

# County Administrator's Digest

March 23, 2012

Alan G. Vanderberg, County Administrator

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It is definitely high time for a Digest update and I will get back on track with making this a mostly weekly event again. Life got busy with preparation for the State of the County Address, my son Peter Vanderberg's Eagle Scout Court of Honor, the NACO Conference, dealing with the EVIP situation, and other excitement.

## **COUNTY BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS ADDED TO DIGEST LIST**

I'm pleased to welcome the County appointed Board and Commission members to the Digest distribution list. The Digest is intended to be a weekly message from myself to the Board of Commissioners. I wrote a similar weekly message to the South Haven City Council when I served as City Manager there and Daryl Delabio had and I think still has a similar message for the Kent County Board of Commissioners (where I also previously served as Deputy County Administrator). We have added many groups to the distribution list and the Digest is also available on miOttawa.org.

## **LEGISLATIVE FORUM CHANGE OF DATE**

The Legislative Forum, originally scheduled for March 23, 2012 has been rescheduled for May 4, 2012 from 8:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. in the Main Conference Room at the Ottawa County Fillmore Street Complex.

The Legislative Forum is hosted by the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners on a bi-annual basis. This forum provides an opportunity for local leaders and area legislators to discuss current legislative issues. At this time, Representatives Agema, Hughes, and Price have confirmed their attendance.

## **2012 STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS**

I plan to start a series of communications related to portions of the State of the County address and where we are going with the Four C's: Communication; Customer Service; Continuous Improvement; and Cultural Competency. The 2012 State of the County Address can be found on miOttawa.org and I've included it



with the Digest for your ready reference ([click here](#)).

### **COOPERSVILLE OUTHOUSE 500**



On Saturday, February 25, 2012, members from the Ottawa County Sheriff's Office participated in the annual Coopersville Outhouse 500. This event consisted of an outhouse on wheels and racing it down Main Street in the City of Coopersville. The Sheriff's Office took 1st place with an average time of 16.85 in the 3 heats



of the 500 foot course.

The Coopersville/Polkton Fire Department hosted this event for the community.

### **FEBRUARY DISPATCH STATS** (Tim Smith)

The numbers handled through Central Dispatch for February 2012 were:

<b>Total Incidents –</b>	8,079 even with February 2011 and up 1.1% YTD over 2011
<b>Fire Incidents –</b>	987 down 2% over February 2011 and up 1% YTD over 2011
<b>Law Incidents –</b>	7,092 up 1% over February 2011 and up 1.2% YTD over 2011
<b>911 Calls –</b>	7,384 even with February 2011 and up 1.2% YTD over 2011
<b>911 Hang Up calls -</b>	875 up 8% over February 2011 and up 5.2% YTD over 2011
<b>Wireless 911 calls –</b>	86.1% of 911 calls for February and 85.4% of 911 calls YTD
<b>911 calls answered in 10 seconds or less -</b>	94.9% for February and 95% YTD 2012
(NENA recommended standard is 90% within 10 seconds)	

### **ROAD COMMISSION LOAN FOR WRIGHT TOWNSHIP BRIDGE**

We recently received the news that the Road Commission no longer needs the short-term Infrastructure Fund loan approved by Commissioners for the bridge repair in Wright Township as a sort of bridge financing until grant revenue is received.

## "COPS AND COFFEE"

Coming to a neighborhood near you...

The Ottawa County Sheriff's Office has teamed up with area McDonalds to provide a unique opportunity for community residents to chat with members of the sheriff's office over a cup of coffee. Most of the time interaction with law enforcement is limited to a few questions when someone steals something from you or you get caught speeding. Cops and Coffee brings everyone together for some genuine conversation. For the past two weeks members from the sheriff's office have been answering questions such as how is the speed limit set and what can I do about it?, What can be done about people cutting through private parking lots to avoid traffic signals? Do I need to stop leaving a private drive? Many questions that probably never get asked, all over a free cup of coffee, thanks to McDonalds. In addition, residents were provided with the opportunity to learn how to access the county incident mapping program, how to sign up for the community alerts program or how to register their home for a security check when they go out of town. McDonalds in Coopersville, Allendale, Hudsonville, and Jenison have already held a "Cops and Coffee" event with dates forthcoming in the Holland area.

With the positive contacts and interest that was shown in the host communities the Sheriff's Office will be scheduling future "Cops and Coffee" opportunities at the various locations.

[http://www.mlive.com/jenison/index.ssf/2012/03/locals\\_turn\\_out\\_for\\_free\\_coffe.html](http://www.mlive.com/jenison/index.ssf/2012/03/locals_turn_out_for_free_coffe.html)

## URBAN SMART GROWTH DEMONSTRATION PROJECT (Paul Sachs)



Talsma Furniture expansion in Downtown Hudsonville

One of the more progressive components of the County Planning Commission's Urban Smart Growth Demonstration Project is the creation of a vibrant downtown core in the City of Hudsonville. When the County and City first teamed-up to implement the Project, there was not a pronounced or clearly recognizable downtown area in Hudsonville. Over the years, however, things are beginning to change.

