

The Ottawa Way

NEWSLETTER



Ottawa County

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Residents: Beware of Scams

The Ottawa County Sheriff's Office is sending a message to residents: Beware of financial scams and fraud.

Detective Joe Monger, a key figure in the County's community outreach efforts, is leading the charge by educating the public through informational presentations. The goal is to arm Ottawa County citizens with the knowledge to recognize and to avoid falling victim to these fraudulent schemes.

Fraudsters typically rely on two main tactics to deceive their victims:

- Creating a sense of urgency, often claiming the victim needs to send money quickly.
- Requesting personal information, such as Social Security numbers or bank account details.

Several types of scams currently targeting residents, include technology scams, social media fraud, romance scams, government impostors, and the so-called "grandchild scam."

Exercising caution is crucial, particularly when dealing with phone calls, emails, or social media messages. Legitimate government agencies will never solicit money over the phone. If you are unsure about a call, hang up and contact the agency directly to verify the information.

"Social media is a breeding ground for fraudsters," Monger said. "Be cautious, never share your personal information over the phone, and if something seems too good to be true, it probably is."

Upcoming Financial Scams Seminars

January 23, 1PM, Georgetown Charter Township Office, 1515 Baldwin St, Jenison

January 30, 10AM, Four Pointes Center, 1051 S Beacon Blvd, Grand Haven

"These frauds are designed to take your money," Monger added. "A lot of times there is a disbelief when someone is the victim of a scam. It is important that you report it."

Stay vigilant and take proactive steps to protect yourself and your family from fraud. For more information or to inquire about a session for your group email jmonger@miottawa.org or call 616-738-4000.

Detective Joe Monger shares valuable insights into how scammers operate during a Financial Scams Seminar in Allendale held in November.



Pathways to Better Health Helps Seniors Thrive

A single event can change everything. For Allendale resident Linda, it was an illness that led to losing her housing. But a referral to the Ottawa Pathways to Better Health program (Pathways) helped her get back on solid ground.

The Pathways program was established in 2017 in response to gaps identified in the 2015 Community Health Needs Assessment. Pathways helps people access community resources to improve their health and decrease unnecessary hospitalizations and emergency department visits. The program leverages the expertise of Community Health Workers (CHWs) who partner with participants as they travel “pathways” to address underlying issues that may be affecting their health, such as housing, employment, and mental health. CHWs are trusted sources for information and help participants navigate complicated systems to receive the care and resources they need.

“Pathways CHWs are compassionate, responsive, and empathetic, and fill in the gaps for clients who need help. I’ve seen clients get support they wouldn’t get elsewhere,” said Lyndsay Wesseldyke, Resource and Care Coordinator, Evergreen Commons, a nonprofit serving older adults in West Michigan.

Linda’s unexpected illness and long-term rehabilitation stay created financial strain that left her feeling anxious, overwhelmed, and unable to prioritize her health.

“I was at a really low point. I was in the process of having my utilities shut off and I didn’t have enough food to make it to the end of the month. I needed everything,” she said.

After being referred to the program through her primary care physician, she was connected to Traci, a Pathways CHW. The two partnered to create a plan, one issue at a time. Traci connected Linda to community resources that have helped address issues including eviction, late utility payments, and access to food and transportation. Traci also helped Linda address her medical debt and complete paperwork for health insurance. With Traci’s support, Linda regained her footing and her confidence. She says she’s in a stronger place and feels hopeful for the future.

“I’ve come a long way and I’m excited about the future,” Linda said. “Traci and the Pathways program have offered me so much more than resources for financial help. Traci is knowledgeable, and she also really cares. She’s helped me get my confidence back. I’m getting back to the old Linda again.”

Wesseldyke went on to say, “Pathways is a wonderful program for so many reasons and I would recommend it for any struggling seniors in the community.”

To find information about Pathways or to make a referral, visit miottawa.info/pathways or call 616-393-5601.



Pictured: Linda (left) and Traci (right). “I’ve come a long way and I’m excited about the future,” Linda said after her journey in the Pathways program. If you or someone you know could benefit from Pathways, visit miottawa.info/pathways or call 616 393-5601.

The Art Trust: A Legacy of Local Talent

Each year, Ottawa County and the Holland Area Arts Council come together to present the Ottawa County Art Trust Exhibition—a celebration of local creativity and culture. This juried art exhibition highlights the talent of Ottawa County residents, while also preserving a growing collection of artwork for future generations to enjoy.

The Ottawa County Art Trust is more than just an exhibition—it's a program that actively builds and preserves a collection of local art. During the annual juried show, the County purchases selected works to become part of its permanent collection, adding approximately \$3,500 worth of local art each year. The purchased pieces are chosen by a juror, ensuring that the collection reflects the best of what Ottawa County artists have to offer.

While some works are selected for purchase, the remaining pieces stay on display throughout the exhibition and are available for sale to the public. In fact, individuals, businesses, and organizations are encouraged to purchase art, either for themselves or to donate to the County's permanent collection. Donated works are honored with a special plaque, further cementing the community's role in supporting and preserving local art.

