



BLUE EARTH COUNTY

COMMUNICATOR

Effectively & Efficiently Delivering Essential Services

FALL ❄️ WINTER 2013



Blue Earth County Implements Lean

Blue Earth County recently implemented the Lean method of continuous improvement. Lean is a time-tested set of tools used by engaging employees to reduce waste and defects within processes to increase productivity, reliability, staff morale, and customer service. Lean's founding has been attributed to Toyota Motor Company and has been applied consistently in both the public and private sectors. Several Blue Earth County staff have participated in Kaizen events to create efficiency and evaluate and improve processes for staff and citizens. Additional Kaizen events are planned. Pictured Above: County staff, Michael Stalberger and Jessica Anderson, taking part in a Kaizen event.

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THE COMMUNICATOR

The Blue Earth County Communicator is published biannually to increase public awareness and involvement in county government.



**BLUE EARTH
COUNTY**

For more information about the publication, or to submit questions and/or comments, contact:

Communications Office
Blue Earth County Historic Courthouse
204 S. 5th St., Mankato, MN 56001

Phone 304-4491 – Fax 304-4344
info@blueearthcountymn.gov



**Award-Winning
Publication**

by the National
Association of County
Information Officers



National Association of Counties Recognizes Blue Earth County with NCGM Award

Blue Earth County was recently recognized at the National Association of Counties (NACo) Annual Conference as the first place winner in the rural counties category for the National County Government Award.

The purpose of the award program is to encourage counties to participate in National County Government Month and recognize those counties that sponsor outstanding programs to reach out and educate citizens about county government during the month of April. Planned events included public guided tours of the Blue Earth County Justice Center, themed story times with County officials at the Blue Earth County Library, Citizens Academy Program sessions, employee appreciation visits to all County departments by Commissioners, Earth Day event, Teddy Bear Clinic and further educational outreach regarding the work of counties.

Blue Earth County works to provide outreach and education regarding County programs and services throughout the year and has actively participated in National County Government Month for the last several years to specially highlight awareness by coordinating and taking part in organized efforts.



Award Presentation to County Officials by the NACo Executive Board. Photo: L to R – Riki Hokama, NACo Second Vice President; Linda Langston, NACo First Vice President; Vance Stuehrenberg, Blue Earth County Commissioner; Will Purvis, Blue Earth County Commissioner; Chris Rodgers, NACo President; Jessica Beyer, Blue Earth County Communications Manager & Business Analyst; Lenny Eliason, NACo Immediate Past President. (Please note, NACo Officer titles changed following this photo being taken)

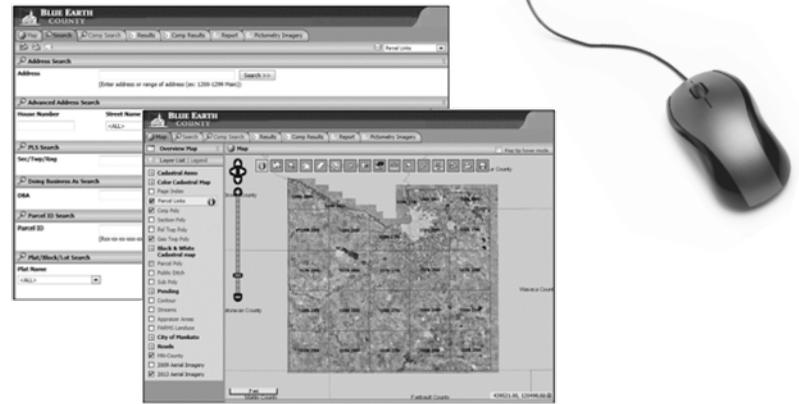
For more information about National County Government Month or the National Association of Counties visit www.naco.org.

New Technology Provides More Online Property and Tax Information

By Michael Stalberger, County Assessor and Deputy Taxpayer Services Director

The Taxpayer Services department is proud to provide a new web-based tool that will provide one-site access to property characteristics, valuation, and tax information, along with maps and photographs. The new program, called Beacon, became available in mid-October. To access Beacon, visit our county website at www.blueearthcountymn.gov and click on the Property & Taxes button on the homepage. You will see a link on that screen to access Beacon.

Beacon will allow you to search for properties by address and other criteria or you can locate the property on a map. Once a property is located, users will find information the Taxpayer



Services Department keeps on each property related to the assessment, valuation, and taxes. There are links to pay property taxes, find copies of notices mailed to the property, and other tools and searches

possible through Beacon. This new easy-to-use system allows users to access a variety of property and tax information anytime or anywhere through internet access. ■

Blue Earth County Expands Online Payment Options

Blue Earth County has expanded its online payment options beyond paying for taxes and camping reservations. A number of departments have implemented ways to make payments online for services, fees and permits.

Visit www.blueearthcountymn.gov to learn more.

To receive Blue Earth County news, see happenings in the County or watch for job postings, don't forget to like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. There are also personalized "notify me" subscription options for customized information available on the Blue Earth County website. ■



Find Blue Earth County Online through social media. Like us on Facebook and Follow us on Twitter.