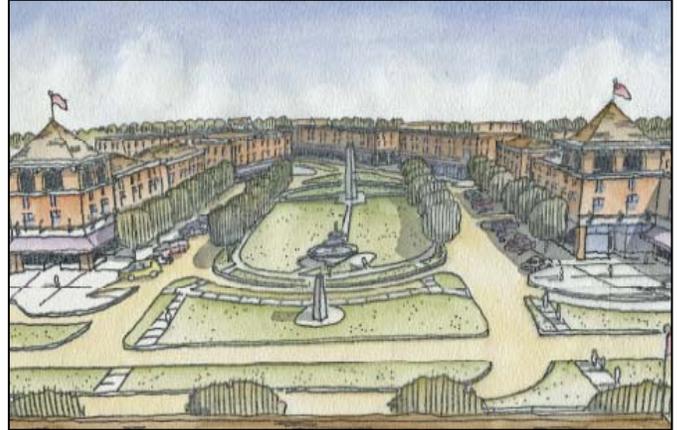
After completing an innovative architectural guidebook for the City in 2006, several new buildings have been constructed and/or proposed in the community which are indicative of the architectural style that Hudsonville wants to create in its downtown shopping district and commercial areas. These

buildings include Mr. Burger Restaurant, Talsma Furniture, McConomy Photography, Autozone, and West Michigan Community Bank.

Another innovative component of the Project is to create a central town square (i.e. Village Green). The Village Green concept originated from the award-winning Downtown Master Plan that was completed for the City in

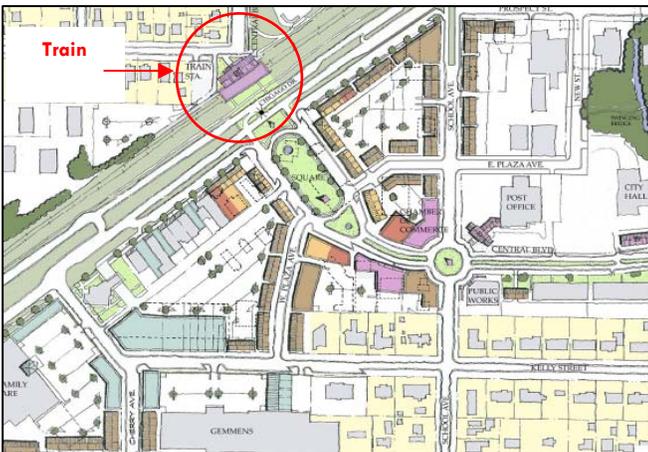
2007. The Plan specifies areas for higher-density, mixed-use buildings in downtown Hudsonville, an improved street grid that is more pedestrian-friendly, a redefined block structure that can facilitate new development, and the Village Green area which will increase opportunities for social engagement.

The City is in the process of requesting funding from the MDNR's Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant to purchase 1.08 acres of land for the new Village Green in the community's emerging downtown center.



Proposed Village Green in Downtown Hudsonville

The Downtown Master Plan also proposes the construction of a Train Depot. The Depot would be situated on the north side of Chicago Drive (M-121) opposite the Village Green. A Depot in this location would provide more connectivity between the City (which is currently bisected by M-121 and the CSX railroad tracks), and help to boost tourism, promote mass transit, and further enhance the vibrancy of downtown.



Proposed Train Depot and Village Green in Downtown Hudsonville

Whether or not the Train Depot concept becomes a reality remains to be seen. Notwithstanding, many exciting things are continuing to happen in Hudsonville including the recent opening of a new micro-brewery and developing plans to create a Dr. Seuss-themed sculpture park and children's learning center near downtown.

## **MARCH COUNTY CONNECTIONS**

The March County Connections newsletter is included with this Digest ([click here](#)).

## **GVMC DIRECTOR WEISS UPDATE**

New GVMC Executive Director John Weiss is off to a great start and is doing a weekly update to the GVMC Board that he is encouraging Board Members to share with others. This week's update is included with the Digest ([click here](#)).



# STATE OF OTTAWA COUNTY 2012

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PRESENTED BY COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR  
ALAN G. VANDERBERG TO THE  
OTTAWA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
FEBRUARY 28, 2012

Chair Kuyers, Vice-Chair Holtrop, and members of the Board, I thank you for the opportunity to present this 8<sup>th</sup> annual State of the County address in which I will reflect on some of the accomplishments of the past year and also focus on new initiatives for 2012 and beyond. Our vision is to make Ottawa County the first choice for people to live, work, and play. 2010 U.S. Census data released last year showed that Ottawa County is still the fastest growing county over 200,000 in population and the County has the distinction of being the sole County among Michigan's 83 counties to grow at a double-digit rate for each of the past 5 decades. Ottawa County is committed to excellence and the delivery of cost-effective public services. This mission clearly defines who we are for our residents, customers, and employees. We continue to focus on four overarching goals as follows:

- 1) MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE THE STRONG FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE COUNTY
- 2) MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE COMMUNICATION WITH CITIZENS, EMPLOYEES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS
- 3) CONTRIBUTE TO A HEALTHY PHYSICAL, ECONOMIC, AND COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT
- 4) CONTINUALLY IMPROVE THE COUNTY'S ORGANIZATION AND SERVICES

The first goal, MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE THE STRONG FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE COUNTY, is so critical to what we do. Residents trust Ottawa County government to use tax dollars wisely, and with Michigan's economic climate, prudence and foresight has always been important to our organization. We stand on the shoulders of prior Boards and Administrations and have a responsibility to make decisions that will allow future Boards and Administrations to stand on our shoulders.

The County has accomplished much over the past 30 years in terms of excellence in financial management:

- The general property tax levy stands at 3.6 mills, 5<sup>th</sup> lowest in the state and the Board takes \$6,300,000 less in property taxes than allowed by the Headlee cap.
- Other Post Employment Benefit (OPEB) expense is very low compared to other county and city governments at \$793,596.
- The Financing Tools including the Solid Waste Clean-up Fund, Infrastructure Fund, Public Improvement Fund, Stabilization Fund, Delinquent Tax Revolving Fund, and Equipment Replacement Fund, save taxpayers \$7.1 million per year, or the equivalent of .7642 mills.
- Effective cost allocation programs charge \$800,000 in overhead expense to state and federal grants.

