www.waukeshacounty.gov)

## DRUG TRENDS FORUM

Waukesha County Drug Free Communities (DFC) will be hosting two forums titled “New Drug Trends in Waukesha County” presented by Captain Chuck Wood, Commander of the Waukesha County Metro Drug Unit on Thursday, May 5. The forum is intended for parents and will begin at 6:30 p.m. at Steinhafel’s in Waukesha. On Friday, May 6, a presentation intended for professionals in the field will begin at 8:30 a.m. in the Waukesha County Courthouse, room 350.

To aid with planning, RSVP is encouraged, but not required. To RSVP for the forum, please email Nancy Bannister at [NBannister@waukeshacounty.gov](mailto:NBannister@waukeshacounty.gov)

As a reminder, Waukesha County Drug Free Communities will be holding a countywide prescription drug collection in May.

Drop off your items on Saturday, May 14 at the following locations between 9 a.m. and 12 p.m.:

- Community Memorial Hospital, Menomonee Falls
- D.N. Greenwald Center, Mukwonago
- Oconomowoc Memorial Hospital, Oconomowoc
- Ruby Isle, Brookfield
- Waukesha State Bank, Downtown Waukesha Branch
- WCTC, Pewaukee (9 a.m. – 1 p.m.)

For more information visit:  
[www.waukeshacounty.gov/dfc](http://www.waukeshacounty.gov/dfc)

## INSTALLATION

On April 19<sup>th</sup>, Dan Vrakas was re-installed to serve his next four-year term as Waukesha County Executive. Vrakas was first elected during a special election in 2005 as Waukesha County’s second County Executive, was re-elected in 2007 and subsequently in the April 5, 2011 election.

“I am proud of our accomplishments during the last five years and look forward to continuing to serve Waukesha County residents for another four years,” Vrakas said. “Government needs to operate in a sound and businesslike manner. I will continue to work with the County Board to make government more efficient and maintain our outstanding quality of service at a low cost to taxpayers.”

Last year, a study by the Wisconsin Taxpayer’s Alliance showed that Waukesha County, one of a small number of AAA/aaa bond rated counties nationwide, has the lowest per capita spending among all of Wisconsin’s counties and, during Vrakas’ tenure, County taxes on a median valued home in Waukesha County have gone up by less than half a percent per year. That is equivalent to \$2 per year in the last five years.

“I consider it an honor and privilege to serve this great County, and I look forward to continuing the County’s legacy as a leader in Wisconsin and nationwide,” Vrakas said. “Waukesha County’s best days lie ahead.”



County Executive Dan Vrakas takes the oath of office while his father, Paul Vrakas, and daughter, Sara Vrakas, look on.

*“Waukesha County: Leading the Way ...”*

## VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION MONTH

April is volunteer appreciation month, and Waukesha County is grateful for all of the outstanding volunteers that have helped us with our activities and programs. There are many opportunities for volunteers to support various departments. Here are some of the groups that have volunteered this spring:

- On April 17<sup>th</sup>, the County Executive thanked over 300 individuals that volunteered with the Aging and Disability Resource Center in the last year.
- On April 2<sup>nd</sup>, nearly 200 volunteers from Elmbrook Church helped pull weeds, pick up debris and spread woodchips at Minooka Park.
- On April 30<sup>th</sup>, over 300 volunteers from a local company will help clean up trails at Retzer Nature Center.
- Over 150 individuals will help assist pharmacists and law enforcement at the May 14<sup>th</sup> Prescription Drug Collection.

## SPRING EVENTS AT COUNTY PARKS

**Morning Bird Hikes** - A Retzer Nature Center naturalist will help you explore bird habitats, welcome back spring migrant birds, and check on year round birds. These hikes will be held on Fridays, at Retzer Nature Center, S14 W28167 Madison Street in Waukesha, from April thru June from 7 to 8:30 a.m. Please bring your binoculars, there are some available at Retzer on a limited basis. The fee for the hike is \$1 per person. No registration needed. Call Retzer Nature Center at (262) 896-8007 for additional information.

**GPS Aided Hiking** - Come and explore Retzer Nature Center's nature trails with a Retzer Teaching Naturalist. Try one of Retzer's GPS units, or bring your own GPS, with instruction manual, and sharpen your skills. The Teaching Naturalist will review basic GPS operation while hiking and help participants develop orienteering skills. In case of rain, there will be an indoor GPS discussion program. This event will take place on Tuesday May 17<sup>th</sup> from 10 to 11:30 a.m. The cost is \$4 per person and you must register by May 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Bird & Wildflower Hike** - Menomonee Park's woods come alive with warblers and wildflowers in springtime. Join Naturalist, Larry Kascht, on Saturday, May 13<sup>th</sup> for an afternoon walk. Participants will identify, smell, photograph, and appreciate the flowers, and learn about their life and ecology. Participants should bring their field guide, camera, and binoculars. This event will take place on Saturday May 13<sup>th</sup> from 1 to 3 p.m. The cost is \$5, plus park entrance fee per person and you must register by May 2<sup>nd</sup>.



A group prepares for a hike at Retzer Nature Center.

*“Waukesha County: Leading the Way ...”*

# FOCUS ON COUNTY GOVERNMENT

## SEVERE WEATHER MYTHS AND TRUTHS

**Myth:** People caught in the open should seek shelter under highway overpasses.

**Truth:** Take shelter in a sturdy, reinforced building if at all possible. The winds of a tornado may actually increase in the tight space of an overpass, increasing the chance for injury.

**Myth:** If it is not raining, there is no danger from lightning.

**Truth:** Lightning can strike when there is no rain. If you hear thunder, the storm is close enough to pose a lightning threat.

**Myth:** “Heat lightning” occurs after very hot summer days and poses no threat.

**Truth:** Heat lightning is a term used to describe lightning from a thunderstorm too far away for thunder to be heard.

**Myth:** Flash floods occur only along flowing streams and rivers.

**Truth:** Flash floods can occur in urban areas where no streams are present.



**Follow County  
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Vrakas on Twitter!**

**Username:  
CoExecDanVrakas**

## WISCONSIN PARTNERSHIP LOAN PROGRAMS

The Wisconsin Partnership for Housing Development, HOME Consortium program offers loans to qualifying residents in Waukesha County. The Consortium offers three major programs, outlined below.

**Forgivable Down Payment Assistance Loan (DPA)** - This program provides eligible home buyers with a forgivable loan of up to \$5,000 to be used for down payment and/or closing costs. The program is funded through the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

**Rehabilitation Deferred Loan Program** - This program to provide low to moderate income households with access to loaned funds for modest home repairs. The loan is provided as a no-interest deferred loan of up to a maximum of \$20,000 for households with incomes at or below 80% of the area median.

**Purchase/Rehab Program** - The HOME Consortium operates a program to provide low and moderate income households with access to loan funds to buy a home of their own and make needed modest home repairs. The loan is provided as a no-interest deferred loan up to a maximum of \$19,999 and is used in conjunction with the \$5,000 down payment assistance.

*“Waukesha County: Leading the Way ...”*