Agricultural Sales Data Feature Added to Website

Property Tax Info & Updates

Property Valuations and Assessments

The County Assessor's Office is responsible for setting new valuations and assessments on all property each January 2. That valuation is used to determine taxes payable in the following year. The office analyzes sales data to understand what is happening in the market. Overall, the countywide total valuation has increased the past three years, and we look for that trend to continue. Certain types of property saw larger increases and some properties even saw reductions based on sales information. Markets tend to be quite local and specific to property types. For example, residential properties didn't see significant value increases countywide, and neither did commercial property. However, apartments did generally see increases, and agricultural land did see very significant increases.

The agricultural land market has been quite strong in Blue Earth County for the past several years. Since the 2010 assessment, our agricultural value per acre of typically productive tillable land has increased from about \$4,500 to \$8,500.



The increase is based on sales data that our office receives and all indications point to this continuing in the next assessment. In the most recently closed analysis period, we had 31 sales that we used to help us determine what values to use. Those sales, along with more current sales information will be used to help set new values, are available on our website (see the sidebar information).

Property owners are notified of the Assessor's Office estimate of value each year in the spring. Watch for your Valuation Notice to be mailed sometime in March 2014. ■

Blue Earth County has added a new feature to its website to provide information on agricultural land sales by township. A County map displays the location of sales and allows users to retrieve a printable summary sheet listing of recent agricultural land sales in the county. The map and related agricultural land sales data may be found at www.blueearthcountymn.gov/agsales.

The sales information is used to help the Assessor's Office estimate the per acre market values for the 2014 assessment (taxes payable in 2015) and is also useful to the public, those in the agricultural industry and others in monitoring agricultural land sales and trends in the market. The information is updated throughout the year.

For more information please contact Blue Earth County Taxpayer Services at (507) 304-4251 or taxhelp@blueearthcountymn.gov.

Blue Earth County
Agricultural Bare Land Sales between Oct 1, 2012 and May 31, 2013



Taxes are Calculated Annually

Changes in values will have impacts on the tax amounts properties pay. For example, due to the large increases in the agricultural land values, while other property types have seen more limited or no increases in value, agricultural properties will generally see larger tax bills this upcoming year, when compared to last year.

Besides valuations, the budgeting decisions of local units of government play an important role in impacting taxes. In Blue Earth County, the Board of Commissioners has passed a preliminary 2014 levy with no increase. By late November, property owners will receive what is called the Truth-in-Taxation Notice. This provides a preliminary estimate of taxes due in 2014. Property owners should use that notice to learn more about the budgeting decisions made by local units of government. It is important to note that the meetings are not to appeal valuations or individual tax bills. ■

Automatic Payments for Property Taxes Now Available

Blue Earth County property owners now have the option to sign-up for an automatic payment program for making property tax payments. The new payment service is free, dependable and convenient. Those interested in taking advantage of the service can find an enrollment form with more information at www.blueearthcountymn.gov/achform.

The automated payment program works by debiting the current tax installment from a subscriber's checking or savings

account. Debits take place on property tax due dates which include May 15 and October 15 for real property (May 15 and November 15 for agricultural properties) and August 31 and November 15 for manufactured homes.

In addition to the new automatic payment option, property taxes may also be paid online at www.blueearthcountymn.gov, by mail, at designated drop box locations and in person at the Historic Courthouse located at 204 S. 5th Street in Mankato. ■

SAVE THE DATE

Truth-in-Taxation Notices

Property owners should watch the mail in late November for their annual Truth-in-Taxation Notices. The Taxpayer Services Department mails the notices to inform property owners of upcoming public meetings to discuss proposed property taxes and proposed budgets for 2014 taxes. The county's meeting will be held at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, December 3 at the Historic Courthouse located at 204 South 5th Street in Mankato. Meetings for other taxing authorities will be listed on the notice.

For more information please contact Blue Earth County Administration at (507) 304-4284.

For more information please contact Blue Earth County Taxpayer Services by phone at (507) 304-4251 or by e-mail at taxhelp@blueearthcountymn.gov.



Be Prepared for Winter Driving



PUBLIC WORKS

Winter Driving Tips

- Buckle up and make sure child restraints are secured tight enough. It is recommended to have bulky winter coats and blankets on top of the child restraint harness, not beneath, to ensure harness restraints fit properly.
- Drive at safe speeds according to road conditions, and allow plenty of travel time.
- Increase safe stopping distance between vehicles.
- Use extra precaution around snowplows — keep at least five car-lengths behind plows.
- If skidding — ease foot off the gas and turn the steering wheel in the direction you want the front of the vehicle to go.
- If vehicle has an anti-lock braking system (ABS), apply a steady firm pressure to the brake pedal. Never pump ABS brakes.
- Clear snow and ice from vehicle windows, hood, headlights, brake lights and directional signals.
- Headlights must be turned on when it is snowing or sleeting.
- Do not use cruise control on snow/icy/wet roads.
- Move over for emergency responders on the shoulder of the road — it's the law.



County Road 17 Project Update

Alan Forsberg, County Engineer and Public Works Director

The largest road project for Blue Earth County throughout the 2013 construction season, and the largest single construction contract in the history of the County Highway Department, is the reconstruction of County Road 17 between Mankato and Eagle Lake. The road is the old TH 14 and is in the process of being reconstructed to meet current and future needs. The project features four lanes from TH 22 to County Road 12 and two lanes with center turn lane from County Road 12 to Eagle Lake. It includes a trail along the north side the entire way. Reconstruction of County Road 17 is an exciting project that will facilitate and encourage future planned growth in our area for decades to come. The project will also provide safe and efficient transportation for decades to come.