- The Board added a major piece to this legacy of good management in 2011 when it decided to move all new County hires into a defined contribution plan instead of the current MERS Defined Benefit plan. In 2011, employees representing sixteen of seventeen pension groups have agreed to this change which is estimated to save County taxpayers an estimated net \$30 million after 30 years.
- A new health benefit plan began on January 1, 2011 and we experienced first year savings in excess of \$4.8 million. A new health management plan was also initiated with the goal of significantly reducing future claims expense.
- The Board approved an investment of \$1.6 million in a new Enterprise Resource Planning system (ERP).

### Financial challenges for 2012:

- Property tax value is expected to continue to go down, albeit much slower than in recent years at 1.25%.
- Governor Snyder's proposed budget would threaten revenue sharing as a stable source of revenue.
- State leaders plan to eliminate the Personal Property Tax which nets \$2.7 million for the County General Fund. The challenge will be the extent to which the tax is replaced from other sources.
- On the expenditure side of the equation, the 2013 cost of the healthcare benefit will be our largest concern.
- We continue to enjoy the top credit ratings of FitchRatings (AAA) and Moodys Ratings (Aaa) and plan to seek the top rating of Standard & Poors later this year.

### Our second goal is to MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE COMMUNICATION WITH CITIZENS, EMPLOYEES, AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS.

It has become an important practice to periodically gather input and data from our employees and residents. An employee survey was administered in June of 2011 to obtain objective information from employees on their perceptions regarding the status of the organization. We were pleased to receive a marked increase in employee participation (64%), the highest since the initial survey conducted in 2005. Results continue to indicate a marked improvement in communication and overall satisfaction from that first survey, although with a softening in overall satisfaction linked to the economy and associated effects on employee benefits. To maintain and improve those results we will continue efforts such as brown bag lunches, the employee newsletter, Administrator's Digest and *Casting for Comments*, and the Labor-Management Cooperation Committee. Overall, the dedication and professionalism of our employees continues to be the main ingredient in being able to offer a high level of services in a time of economic constraint. In 2012 a citizen survey will again be used to ask

residents' opinions about county services and priorities for the four strategic plan goals, serving as a gut check for the Board.

The County website, miOttawa.org, continues to improve upon its status as an award-winning website. The website continues to offer increased services to residents and businesses online, which is not only more convenient for the citizen but also increases the efficiency of our operations. The site generated 25% more revenue for departments in 2011, which translated into a 12% increase in convenience fee revenue.

Highlights from 2011 include the following:

- The Planning and Performance Improvement Department created two web-based Performance Dashboards in an effort to provide greater transparency to the public. The first Dashboard compares Ottawa County to the State using the State's format and the second dashboard is comprised of County data.
- The Fiscal Services Department completed the 20-page *Dollars and Sense: How Ottawa County Spends Your Money* and was added to miOttawa.org in September.

The third goal established in the strategic plan is to CONTRIBUTE TO A HEALTHY PHYSICAL, ECONOMIC, AND COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT.

- In June 2011, Ottawa County was awarded a \$20,000 grant from the United States Department of Agriculture to complete a Market & Needs Assessment, Feasibility Study, and Business Plan for an agriculture-based technology business incubator.
- The Agricultural Preservation Board established both endowed and non-endowed funds through two separate local community foundations for the purpose of purchasing development rights in order to permanently preserve agricultural land.
- The Ottawa County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA) approved their first Brownfield Plan on April 27, 2011 for Cedar Crest Dairy in the City of Hudsonville. This project included \$2,152,007 in local investment and will also clean up a contaminated site and create 17-20 new jobs.
- The Ottawa County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) approved the issuance of up to \$10 million in limited obligation refunding revenue bonds for Hope College, saving the college an estimated \$3.2 million.
- In 2011, Ottawa County was ranked as the healthiest county in Michigan.

Water quality remains an important component for maintaining a high quality of life in Ottawa County.

- In 2011, Ottawa County hosted its Sixth Annual Water Quality Forum. One of the highlights from this year's forum included a presentation from Dr. Elizabeth Alm, of Central Michigan University, regarding a grant to monitor Sea Gulls on Lake Michigan beaches, and the effects they have on the amount of bacteria in the beach sand. The planned study area will be the city and state beaches in Grand Haven.
- The Institute of Water Research at Michigan State University (IWR) was selected in 2011 to conduct a countywide Water Resource Study which will provide decision-making tools and policy recommendations that will help the County and local units to address groundwater issues.

The Parks and Recreation Commission made progress in 2011 in acquiring land to establish greenways along the county's river corridors including the following highlights:

- Following over 10 years of work, a 100 acre site in Georgetown Township with outstanding views of the Grand River was finally acquired to create a new 168 acre park called Grand River Ravines.
- The Grand River Open Space in Tallmadge Township was expanded with the acquisition of 122 acres with funding assistance from Ducks Unlimited and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.
- The Marne Bog Natural Area was expanded from 40 acres to 83 acres with an acquisition that also helped to accomplish the Board's objective to protect an agricultural business from impact from the extension of the Musketawa Trail through Wright Township.
- The Parks Commission was excited to open the new Holland Harbor Fishing Access, an impressive new waterfront walkway with fishing docks located at the Historic Ottawa Beach Parks, previously known as Park 12 in Park Township.
- Park improvements were also completed at Eastmanville Bayou Open Space located on the south side of the Grand River near the Eastmanville Bridge.
- Ground breaking also took place in the fall at the Olive Shores site on Lake Michigan in Port Sheldon Township and at Connor Bayou in Robinson Township with both new parks scheduled to open in 2013.

The final goal established by the Board of Commissioners is to CONTINUALLY IMPROVE THE COUNTY'S ORGANIZATION AND SERVICES.

