

FOCUS ON COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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



In this issue:

- Leverage Loan Funds Available
- Higher Education Listening Session
- Ice Safety
- County Parks Winter Events
- Non-Profit Sustainability
- Drug Collection: Save the Date

Dear Friends,

During my service as your County Executive it has been an ongoing goal of mine to seek partnerships among departments, with the County's municipalities and our neighbors throughout Southeastern Wisconsin. In Waukesha County, cooperation plays a key role in delivering high-quality services to residents while holding the line on taxes and spending.

Waukesha County prides its self on high quality service and low taxes through efficiency. A key to this efficiency has been consolidation and merger. One example of efficiency during my tenure as County Executive is that we have reduced the number of Waukesha County departments from 15 to 12. In 2010, the Aging and Disability Resource Center and Veterans Services Office merged into the Department of Health and Human Services in an effort to better serve our growing population of veterans and seniors. Last year, the Airport, which was formerly its own department, merged into the Department of Public Works in an effort to provide better support for the stand-alone department.

However, I believe cooperation should not be limited to government. As you will see in this newsletter, I have provided my support to a number of new initiatives to encourage cooperation among Waukesha County institutions of higher education and the non-profit community. In the month of February, I will be holding a listening session seeking feedback from the community on how we can better educate our workforce. Additionally, I am part of a Task Force charged with the job of developing an action plan to encourage human services non-profit organizations to work together more closely.

As we move forward, it is important that we continue to seek out and encourage ways to work cooperatively and deliver efficient services to all residents. It is truly vital to our success that we work together as a cohesive county and team.

Sincerely,



515 W. Moreland Blvd., AC320
Waukesha, WI 53188
262.548.7902 office • 262.896.8510 fax
www.waukeshacounty.gov

LEVERAGE LOAN FUNDS AVAILABLE

As of January 1st, 2012, funds are now available for Waukesha County's Leverage Loan Program. The new program is designed to assist small and medium-sized emerging businesses in Waukesha County.

The program was introduced by the County Executive and approved by the County Board last year. The funding supplements existing financing and fills the gap where conventional financing may not be available. The financing is not intended for start-ups, but for 2nd tier, growing businesses.

Loans are available for up to \$50,000 and are intended for manufacturing, supply-chain and information technology industry businesses. Funds are not available for retail trade industry businesses. Funds may be used for the purchase of real estate, equipment, tangible products or inventory.

Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation (WWBIC) will be administering the program and accepting program applications. Those interested in applying for the loan should contact WWBIC's Director of Lending, Barbara Eckblad by calling (414) 263-5450.



HIGHER EDUCATION LISTENING SESSION

Waukesha County Executive Dan Vrakas and State Representative Paul Farrow are seeking public input on the future of higher education in Waukesha County. The effort is aimed at helping more students achieve post-secondary education, meeting the needs of area employers and increasing economic development.

In 2007, the Waukesha County Higher Education Coalition, a group comprised of WCTC, UW-Waukesha, the Waukesha County Action Network (which is now part of the Waukesha County Business Alliance) and the County Executive's office, surveyed select Waukesha County businesses about the County's higher education needs. The survey results overwhelmingly showed a need for a change in our higher education system and policies in Waukesha County. The Coalition recommended policy changes increasing the number of people with bachelor's degrees in the County and increasing access to the University of Wisconsin's four-year system.

Anyone interested in higher education in Waukesha County is encouraged to attend the February 6th listening session at UW-Waukesha from 12-2 p.m., to share your opinions and learn more about the future of education in our County. The discussion will focus on answering three fundamental questions about higher education in Waukesha County:

1. How can higher education impact economic development in Waukesha County?
2. What are the barriers to students in Waukesha County that are preventing them from reaching their goals?
3. What roles should UW-Waukesha and WCTC play in providing the educational needs for the students in Waukesha County?

In addition to Representative Farrow and the County Executive, the panel will include WCTC President Barbara Prindiville, UW-Waukesha Dean Harry Muir, Carroll University President Doug Hastad and Waukesha County Business Alliance President Suzanne Kelly.