In late August the first stage of the project from TH 14 west to the Eagle Lake City Hall was completed. Work is currently underway and is expected to be completed this fall from the Eagle Lake City Hall west through the County Road 56 roundabout. Additional work is underway and is expected to be completed this fall from the west end of the project at Mankato Ford through the County Road 12 roundabout, with the exception of a one quarter mile section which will be

two lanes rather than the final four lane configuration.

Work will be suspended over the winter and the entire road from Eagle Lake to Mankato will be open to traffic.

Early next spring work will resume on the project. First, the roundabout at Carver Road will be completed and opened to traffic prior to MnDOT's work on the two TH 22 roundabouts. The road from Haefner Drive to County Road 12 and then north to TH 14 is an important part of MnDOT's TH 22 roundabout construction detour plan.

The road from east of County Road 12 to west of County Road 56 and conversion of the one-quarter mile two lane to four lane section will be completed in the 2014 construction season, concluding the entire project. ■



For more information on road projects, please contact the Blue Earth County Public Works at (507) 304-4025.

WINTER ACTIVITIES AT BLUE EARTH COUNTY PARKS

ACTIVITIES

PARKS



	BRAY (102.3 ACRES)	DALY (75.81 ACRES)	DUCK LAKE (31.66 ACRES)	LAKE GEORGE (4.2 ACRES)	RED JACKET TRAIL PARK (4 ACRES)	WILLIAMS NATURE CENTER (65.3 ACRES)	INDIAN LAKE (112.44 ACRES)	SCHIMEK (29.75 ACRES)	WILDWOOD (28.3 ACRES)	LONE PINE (2.3 ACRES)	RAPIDAN (38.69 ACRES)
SNOWSHOEING	•	•			•	•	•	•	•		•
ICE FISHING	•	•	•	•						•	
CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING	•	•			•	•	•	•	•		

WINTER is on the way...
Be Prepared!

Winter Survival Car Kit

Items in Kit Should Include:

- Candle and Matches
- Metal Cup/Soup Can to melt snow
- Whistle
- Brightly colored bandana or ribbon to signal for help
- Flashlight and Extra Batteries
- Garbage Bags and Rubber Bands
- Snack Foods for Energy
- Boots
- Kleenex/Paper Towels
- First Aid Kit
- Hand Warmers
- Emergency Blanket
- Needed Medications

Other Suggested Items:

- Jumper Cables
- Snowmobile Suit
- Sleeping Bag
- Shovel
- Sand/Cat Litter
- Reflectors
- Rope
- Boots
- Gloves
- Extra Clothing

Contact Your Local Emergency Manager for Additional Information
hsem.dps.mn.gov



Community Farm Celebrates Second Season & Ribbon-cutting of New Well & Drinking Fountain

Jessica Beyer, Communications Manager & Business Analyst

The Blue Earth County Community Farm held an open house and ribbon-cutting ceremony in late September to commemorate the installation of a new well and drinking fountain at Weagel Park and showcase progress from its second growing season. Additional highlights of the event included tours of the farm site and the opportunity to view informational displays by guest organizations such as the University of Minnesota Extension and Greater Mankato Bike & Walk Advocates. Attendees were also able to learn more about fresh produce donated to local hunger assistance programs and see a new sampling station that can travel to destinations such as ECHO Food Shelf, to help provide healthy recipes and introduce individuals and families to varieties of produce from the Blue Earth County Community Farm.

To date, the Blue Earth County Community Farm has yielded over 7,000 pounds of fresh produce in the 2013 growing season. Community members, students, youth groups, organizations and sentence to serve participants have helped share their time and talents to plant, maintain, and harvest a wide variety of herbs, vegetables and fruits. Contributors including



individuals, businesses and organizations have also helped support the Blue Earth County Community Farm through the donation of materials, supplies, seeds, labor and monetary contributions, which helps keep the farm operational to provide local area hunger assistance programs with fresh produce.

The new well will supply much needed water to the Blue Earth County Community Farm for irrigation uses, which will help boost yield potential in future growing seasons, in addition to supplying Weagel Park with a water source for the newly

installed drinking fountain, which will benefit Red Jacket Trail users for years to come. Contributors to the Blue Earth County Community Farm well and drinking fountain included: Hy-Vee, Greater Mankato Bike & Walk Advocates, St. Peter Well Drilling, Xcel Energy, Ploog Electric and Kopp Plumbing & Heating.

The Blue Earth County Community Farm is a unique collaboration between local government and nonprofits (Blue Earth County, Three Rivers Resource Conservation and Development Council, and Feeding Our Communities Partners) to grow fresh produce for local hunger assistance programs. ■

For more information on the Blue Earth County Community Farm visit www.FeedingOurCommunitiesPartners.org

Blue Earth County youth "fair" well at MN State Fair!

Members of the Blue Earth County 4-H program had an amazing year at the Minnesota State Fair in St. Paul. With 79 youth participating from Blue Earth County, members came home with some top ribbon placings as well as more experience and knowledge under their belt. You can find a link to all of the Blue Earth County State Fair results by visiting: www.extension.umn.edu under youth and 4-H programs.



Congratulations to all 4-H Participants!

For more information about 4-H, contact Amanda Sommers, Blue Earth County 4-H Program at (507) 304-4325 or epe0018@umn.edu. If you are interested in enrolling in 4-H, you can sign up at: <http://mn.4honline.com>.