Since 2003, outcome-based evaluations completed by the Planning and Performance Improvement Department have saved over *\$6.9 million* in taxpayer dollars as a result of recommendations that modified, privatized, or discontinued ineffective programs

and services. Moreover, *\$25 million* in County programming and services has been verified as cost-effective through the evaluation process.

The Planning and Performance Improvement Department, in conjunction with Department officials, took the development of the outcome based performance system to a new level with the completion of performance plans that will serve as the cornerstone of the County's new Performance-Based Budgeting System. This comprehensive set of performance measures, related to workload, efficiency, outcomes, and customer service, is one of the only known programs which incorporates measures that quantify actual department outcomes and ties it back to the budgeting process.

Major progress was made with intergovernmental collaboration in 2011 including the following highlights:

- The County and City of Grand Haven approved a contract whereby the Ottawa County Equalization Department provides City Assessor services for Grand Haven.
- The City of Grand Haven and Ottawa County successfully competed for a Michigan Municipal League grant to study possible collaboration with Finance, Treasury, and Human Resources services.
- The finishing touches are being put on an agreement where the Ottawa County Facilities Department will perform periodic maintenance inspection for City of Holland building systems.
- Local governments cooperating with the County were able to access just over \$50,000 in funding for energy audits and nearly \$380,000 in funding for projects to improve energy efficiency projects through the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) federal program.

### **2012 AND BEYOND**

We have an exciting year to look forward to as we work to raise the County organization to a new level in what is being referred to as "the four C's" including Communication, Customer Service, Continuous Improvement, and Cultural Competency.

#### **Communication**

The Board of Commissioners adopted a Communications Plan for Ottawa County two years ago and amended the plan last year. The decision of the Grand Rapids Press and other publications to distribute three days per week instead of seven, the greatly reduced coverage of County Board and Standing Committee meetings, and the exploding nature of social media communication has necessitated that we take a more aggressive approach to communication. We will create a new Countywide Marketing

and Communications Manager position in the County Administration for the following purposes:

- Make communications services available to County departments and offices through the Administrator's Office much like GCSI lobbyist services are available to County departments and offices through the Administration.
- Aggressively implement the Board of Commissioner's Communications Plan including new social media approaches.
- Work to develop news stories with quotes and photos on important Board actions and other County business and submit these to the various media markets.
- Manage and promote speaker's bureau.

For 2012, we will utilize 25 percent of Shannon Felgner's time in the Administrator's Office and she will continue to spend the balance of her time serving as the Communication Specialist with the Ottawa County Health Department. If demand for the position is as strong as we suspect, we would then plan to implement the position full-time effective January 2013.

### **Customer Service**

In my role as a consumer I have seen dramatic shifts in customer service in recent years. It is not difficult to tell which organizations have invested heavily in customer service and which have not. I was at the teller window in my bank and while a check was being cashed a customer service representative approached me and informed me that if I made minor changes in our accounts I could make a little more interest. While purchasing paint at an area lumber yard, I was presented with a card that tracks all paint purchases, color & mixes, what room the paint is used in, all for use in future paint purchases. We also know when we have received bad customer service as depicted in the famous Discount Tire advertisement in which an elderly woman heaves a tire through a plate glass display window.

A new initiative for 2012 will be the development of an Ottawa County unique brand of customer service. As a large, decentralized County with 35 departments, courts, offices, and agencies delivering services from multiple locations we have significant variation in customer service. We will engage County leaders in an inclusive effort to develop a consistent customer service approach and will include the new approach in employee training programs from orientation moving forward. We plan to develop process tools from Disney, Nordstrom, and other models of excellence while making sure that the customer service brand retains our own Ottawa County DNA. Misty Cunningham will work closely with this effort as she is currently the focal point of many of those seeking

service from Ottawa County. Both our external and internal customers deserve the very best customer service and our goal will be to do just that!

### **Continuous Improvement**

The *lizard brain* is the part of the human brain that unconsciously protects us. For example, if you have ever driven somewhere, arrived, and not remembered the actual driving part...the lizard brain got you there safely. The lizard brain also remembers times when we were embarrassed and tries to avoid those situations in the future. A great lizard brain example is the story of the young couple that celebrates their first Christmas together and invites her parents and grandparents for dinner. As she is preparing the ham she cuts both ends off and puts it in the pan and then into the oven. She pauses and asks her mother why it is that they always cut the ends off of the ham when preparing it. Her mother thinks and says that the daughter should ask the grandmother why the ham is prepared this way because this is also the way that the mother has always prepared the ham. When the grandmother is asked the question upon arrival, she responds that when she and the grandfather were first married, they had a small pan to cook the ham in and both ends were cut off in order for the ham to fit into the pan. We have an example from one department where a certain document was being handled with two separate stamping processes. When a new department head asked why this was the case he learned that a mistake had been made 10 years ago and the second stamp process added. It was determined that the second process added little value and 4 hours of employee time was immediately terminated when the process was ended. Most organizations have many examples of this that can be ferreted out.

We believe that organizations have lizard brains as well, epitomized by bureaucratic work process routines that go on for decades, in some cases without being questioned. The County has accomplished many initiatives that have attacked the unconscious routines such as departmental reviews and program evaluations that have implemented changes that have saved over \$6.9 million in the past 8 years. The new Justice Imaging system, miOttawa.org, and the new Fiscal Services ERP are examples of radical changes to long term work process flows that have resulted in increased efficiency and in some cases, bottom-line cost savings.

State and federal revenue sources are down and economists say that it will take a long time for the tax base to recover once we break even and begin to add value once again. We must look within the organization for efficiencies that will provide additional resources for the future. The City of Grand Rapids has documented savings of approximately \$1 million per year from its continuous improvement program and the City of Fort Wayne has documented more than \$33 million in savings from its program.

The point person for this initiative will be Shannon McGoran, currently a .70 FTE Accountant in Fiscal Services.