“Waukesha County: Leading the Way ...”

ICE SAFETY

This winter's mild weather has resulted in ice levels much thinner than normal for this time of year. Given the current and warmer forecasted weather conditions; it is important that safety precautions are taken. Before you head out on the ice:

- Contact local sport shops or bait dealers to ask about ice conditions on the lake or river.
- Learn about the water you are going to use.

When you go:

- Do not go out alone. If you do, carry a cell phone and let someone know where you are and your expected return time.
- Carry a spud bar to check the ice and only walk to new areas during the daylight.
- Do not travel in unfamiliar territories at night.
- Look for clear ice. Clear ice is generally stronger than ice with air bubbles in it or with snow on top of it.

DISCOVER RETZER'S "SCHOOL" OF THE LAND...JUST BEYOND YOUR BACKYARD!

Retzer Nature Center staff is on duty every Saturday, come out and enjoy the Environmental Learning Center or stay for a program. Hours: Nature Center - 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Grounds - sunrise to 10 p.m. (262) 896-8007 or www.waukeshacountyparks.com.

Environmental educational programs led by experts who offer hands on instruction are held every Saturday. Registration required. The address is S14 W28167 Madison Street, Waukesha, (262) 548-7801. www.waukeshacountyparks.com

February 11, 18 & 25

- 9 – 11 am: Winter Wildlife on Snowshoes (adults)
- 1 – 3 pm: Winter Wildlife on Snowshoes (families and scouts)

February 25

- 10 – 11 am: Green Cleaning Party, healthy household cleaning products

March 10

- 9 – 11 am: Natural Landscaping for your yard (adult program)
- 10 – 11 am: Organic Lawn Care (adult program)

March 17

- 9 – 11 am: Wisconsin small mammals (adult and family program)

March 24

- 9 – 11 am: Co-Op program with Planetarium "Secret of Cardboard Rocket", build a rocket to launch (family program)

March 31

- 9 – 11 am: Identification of Leafless Trees and Shrubs
- 1 – 4 pm: Aldo Leopold - Reading the Landscape (adult program)

"Waukesha County: Leading the Way ..."

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NON-PROFIT SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT

Waukesha County is partnering with the United Way in Waukesha County and the Waukesha Community Foundation to embark on a project focused on building a thriving and sustainable non-profit community in Waukesha County. The partners and representatives from their agencies hired a consultant last month to assist in developing an action plan for non-profit sustainability.

A task force of community leaders consisting of non-profit directors, elected officials, business leaders, non-profit board members, philanthropists and others will develop an action plan for enhancing the community and helping non-profits serve the community and their clients in a more efficient and fiscally prudent manner.

The task force will meet over the next several months to make decisions and recommendations to work toward the common goal of identifying ways human service non-profit organizations can work together. The task force expects to complete its work by the end of the year.



**Follow County
Executive Dan
Vrakas on Twitter!**

**Username:
CoExecDanVrakas**

DRUG COLLECTION: SAVE THE DATE

Waukesha County Drug Free Communities will be holding a countywide prescription drug collection on Saturday, April 28th in an effort to reduce prescription drug abuse and accidental poisonings in Waukesha County as well as help protect local waterways. Residents are invited to bring unwanted prescription medication, over the counter medication, ointments, sprays, inhalers, creams, vials, herbals and pet medications to the Waukesha County Drug Collection.

Drop off your items on Saturday, April 28th between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. at the following eight locations:

- Community Memorial Hospital, Menomonee Falls
- D.N. Greenwald Center, Mukwonago
- Oconomowoc Memorial Hospital, Oconomowoc
- Ruby Isle, Brookfield
- Arrowhead High School, Hartland
- WCTC, Pewaukee
- Waukesha State Bank, Downtown Waukesha
- Muskego Police Department, Muskego

For more information visit: waukeshacounty.gov/drugcollection

“Waukesha County: Leading the Way ...”