EXTENSION EDUCATOR RECEIVES AWARD

Diane DeWitte, Extension Educator in the U of M Blue Earth County office, received the Distinguished Service Award from the National Association of County Agricultural Agents (NACAA) during the association's annual conference in September.



Pictured with DeWitte is David Nicolai, President of the Minnesota Association of Extension Agriculture Professionals.

Be Roundabout Ready

Multi-lane roundabouts are planned for the Highway 22 intersections with Madison Avenue and Adams Street in the retail area of Mankato in 2014. Use this website to learn about the projects, how to navigate roundabouts and be Roundabout Ready!

www.roundaboutready.com





Monday, Nov. 4 at 6:30pm:

Students from the Fine Arts School of Ballet will present scenes from their upcoming production of "North Woods Nutcracker."

Saturday, Nov. 16 at 10:30am: Special Storytime provided by Faith, Hope and Forever Animal Rescue, including a live dog.

Saturday, Dec. 7 at 10:30am:

Special *Santa Storytime* followed by holiday music from the *Minnesota Valley Chorale*.

Saturday, Dec. 14 from 11:00am to 3:00pm: *History Day Hullabaloo*. Members of the Minnesota Historical Society will be on hand to provide research assistance to any students involved with a History Day project.

Saturday, Dec. 21 at 10:30am:

Special Storytime provided by Faith, Hope and Forever Animal Rescue, including a live dog.

www.beclibrary.org

Free Library Mail Service Available to Rural County Residents

By Tim Hayes, Library Director

Residents in Madison Lake, St. Clair, Pemberton, Good Thunder, Garden City, Vernon Center, Amboy and rural areas of Blue Earth County are encouraged to utilize free direct mail library services. Patrons can go online to www.beclibrary.org or contact the Blue Earth County Library at (507) 304-4021 to order materials. Materials will be mailed to you with an enclosed postage-paid return envelope. It's a free, convenient and



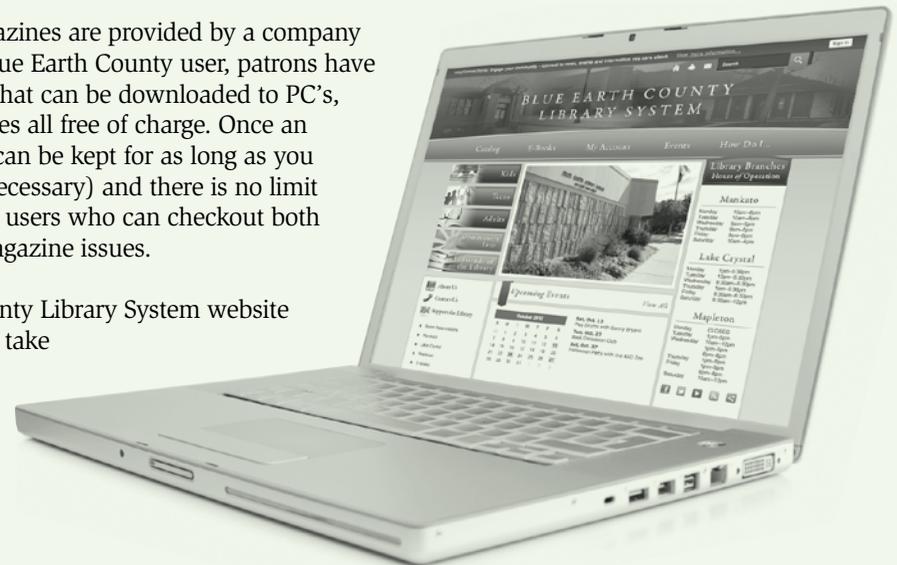
easy way to receive books, DVD's and all your favorite library materials. This service includes full access to the State-wide library system's extensive collections, plus e-book, e-audio book and e-magazine collection materials, which can be downloaded to individual reading/listening devices. This service is for rural Blue Earth County residents of all ages. ■

E-Magazines Now Offered at the Blue Earth County Library

Similar to e-books, the Blue Earth County Library is now offering a service that allows patrons to download all of their favorite magazines for free.

The downloadable magazines are provided by a company known as Zinio. As a Blue Earth County user, patrons have access to subscriptions that can be downloaded to PC's, laptops, or mobile devices all free of charge. Once an issue is downloaded, it can be kept for as long as you wish (with no returns necessary) and there is no limit to the number of library users who can checkout both current and archived magazine issues.

Visit the Blue Earth County Library System website at www.beclibrary.org to take advantage of this new service.



Library Supporters

The Blue Earth County Library thanks all the generous sponsors to the libraries in Mankato, Lake Crystal and Mapleton Communities. To view a listing of individual and organization sponsors or to learn more about supporting the Blue Earth County Library, visit <http://www.beclibrary.org/supporters>



Thank You 2013 Summer Reading Program Sponsors, Volunteers and Participants!

More than 2,700 children participated in the Blue Earth County Library System's 2013 Summer Reading Program.

Many thanks to our generous community sponsors:

- Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund
- Noodles & Company
- Chipotle Mexican Grill
- Papa Murphy's Pizza
- Mankato MoonDogs
- Mankato Experimental Aircraft Association
- Arby's



2013 Key Sponsor:

Taylor

Reading incentives paired with the ability to provide educational and fun programs for all ages is contingent upon the generous support of our community sponsors.