### **Cultural Competency**

Another new initiative for 2012 will be development of an in-house cultural competency effort to complement efforts by major private and non-profit sector organizations to improve cultural competency throughout the organization in order to better compete for the global talent pool. The basic premise is that if this is critically important to major employers in the County we should be active and involved as well. We will engage county business, minority, and educational leaders in a process to define cultural competency and build a learning program around it.

Changes necessary to staff these initiatives on an ongoing basis will be part of a larger reorganization involving the Administrator's Office, Fiscal Services, and Human Resources that will result in net savings to the budget. Temporary consulting services may be utilized to get one or more of these initiatives up and running.

There will be other new initiatives in addition to the four C's. We will continue to define and develop the concept of *Administrative Infrastructure*. Ottawa County has a number of administrative departments that support all departments and offices of the County and are necessary for the effective functioning of the organization including Fiscal Services, Human Resources, Information Technology, Facilities, Corporation Counsel, and Planning and Performance Improvement. In the past we have made specific programs and systems available to local units of government such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Justice Imaging and miOttawa.org. The Governor's push for intergovernmental collaboration is causing Ottawa County and others to reevaluate our *Administrative Infrastructure* in order to determine what extent efficiencies can be gained and redundancy eliminated by combining some functions with other local governments.

Initiatives for 2012 include the following:

- Continue the many ongoing discussions with local units of government relative to cost sharing.
- Complete the Road Commission and Public Utilities Report separately examining how best these functions should be organized.
- Continue working with the Holland/Zeeland Future Search process, now a formal standing committee of the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council, as these eleven governments work to find commonality in service provision.

- Continue working with the 8 counties that make up the West Michigan Strategic Alliance to find areas of cooperation.
- A study of the Information Technology function to position the County in the rapidly changing technology world will be completed by early summer, a focus on how to define and maximize cloud computing opportunities and IT for an increased role as business solutions consultant to the organization will be important facets of the evaluation.
- A renewed focus on development of a volunteer system utilizing the increasing number of Baby Boom generation retirees and youth looking for opportunities to gain experience. This will also include a component of seeking youth participation on various County boards and commissions.

### **Conclusion**

Former hockey great Wayne Gretsky once said “A good hockey player plays where the puck is. A great hockey player plays where the puck is going to be.” Ottawa County has thus far survived the Great Recession and its aftermath by continuing to make investments in facilities, technology, and most importantly; employees. Raising the organization to a greater capacity in the areas of communication, customer service, continuous improvement, and cultural competency further moves the County to where the puck will be in the future.

The Administration and staff appreciate the leadership of the Board of Commissioners and look forward to working with you toward the betterment of Ottawa County in 2012.



# COUNTY CONNECTIONS

## Health Management Committee: Free Downloadable Applications for your Smart Phone



There are many new applications available to monitor your health and wellness. The following is an application that one of our employees uses and wanted to share with fellow county employees. It is called **Calorie Counter** and is presented by Fat Secret.

*This app was FREE on my Smart Phone Market App. Since I have been OBSESSED with this app, I have lost 12.5 pounds. When you first download the app, it requires that you give all of your personal information such as your height, your current weight, your weight loss goal, what kind of lifestyle you live (active, sedentary, etc..) if you want slow and steady weight loss or fast weight loss, etc. From there it will calculate how many calories per day that you should be targeting and it begins your diary.*

*I love the diary!!! It has a search engine for all types of foods so you can save them to your food diary. It has a Bar Code Reader so that you can pick up any food that has a bar code and it will bring that information up on the phone. You can change the serving size if you know you want more than one serving, and then you can save it to your diary automatically.*

*It also has convenient exercise options that will subtract calories from your daily food log.*

*It keeps a weight loss graph and chart for you, so you can go into the chart and see your weight loss results. If you want to lose weight and want to have a super handy monitoring system, this app is DEFINITELY for you!!!*

## Getting to Know...Rick Vandekerkhoff

*By Penni DeWitt*



Rick's first full-time job was at Michigan Bell Telephone as a telephone operator where he was the sixth male operator MBT had hired in Grand Rapids. His supervisor was the sister of Malcolm X! Rick has developed an extensive background in real estate, facilities and operations. While in maintenance at Ma Bell, Ameritech outsourced to Johnson Controls all operations and maintenance responsibilities. Rick transferred to JCI and continued his education at Davenport and Ferris State. As an Operations Manager at JCI and General Manager at Jones Lang LaSalle he managed facilities for Ameritech, General Motors and Pfizer. He also held positions as commercial manager at Prudential Preferred Realtors and as Facility Director for the YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids.

He has been active in his community with the Rockford Jaycees and Chamber of Commerce. He served on Rockford's Planning Commission for three years and six years on the City Council. He served two terms as Mayor for Rockford and in the

*(Continued on page 2)*

### Our new Facilities Director

#### Newsletter Editorial Board

Sherry Costello Penni DeWitt Shannon Felgner  
Kim Hewitt Laura Mousseau Karen Otto

Thank you for your suggestions for the newsletter. We encourage you to continue submitting them to any Newsletter Board member. Every idea is considered even if it does not appear in a newsletter. The Newsletter Editorial Board reserves the right to edit submissions as needed.

#### Inside This Issue

Volunteering in the Parks  
Who We Really Are...  
Kouty Kudos

# Third Annual Katty Shack Run/Walk

By Deanna Sears and Joan Grillo

As a kick-off to National Crime Victim Rights' Week, the Third Annual Katty Shack 5K & 1 Mile Run/Walk will be held in Grand Haven to benefit **The Crime Victim Foundation**, a non-profit agency that provides assistance to victims of crime in Michigan. This year marks the 20-year anniversary of the establishment of the foundation, created by former Senator William VanRegenmorter, a Jenison native, and author of the Crime Victim's Rights Act of 1985.

The event honors the memory of four victims who lost their lives in 2008. Sharmaine Zimmer and her sons, Jeremy and Tyler, and Katherine Brown, were killed in an arson/murder in Wright Township. Prosecutor Ronald J. Frantz successfully prosecuted Troy Brake in July of 2009 for the crimes. Katherine Brown's mother, Natalie Kik-Brown, and Joan Grillo, Crime Victims Rights Coordinator for the Ottawa County Prosecutor's Office, organize the event each year. The "Katty Shack" Race gets its name from a nickname given to Katherine Brown by friends who ran cross country with her at Michigan State University.

The course starts and ends near Mulligan's Hollow in Grand Haven. Jennifer Juhasz and Team Jazzercise will start warming up participants at 8:00 a.m. A pre-race ceremony to honor all victims of crime begins at 8:45 a.m. The 5K begins at 9:00 a.m., with the 1 Mile start shortly thereafter. New this year is a free pancake breakfast for all participants following the race. The breakfast will be held at the Grand Haven American Legion.

Open to All Ages!  
Discounted Family Fee!  
Awards & Post-Race Refreshments!

3rd Annual  
**KATTY SHACK 5K Run**  
**\$1 Mile Run/Walk**

This event endorsed by  
GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL  
MICHIGAN FITNESS  
WISDOM AND SPORTS

Saturday, 4-21-12  
Grand Haven, MI • 9:00 am  
New Course!  
Race begins at Mulligan's Hollow!

Registration info @  
<http://kattyshackrace.webs.com>  
or register online @ [www.signmeup.com](http://www.signmeup.com)

Follow us on twitter @kattyshackrace  
Find us on facebook @kattyShack 2012

**DON'T MISS THESE EVENTS!**

**Fuel Up for Katty Shack Pasta Dinner**  
@ ST. PATRICK'S FAMILY CENTER  
920 FULTON ST., GRAND HAVEN  
FRIDAY APRIL 20TH FROM 4 - 7 PM

**Post Race Pancake Breakfast**  
@ GRAND HAVEN AMERICAN LEGION  
700 HARBOR AVE.  
RACE AWARDS & DOOR PRIZES!

The Katty Shack Race is in loving memory of Katherine Brown, Sharmaine, Jeremy, & Tyler Zimmer, victims of the 2008 Wright Township crime that shocked & devastated Ottawa County.

100% of proceeds benefit  
**The Crime Victim Foundation**  
Helping Victims of Crime in Michigan

20 Years of Helping in 2012

## Rick Vandekerkhoff *(Continued from page 1)*

1990s visited South Korea through an exchange program for Rotary International which reinforced his appreciation for what we have here in the USA! Rick is still active in the community, currently serving on Rockford's Economic Development Corporation and as trustee for the Rockford Education Foundation. For the past ten years Rick has also been the emcee for Relay for Life in Rockford.

Rick has lived in Rockford for 31 years. He has been married for 34 years to his wife Pam. She works as the principal's secretary in one of Rockford's elementary schools and does medical transcription at home. Rick and Pam have two boys: Scott, who lives in New York, currently pursuing his MBA at Columbia, and Kyle, a Berklee College of Music graduate who lives in LA and works at Interscope Records as a recording engineer.

Rick believes in the three "R's" with regard to supervision: respect, responsibility, and recognition. His favorite sayings are "it's all temporary" and "it's not about me" when dealing with issues! Rick thoroughly enjoys his position and the people here in Ottawa County and hopes to serve for many years to come.

# Who We Really Are...



Alan (right) and his father (left) in 2010 going to Haiti after the earthquake.

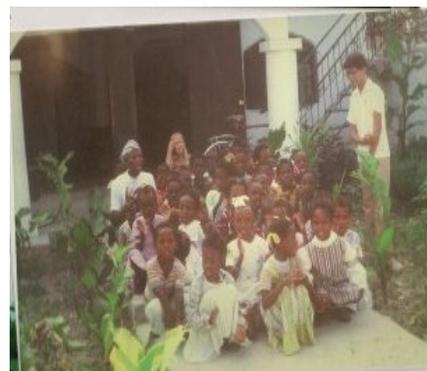
## Alan Vanden Bosch

Although born in Michigan, Alan Vanden Bosch (Juvenile Court) and his family moved to Haiti in 1978 where his parents who had been on mission trips before decided to make a five year commitment to the Haitian people. The family lived in St. Marc which is a very large city north of the capital of Port-Au-Prince. They started an orphanage and raised sixty orphans, 30 boys and 30 girls. The building also housed the church and a school. They also started eight congregations

throughout the area. Quite a few of the orphans they raised now have families of their own and work with other Americans who are working in St. Marc as a result of what the Vanden Bosch's helped start. Alan learned how to speak the language, Creole, fluently very quickly and was an interpreter for his dad and other missionaries. At one point they had a radio ministry and the Haitians would come to see the little 'blanc' (slang for white person) who could speak like a Haitian. They did not live in a gated compound but assimilated into the culture which facilitated the work they did with the Haitians. Alan's mom, an LVN, ran a front porch clinic with donated over-the-counter meds which was hugely successful as even basic medical treatment was difficult to come by. Alan (who can still speak Creole) and his father went back to Haiti in April of 2010 to help with the earthquake disaster relief and have been offered the use of property to build another church/school/orphanage. Now living in Allendale, Alan, his wife and two daughters, Valerie (11) and Stephanie (6), continue to help the people of Haiti. Valerie's Girl Scout troop is collecting new and gently used Barbie dolls and soccer balls as their service project to send to the children of Haiti.