Multi-County Veterans Court Takes Shape in the Fifth Judicial District

Jessica Beyer, Communications Manager & Business Analyst

The Minnesota Judicial Council recently approved creation of a Veterans Court Program that will serve the counties of Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault, Jackson, Martin, Nicollet and Watonwan in the Fifth Judicial District. A partnership of veterans affairs and criminal justice agencies are responsible for the formulation of the multi-county program.

The program is designed to handle cases involving defendants with veteran status through a judicially-monitored program of alcohol, drug and/or mental health treatment, rehabilitation services and strict community supervision. The Veterans Court Program recognizes that military veterans face unique challenges following their service and, in turn, need particularized treatment and support that is best provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs and other veteran specific organizations. A Veterans Court promotes public safety while supporting veterans and their families through a coordinated effort among the veteran services delivery system, community-based services and the court with the stated goal of leaving no veteran behind.

The Veterans Court is held at noon on the second



and fourth Fridays of each month at the Blue Earth County Justice Center in Mankato. The Honorable Bradley C. Walker, retired Marine Corps Colonel and Fifth Judicial District Chief Judge, serves as the Veterans Court Judge.

The Blue Earth County Attorney's Office created a Veterans Program in February 2012 with the help of many partners in the criminal justice system. The new multi-county Veterans Court will model the success of the Blue Earth County Program.

"We have seen firsthand the value in the Blue Earth County Veterans Program and are excited to work with a number of

agencies to be able to help additional veterans throughout the seven counties in the Fifth Judicial District," said Patrick McDermott, Assistant Blue Earth County Attorney.

A \$200,000 grant from the Minnesota Department of Human Services-Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Division has been secured to establish the Fifth Judicial District Veterans Court, including hiring a case manager with experience working with veterans and to establish a veteran mentor program. ■

For more information contact Kevin Mettler, Veterans Court Coordinator at (507) 469-5518.

The Blue Earth County Drug Court Program celebrated its 100th Graduation recently at Minnesota State University, Ostrander Auditorium with a special ceremony honoring graduate Noah Summers (pictured below).

The Honorable Kurt D. Johnson presided over the graduation and the special event included remarks from elected officials, program coordinators, community members and past graduates of the program.

The Drug Court program in Blue Earth County is a community-wide, collaborative effort to reduce crime, increase public safety, lower recidivism and rehabilitate substance-abusing offenders by providing them with multifaceted interventions, frequent court contacts and intensive supervision.

For more information about the Blue Earth County Drug Court visit www.blueearthcountymn.gov/drugcourt.



Sheriff's Office Receives Grant for New Jet Boat

The Blue Earth County Sheriff's Office received a 2012 Federal grant to obtain a new SJX jet boat for use during river search and rescues. The boat is specially designed for river rescues and has the ability to navigate shallow waters which is an important feature, especially during times of low water. Blue Earth County has the most miles of river in the State and with the recent increase of recreational activities such as kayaking and canoeing in area rivers, the boat is an important resource. The new boat was put to use in assisting Brown and Nicollet Counties in a recent river search operation.



Snowmobile Safety Training

Youth snowmobile safety classes will be offered in Blue Earth County throughout fall/winter 2013. For information and course schedules visit www.dnr.state.mn.us and view the education/safety tab to find snowmobile safety information.



The American Psychiatric Association (APA) recently named Dr. Michael Farnsworth, Medical Director/Consultant of the South Central Community Based Initiative (SCCBI) Psychiatric Hub, as a Distinguished Fellow. Farnsworth was nominated at the state level by the Minnesota Psychiatric Society for the national award given his innovative and highly regarded work within the profession.

The Distinguished Fellowship is awarded to outstanding psychiatrists who have made significant contributions to the psychiatric profession in at least five of the following areas: administration, teaching, scientific and scholarly publications, volunteering in mental health and medical activities of social significance, community involvement, as well as clinical excellence. Distinguished Fellow is the highest membership honor the APA bestows upon members.

“Dr. Farnsworth is most deserving of this hallmark award from the APA for his commitment to the field of psychiatry,” stated Phil Claussen, Blue Earth County Human Services Director. “We are fortunate to have Dr. Farnsworth leading our South Central Community Based Initiative Psychiatric Hub for Mental Health Services and for the innovation he has brought to our network and the entire practice of psychiatric work.”

During his tenure working with the SCCBI, Farnsworth helped develop the tele-psychiatry clinic network to provide high quality, cost effective, easily accessible mental health services to the 10 south-central Minnesota counties comprising the initiative. The SCCBI helps persons experiencing serious and persistent mental illness to receive services to improve their quality of life, increase the responsibility for their lives and help them function as actively and independently as possible in the community.



Blue Earth County Board of Commissioners and staff recognizing Dr. Farnsworth at a recent Board Meeting. L to R. Phil Claussen, Human Services Director; Commissioner Vance Stuehrenberg; Commissioner Will Purvis; Dr. Michael Farnsworth; Commissioner Drew Campbell; Commissioner Mark Piepho; Commissioner Kip Bruender; Angela Youngerberg, Assistant Human Services Director; Bob Meyer, County Administrator

Questions and answers about SHINGLES and vaccination



What is shingles?

Shingles is a painful disease caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox. It is also called zoster.

Shingles usually includes a painful rash with blisters that can occur anywhere on your body, even the face and eyes. The main symptom of shingles is severe pain. Some people have compared it with the pain of childbirth or kidney stones.