The Vanden Bosch family in Haiti. (Alan is front row, right)



Alan (far right standing) with a class of Haitian orphans



## Life in Croatia

**Bethany Vukusic-Clubhouse Team Supervisor  
Community Mental Health**

I was privileged to be able to spend four years living and working in Split, Croatia (2003-2007). I had initially committed to one year and that quickly turned into two and then four. I was working with World Hope International and a local church by teaching English classes, organizing summer camps for teens, hosting an interna-

tional conference for teens from across Europe and North America and studying Croatian language in the local university. I enjoyed living in the midst of such rich history. Split is built around the still-standing palace of the Roman Emperor, Diocletian. This serves as the city center and is directly on the coast of the Adriatic Sea. The mountains provide a gorgeous backdrop to this coastal city. I enjoyed walking to the outdoor market for fresh fruits and vegetables daily and of course the amazing European breads made fresh at the bakeries each day. While living in Croatia I had the opportunity to travel to various cities in Bosnia, Slovenia, Austria, Germany and Italy. I've always struggled to find lasting and meaningful souvenirs but this time I think I got it right. I returned to the states with my best friend and husband, Josko, who I met and fell in love with while I was living in Croatia; the best souvenir I could ever imagine! We enjoy returning to Split annually to visit friends and family and to enjoy the beautiful Adriatic Sea.



Juvenile Detention workers Janna Jackman and Michael Wingo always come to work with shoes that match their shirt. Both have many, many colors of shoes. Today they match each other!

# Kounty Kudos

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Sgt. Keith Koeman retired from the Ottawa County Sheriff's Office on February 29, 2012. Keith spent 30 years with the county and was a valuable asset to the department. He is kick-starting his retirement by heading south to sail and scuba dive. Congratulations Keith!



Kathy Kuck (Human Resources) retired on January 29, 2012, after 34 years of service to the people of Ottawa County. Kathy worked in the MSU Extension Office prior to joining the Human Resources team in 1985. She will be sorely missed by her co-workers and all the employees she assisted over the years. We wish her all the best in her new adventures.



Congratulations to Nelleke Knarr for receiving two "Certificates of Appreciation" from the United States Department of State National Passport Center for the outstanding work she did on December 29, 2011 and February 2, 2012.

Congratulations to the newly promoted employees in the Sheriff's Office. Former Sergeant Robert Tease was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant in February and will be serving as the Uniform Operations Lieutenant. David Vanderploeg and Matt Wildfong were both promoted to the rank of Sergeant.

Jennifer Sorek (Public Health) and her husband Dan welcomed their second child, a boy named Gregory Edwin, on Friday, March 2. Although a few weeks early, Gregory weighed in at 6 lbs., 11 ozs, and has been warmly welcomed by big sister Maggie, who will turn 2 in August. Congratulations to the Sorek family!



Legal Self-Help Center

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Find us on Facebook

## Legal Self-Help Center

The Legal Self-Help Center is proud to announce that they have recently started a Facebook page for the center. They would like to invite everyone to visit their page and "Like" it. Pass the word, and tell others about it too.

They have information there about the services they provide, the forms they carry, and their hours.

The official name is "Legal Self-Help Center | Ottawa County."

# Helping the Parks: Volunteering



## Stewardship Programs and Work Days

**Volunteer Open House** Saturday, April 14 10:00 a.m. to noon at the Nature Education Center

Do you love Ottawa County Parks? Have you wanted to find a way to get involved? This spring, Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission is hosting an open house to launch our new volunteer program. We are committed to offering volunteer opportunities that are rewarding and meaningful. Join us to learn more about how you can become part of the OCPRC team!

**Garlic Mustard Management and Beyond** Saturday, May 5 from 10:00 a.m. to noon at Hager County Park

The battle against invasive species can feel futile. This workshop will discuss the most recent management techniques recommended in the treatment of garlic mustard. It will also address the question of, “what is next?”. The first part of this class will begin inside with a PowerPoint presentation, followed by an outdoor demonstration of some different techniques.

## Stewardship Workdays

Parks Natural Resources Management Supervisor Melanie Manion is looking for volunteers to help in the important work of stewardship on park properties. Bring work gloves, insect repellent and appropriate outdoor gear. Drinking water and snacks will be provided and advanced registration is not required. All ages welcome (under 16 must be supervised by an adult) and the work days will be cancelled if raining. Call 616-738-4811 for details.

### Garlic Mustard Pulls

Thanks to the efforts of numerous volunteers, Ottawa County Parks is winning the battle against garlic mustard. This invasive plant threatens the parks’ scenic and biological values. Join us for a garlic mustard pull to enjoy a spring day in a local park and help protect its natural features into the future.



- ◆ **Tunnel Park** on Thursday, May 3 at 7:00 p.m. (1.5 hours) Meet in the parking lot near the rest rooms.
- ◆ **Hager Park** on Saturday, May 5 at 1:00 p.m. (3 hours) Meet in the Picnic Building parking lot.
- ◆ **Riley Trails** on Thursday, May 10 at 7:00 p.m. (1.5 hours) Meet in parking lot.
- ◆ **Pigeon Creek Park** on Saturday, May 19 at 9:00 a.m.(3 hours) Meet in main parking lot.
- ◆ **Mt. Pisgah** on Saturday, June 2 at 9:00 a.m. (3 hours) Call 616-738-4810 for meeting location.



**Trail Building at Connor Bayou** Saturday, April 28 at 2:00 p.m. (3 hours)

Volunteers are needed to help parks staff build a trail at Connor Bayou County Park in Robinson Township.

Meet at the park building at the end of the drive.

Directions: (Robinson Township) On the north side of N. Cedar Drive, just west of 128th Avenue.



# Welcome New Employees!

These individuals joined the Ottawa County workforce since January 2012.

Curt Mobley

Dave Miller

Kaitlyn Winter

Mary Elzinga-Wentworth

Elizabeth Garcia-Janis

Chris LePage

Leslie VerDuin

Vicki Schuring

Relief Youth Specialist

Environmental Health Specialist

Mental Health Nurse

Court Services Officer

Medical Director

Team Supervisor—Children's Services

Community Health Nurse

Gatekeeper

Juvenile Detention

Public Health

CMH

Comm Corr/Dist Court Probation

CMH

CMH

Public Health

Parks and Recreation

## The Latest Software Versions...

### When Will They Be Coming to A Desktop Near You

*By Tina McConnell*

The Ottawa County IT department has been updating several software programs that the county uses. You might be wondering when you will get the latest and greatest versions and what that means to you. Below is a summary of on-going upgrade projects.

### Windows 7

Windows 7 is the latest operating system that computers use. Windows XP was the previous operating system that the county had on most of its computers. Ottawa County will not be upgrading existing computers from Windows XP to Windows 7. If you received a new computer in 2011 or 2012, or will receive one in 2012, it will come with Windows 7. If you have an older computer that was purchased prior to 2011, it will have Windows XP. You will not receive Windows 7 until your computer is due for replacement.



### Microsoft Office 2010

Microsoft Office 2010 is the latest version of the Office software. Microsoft Office is a suite of software programs. The standard version, which most computers in the county use, includes Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Publisher. All county departments were asked to budget for Office 2010 licenses for all of their computers for 2012. Therefore, if you do not already have Office 2010, it should be installed on your computer sometime this year. To learn about more about Microsoft Office 2010, check out our Office 2010: Making the Transition class. If you are already familiar with previous versions of the Office products, this is a great class to learn more about the new features in Office 2010. If you are not familiar with a previous version, look into registering for an introductory class in the application of your choice.



### Lotus Notes 8.5

Lotus Notes 8.5 is the latest version of Lotus Notes that the county is currently installing. When you are upgraded to Lotus Notes 8.5, you will also be set up for centralized archiving. Centralized archiving is a service that automatically archives items in your mail file when they are 90 days old. The items are archived to a server, and you can access them simply by clicking on your archive folder in Lotus Notes. We are performing a department by department upgrade to Lotus Notes 8.5 and centralized archiving. Many departments have already been upgraded. The remaining departments should be upgraded by the end of 2012. There are a couple of situations in which individuals might be upgraded prior to the rest of their department:



Individuals are upgraded when they receive a new computer.

The Help Desk will upgrade individuals if they have a need to archive their mailbox.

If you have questions about a particular software upgrade, or questions about when you should expect an upgrade, please contact the IT Help Desk @ x4880 or [ithelpdesk@miottawa.org](mailto:ithelpdesk@miottawa.org).

**GVMC ON THE ROAD**

Former Speaker of the House Tip O'Neal once said, "all politics is local". In our region we definitely know the truth to that statement. Some of the goals within our Strategic Initiative to "Ensure Trust, Credibility and Confidence" pertain to attending as many board, professional associations and partner organization meetings as possible. These meetings help to communicate directly with our members and the public about GVMC and give me the opportunity to answer questions and hear directly local issues and concerns.

So far, I have met with 8 of our member boards as well as the Urban Mayors and Managers, the Lansing staff of the Michigan Municipal League, the West Michigan Local Government Managers Association, our Legislators and also the Chamber of Commerce along with several other groups.

If you would like to schedule a time for me to visit your board, service club or professional association, please feel free to call or email. The presentation can be any length to fit your schedule.

**Don't Forget to Reserve Your**

**Quarterly Luncheon Tickets**

**for**

**April 9th with Mark Murray**

**RSVP to Gayle at [mccrathg@gvmc.org](mailto:mccrathg@gvmc.org)**

**Spotlight on Cooperation**

Governmental cooperation is not a new idea in our region. Sixty-two years ago the townships of Byron and Gaines formed the Cutlerville Fire Department. Founded in 1950, the department is shared between the two townships with each paying the costs to provide service within their jurisdiction. The cost of the and full-time firefighters are also shared between the partner townships. Additionally, the Chief serves both the Dutton and Cutlerville Fire Departments in another cooperative agreement. At the close of each quarter any needed financial adjustments are made based on actual calls for service.

The Cutlerville Fire Department is located on the boarder of the two townships at 68th and Division Avenue. Located in a station financed cooperatively in 1981 the department also has 6 pieces of fire apparatus including a 105 ft. ladder truck purchased in cooperation between the two townships and the Kent County Fire Commission. Last year the department responded to 1,929 calls.

Ultimate oversight of the department is through the Cutlerville Fire Authority with representatives of both Byron and Gaines Townships. The Supervisors of both townships serve on this board which is responsible for policy issues, budget oversight

(Spotlight continued)

and all personnel issues including labor negotiations.

Another partnership serving the area is the Tri-County Training Consortium established in 2001. There are 175 firefighters from the townships of Byron, Gaines, Caledonia, Thornapple, Leighton along with Wayland, Cutlerville, and Freeport involved in the program. According to Dutton/Cutlerville Fire Chief Russ Jansen, *"there is hardly any cost involved to the participating townships in maintaining and operating the Tri-County Training Consortium."*

Don Hilton, Supervisor of Gaines Township and Vice Chair of GVMC, stated, *"I believe the cooperation between our townships has benefited our citizens in several ways. We have been able to pool resources and provide quality well-trained firefighting personnel and medical first response to our citizens. Through joint purchasing we have not only reduced costs, but maintained a fleet of up-to date fire trucks and response units. I believe that our firefighters are trained well enough to respond with any Fire Department in the County and equipped well enough to be able to respond to most disasters."*