Is it serious?

Yes. For about 1 out of 5 people with shingles, severe pain can continue for months, or even years.

This long-lasting pain can be so bad that it interferes with eating and sleeping. Although some medicines can help treat shingles, there is no cure.

Am I at risk?

Anyone who has ever had chickenpox can get shingles. You are more likely to develop shingles as you get older.

How can I protect myself from shingles?

The best way to prevent shingles and its serious complications is to get vaccinated. You should get the shingles shot if you are



age 60 years or older, even if you've already had shingles. It is possible to get the disease more than once.

Where can I get vaccinated?

Shingles vaccine is available from your health care provider and pharmacies.

Do all pharmacies have the vaccine?

Many pharmacies in the area provide shingles vaccine.

Check with your pharmacy

for availability.

How much does it cost?

Most private health insurance plans cover the vaccine for people 60 years of age or older. Medicare Part B does NOT cover shingles vaccine. All Medicare Part D plans cover the shingles vaccine. The amount of cost-sharing (money you have to pay) for vaccination varies. Call the customer service number on the back of your plan card to find out how much it will cost you get to get vaccinated. ■

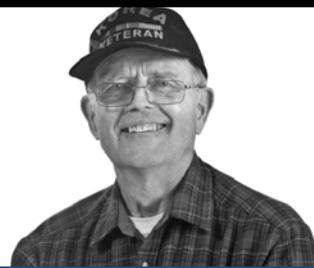
BEC Advisory Committee and Task Force

**ADULTS AND
YOUTH NEEDED!**

Blue Earth County Human Services is seeking applicants for the Human Services Advisory Committee and Task Force which is appointed by the Blue Earth County Commissioners. This committee is authorized by law to fulfill specific responsibilities in relation to a County's operation of its Human Services programs. The purpose of the committee is to provide input to the County Board relating to service developments, priorities, budgeting and evaluation within the Human Services Department. This includes the program areas of mental health, social services and human services. In addition to adult members, two high school age youth are needed on each of the three committees.

For more information or to apply to serve on an advisory committee or task force, contact Noelle Bruender at (507) 304-4064 or by email at noelle.bruender@blueearthcountymn.gov

News for Veterans: Vocational Rehabilitation



What is the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program?

The Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program is authorized by Congress under Title 38, USC, Chapter 31 and Code of Federal Regulations, Part 21. It is sometimes referred to as the Chapter 31 program. This program assists Veterans with service-connected disabilities to prepare for, find, and keep suitable jobs. For Veterans with service-connected disabilities so severe that they cannot immediately consider work, this program offers services to improve their ability to live as independently as possible.

Program Includes:

- Comprehensive rehabilitation evaluation to determine abilities, skills, and interests for employment
- Vocational counseling and rehabilitation planning for employment services
- Employment services such as job-training, job-seeking skills, resume development, and other work readiness assistance
- Assistance finding and keeping a job, including the use of special employer incentives and job accommodations
- On-the-job training (OJT), apprenticeships, and non-paid work experiences
- Post-secondary training at a college, vocational, technical or business school
- Supportive rehabilitation services including case management, counseling, and medical referrals
- Independent living services for Veterans unable to

work due to the severity of their disabilities

Who is Eligible for VR&E Services?

Active Duty Service Members are eligible if they:

- Expect to receive an honorable discharge upon separation from active duty
- Obtain a memorandum rating of 20 percent or more from the VA
- Apply for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) services

Veterans Are Eligible if They:

- Have received, or will receive, a discharge that is other than dishonorable
- Have a service-connected disability rating of at least 10 percent, or a memorandum rating of 20 percent or more from the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA)
- Apply for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) services

Basic Period of Eligibility

The basic period of eligibility in which VR&E services may be used is 12 years from the latter of the following:

- Date of separation from active military service, or
- Date the veteran was first notified by VA of a service-connected disability rating

The basic period of eligibility may be extended if a VA Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) determines that a Veteran has a serious employment handicap. ■

For further information, or assistance in applying for vocational rehabilitation benefits please contact the Blue Earth County Veterans Service Office at (507) 304 4246.

Free Discount Prescription Card

Don't Miss Out on Savings...

The Coast 2 Coast Free Discount Prescription Card is available to Blue Earth County residents and may be obtained in Human Services on first floor of the Blue Earth County Government Center located at 410 S. 5th Street in Mankato. Cards are also available at participating pharmacies, by contacting 800-931-8872 or may be printed online at www.coast2coastrx.com.

It is important to note that the card does not act as insurance. However, it can provide users savings on prescriptions and discount benefits for services such as dental, vision, hearing and veterinary services under the program.

For more information on the Coast 2 Coast Free Discount Prescription Card please contact (800)-931-8872.



The Affordable Care Act (ACA) expands health insurance coverage to millions of Americans. Many more people will qualify for coverage under the ACA's rules.

The ACA requires each state to create a web site where people can compare health plans and choose insurance. MNSure is Minnesota's new, one-stop health insurance marketplace where Minnesotans can find and compare health plans, and choose the coverage that fits their needs. Individuals can access MNSure online at www.mnsure.org. MNSure has a contact center that you can call if you have questions at (855)-366-7873.

www.mnsure.org

Participants Needed for 2014 Citizens Academy

Interested in
Learning More About
County Government &
Getting Involved?

Apply for the 2014
Blue Earth County Citizens Academy!

Get an inside look at county functions through six hands-on sessions with facility tours and the opportunity to meet the people behind the services on selected Tuesday evenings in March and April 2014.

To learn more, contact Jessica Beyer at (507) 304-4491 or by e-mail at jessica.beyer@blueearthcountymn.gov.





The Blue Earth County Household Hazardous Waste Facility closes each winter season. It is closed from November through March. However, it's easy to safely store hazardous materials in your home this winter if you follow a few simple rules.

.....

1. Keep materials from freezing. Don't keep them in an unheated garage, shed or barn for the winter. This could destroy the effectiveness of yard and garden chemicals, and will ruin items like latex paint.
2. Keep materials away from furnaces and all other heat sources. If they catch fire, they will give off dangerous gases. Even if they don't catch fire, they could heat to the point of releasing harmful vapors.
3. Check to make sure containers aren't leaking.
4. Keep all products in the original containers with labels attached. If you do need to put a product in a new container, label that container to identify the material within. It's easy to forget what's inside over the long winter months.
5. Don't mix products.
6. Store products out of the reach of children and pets.

For more information, call the 24-Hour Waste and Recycling Hotline at (507) 304-4242, or visit www.blueearthcountymn.gov



Does My Project Require a Construction Permit?

By George Leary, County Zoning Administrator

The Blue Earth County Planning and Zoning office issues construction permits for projects in all rural areas of the county with the exception of municipalities, Lime Township and Mankato Township. The City of Mankato issues permits for Lime Township, and Mankato Township does their own zoning.

In general, proposed projects for structures or additions with a footprint greater than or equal to 120 square feet, require a construction permit. Although, smaller projects may not require a construction permit, the setback requirements of the county still apply. Modifications within an existing home that involve replacing a basement or converting existing living space into a bedroom also requires a permit. In those areas that are under the jurisdiction of the county, simple projects such as replacing siding, roofing, windows and doors do not require a permit. Other jurisdictions may require a permit for these

projects. Please check with your local zoning authority for applicable permit requirements.

In situations where construction has commenced without a permit, a double permit fee is assessed. Unfortunately these situations may include setback issues that lead to after-the-fact variance requests which are also charged a double fee and have the possibility of being denied by the County Board of Adjustment.

Some after-the-fact permit requests may involve activities that are prohibited within the zoning district involved.

In all cases it is best to contact the County Planning and Zoning office during the initial planning phase of your project to see what permits and setback requirements may be involved with your proposal. ■



For more information contact the Blue Earth County Environmental Services at (507) 304-4381.

Blue Earth County Highlighted for Energy Saving Practices

The Minnesota Department of Commerce recently featured Blue Earth County for its implementation of energy saving measures throughout its facilities.

The Blue Earth County story is part of a series of energy success stories that document the positive outcomes of energy improvement projects in public buildings in Minnesota. The stories were created by the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Division of Energy Resources.

The featured story on Blue Earth County facilities may be viewed at: <http://mn.gov/commerce> under the Energy and Information Resources sections.



SERVING YOU



Drew Campbell, Chair
 District 1 Commissioner
 P.O. Box 1283
 Mankato, MN 56002-1289c3
 387-2408 (H) / 382-1374 (C)
drew.campbell@blueearthcountymn.gov



Brad Peterson, Sheriff
 Blue Earth County Justice Center
 401 Carver Rd.
 Mankato, MN 56001
 304-4800 (O)
brad.peterson@blueearthcountymn.gov



Vance Stuehrenberg
 District 2 Commissioner
 2316 East Main St.
 Mankato, MN 56001
 388-8129 (H) / 317-3942 (C)
vances@blueearthcountymn.gov



Ross Arneson, County Attorney
 Blue Earth County Justice Center
 401 Carver Rd.
 Mankato, MN 56001
 304-4600 (O)



Mark Piepho
 District 3 Commissioner
 8 Skyline Drive
 Mankato, MN 56001
 345-4380 (H) / 327-4161 (C)
mark.piepho@blueearthcountymn.gov



Bob Meyer, County Administrator
 Blue Earth County Historic Courthouse
 204 S. Fifth St.
 Mankato, MN 56001
 304-4235 (O)
bob.meyer@blueearthcountymn.gov

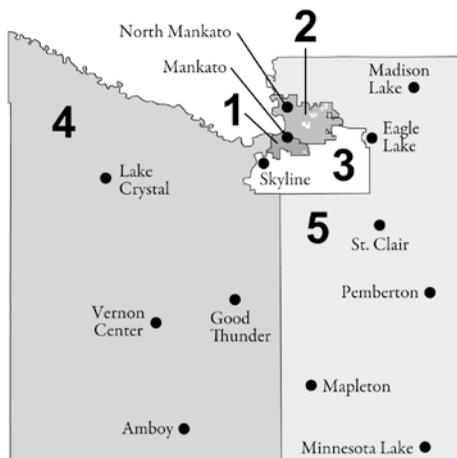


Will Purvis, Vice Chair
 District 4 Commissioner
 52298 140th Lane
 Vernon Center, MN 56090
 549-3420 (H) / 317-5465 (C)
will.purvis@blueearthcountymn.gov



Kip Bruender
 District 5 Commissioner
 204 Joan Lane
 Eagle Lake, MN 56024
 257-2116 (H) / 382-2440 (C)
kip.bruender@blueearthcountymn.gov

Blue Earth County COMMISSIONER DISTRICTS



Board Information

The Blue Earth County Board generally meets every other Tuesday in the Boardroom at the Blue Earth County Historic Courthouse, 204 South Fifth Street, Mankato. For more information and specific meeting dates and times visit:

www.blueearthcountymn.gov/board

Citizens who wish to address the Board of Commissioners at a meeting must contact Administration at 507-304-4284 before noon Thursday preceding the Board meeting. This is needed to manage the Board's schedule. The Board will not take action at the time of the presentation, but will direct County staff to respond appropriately to issues raised by citizens.

Write Now!

Write & Tell Us What You Think.

The Blue Earth County Board of Commissioners and other officials are committed to providing quality service to our residents. Responding to your concerns and needs is a priority.

Please fill out the information below and leave it with a receptionist at any County office, or mail it at your convenience to:

Blue Earth County Public Information
 P.O. Box 8608
 Mankato, MN 56002-8608
 or email info@blueearthcountymn.gov

With which County department did you have contact?

Please Evaluate: Excellent Good Poor

Courtesy of employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knowledge of employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Timeliness of service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Value of service provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I would like County officials to know:

I have a suggestion:

If you want us to respond to your comments:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime Phone: _____

**Thank you for your feedback.
 We appreciate your comments so
 we can serve you better!**



SERVICE DIRECTORY



Blue Earth County Justice Center
401 Carver Rd., Mankato



Blue Earth County Historic Courthouse
204 S. Fifth St., Mankato



County Government Center
410 S. Fifth St., Mankato

Probation

1st Floor 304-4750

Restitution/Restorative Justice
Adult & Juvenile Probation, Parole, Supervised Release and Diversion
Pre-trial Services/Bail Evaluation
Community Work Service Programs

County Sheriff/Emergency Services

1st Floor 304-4800

Burning Permits
Civil Process Office
Request a Crime Report
Report a Crime

5th Judicial District Court

2nd Floor 304-4650

Traffic Tickets
Small Claims Court
Civil and Criminal Court

County Attorney

2nd Floor 304-4600



Public Works Department
35 Map Dr., Mankato

Roads & Bridges 304-4025

Road/Bridge Construction & Inspection
Permits: Driveway, Overweight/Size Loads, Utility
Culvert Sales
Swing-away Mailbox Mounts
Calcium Chloride for Dust Control
Park & Trail System 304-4025
Camping & Shelter Reservations
Firewood Sales & Boat Rental
Agricultural Inspection 304-4025
Weed Control & Seed Testing

Facilities and Management

Lower Level 304-4249

Finance

Lower Level 304-4182

Taxpayer Services – Property Information/Passports

1st Floor 304-4251

Property Assessment & Tax Collection
Abstracts/Certificates for Registered Land
Mapping
Ditch Management
Passports

Administration

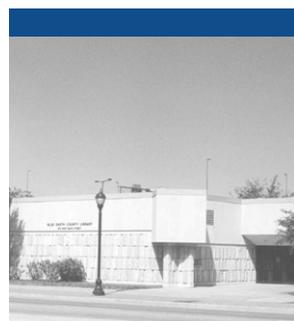
2nd Floor 304-4150

Human Resources 304-4288
Public Information 304-4491

U of M Extension

3rd Floor 304-4325

Agriculture 304-4143
4-H/Youth Development 304-4142
Horticulture 304-4146
Misc. Program Areas 304-4326
Nutrition Education Program 304-4141



Blue Earth County Library
100 E. Main St., Mankato

General Services 304-4001

Children's & Young Adult Services 304-4020
Adult & Reference Services 304-4022
Fines & Renewals 304-4010
Meeting Room Reservations 304-4002
Administration 304-4002
Mapleton Public Library 524-3513
Lake Crystal Public Library 726-2726

Taxpayer Services – License Center/Elections

Lower Level 304-4340

Driver's Licenses
Motor Vehicle/Boat Registration
Fishing/Hunting Licenses
Birth/Death Certificates
Marriage Licenses
Voter Registration/Absentee Ballots
Filing of Notaries

Veterans Services

Lower Level 304-4246

Federal & State Benefits
Transportation to VA Hospital

Information Technology

Lower Level 304-4204

Human Services

1st/2nd/3rd Floors

Main Line 304-4222
Financial Assistance 304-4335
Social Services 304-4319
Community Health 304-4319
Mental Health Center 304-4319
Child Protection/Intake 304-4444
Child Support 304-4166

Environmental Services

3rd Floor 304-4381

Planning & Zoning
Building & Feedlot Permits
Shorelands/Flood Plains
Water Wells/Septic Systems/Wetlands
Recycling Center/Compost Site/Landfill
Household Hazardous Waste Center
911/Rural Addressing

Serving Citizens Through County Government

Other County Facilities/Numbers

Household Hazardous Waste Facility
651 Summit Ave., Mankato, 304-4242

Ponderosa Landfill
20028 Gooseberry Lane, Mankato, 625-7301

Recycling Center
741 Waseca Ave., LeHillier, 345-4255

24-Hour Waste and Recycling Hotline, 304-4242
County TTY/TDD (Hearing Impaired), 304-4399



BLUE EARTH COUNTY

visit us online:
www.blueearthcountymn.gov