Since its inception in 2018, the Ottawa County Art Trust has built a rich collection of artwork from West Michigan artists. The County now owns 72 pieces with an estimated value of \$35,000. These works, which

represent the culture, traditions, and natural beauty of Ottawa County, will continue to be displayed in public buildings for years to come, enriching the environment and connecting future generations to the creative spirit of the community. For more information, call 616-738-4672 or visit miottawa.info/art.

Be Part of the Art Trust

The Ottawa County Art Trust provides a platform for local artists to share their work and contribute to a growing cultural legacy. Artists who live or work in Ottawa County are eligible to submit an entry. Whether you are an artist, an art lover, or someone who appreciates the local creativity, the Ottawa County Art Trust Exhibition is a wonderful way to support the arts. Art Trust dates:

Art Drop Off

June 17 & 18, 10AM - 2PM

Opening Reception & Awards

June 24, 4PM

Exhibition Closes

September 8, 5PM

Location: Ottawa County Administration Building, 12220 Fillmore, West Olive.
Exhibit is open Monday - Friday, 8AM - 5PM.



Protect Your Property with Fraud Alert

Your home is one of your most valuable assets, and Ottawa County is here to help you protect it. The County Clerk/Register of Deeds is proud to offer Property Fraud Alert, a FREE public service designed to safeguard you and your loved ones from property fraud.

Property Fraud Alert is a notification system that alerts you via phone, text, or email if a document is recorded in



Ottawa County under your name. This service provides peace of mind by helping you stay informed about any activity involving your property.

Property fraud is on the rise across the country. Criminals may attempt to illegally use your property for financial gain through fraudulent sales, home equity loans, or other schemes. Early detection is crucial to preventing legal battles or, worse, the loss of your home.

Once you sign up for Property Fraud Alert, you will be notified whenever a document is recorded in your name. If you receive an alert, you can contact the Ottawa County Register of Deeds to verify the activity. Acting quickly can help resolve issues and involve law enforcement if necessary.

Signing up for Property Fraud Alert is simple and free. Visit miottawa.info/fraud or call 1-800-728-3858.

For questions or more information, contact the Ottawa County Clerk/Register of Deeds office at 616-994-4510.

Stay 200 Feet Back: Snowplow Safety Law in Effect

The Ottawa County Road Commission is reminding drivers to follow the new snowplow safety law now in effect:

Stay Back 200 Feet—Keep 200 feet (12 car lengths) behind active snowplows and salt trucks with flashing lights.

Keep Back at Intersections—Maintain at least 20 feet from stopped snowplows. They may back up unexpectedly.

Pass with Caution—Passing on the left is allowed if conditions are safe. Never pass on the right.

Keeping your distance reduces accidents, prevents damage, and allows plow drivers to work efficiently.

The Ottawa County Road Commission is responsible for maintaining county roads, state highways and bridges. Governed by a five-member board, the organization administers its budget, expenditures, contracts, policies and other operations. Although the board members are appointed by the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners, the Road Commission is a separate legal entity from general county government. The Road Commission is primarily funded by fuel taxes and vehicle registration fees. Except for the countywide road millage, the property taxes you pay to Ottawa County do not fund roads.



Park Programs for Every Age & Interest

Ottawa County Parks and Recreation offers a wide range of programs for all ages—including many that are geared for adults. This winter, we invite you to participate in one of our offerings.

- Enjoy coffee and baked goodies as you watch the birds at the feeders during a Coffee with the Birds session.
- Join the Shoreline Amateur Astronomical Association for a monthly educational lecture on various astronomy topics.
- Connect with fellow journal enthusiasts during Nature Journal Club, where you can learn new drawing and writing techniques each month.
- View our event calendar at miottawa.info/parkprograms

Looking for a more tailored experience? Our Outdoor Enrich programs provide recreational and nature-based experiences, including guided hikes and insightful presentations on local wildlife, perfect for groups seeking to connect with nature. Whether you prefer to visit us at a park or have us bring nature to you, we are here to make your time memorable. Visit miottawa.info/enrich or contact the Nature Center at 616-786-4847 for more details.



Embrace nature this winter with warm drinks, delicious treats, and peaceful sights of birds at the feeders.



Field trips are not just for kids! Check out a program on the event calendar or contact the Nature Center to plan your own unique experience.

Supporting Ottawa County's Aging Population

With over 63,000 residents aged 60 and older, seniors make up 21% of Ottawa County's population. Recognizing their unique needs, Community Mental Health of Ottawa County launched Senior Reach® in 2016 to provide emotional and physical support, helping seniors remain independent.

Senior Reach® identifies seniors (60+) who face challenges like mental health issues, social isolation, neglect, and other issues. Through partnerships with agencies, the program connects individuals to resources, offering home-based care management and counseling.

By meeting seniors in their homes, Senior Reach® gains valuable insights into their daily struggles, providing tailored experiences. Regular collaboration with partner organizations ensures the program addresses unmet needs and improves service delivery countywide.

This vital program not only links seniors to much-needed resources but also fosters a deeper understanding of their challenges, promoting intentional and effective care. To learn more about the resources available or to refer someone to Senior Reach®, visit miottawa.org or call 1-877-588-4357.

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OCCAA Helps Residents Beat Rising Utility Costs

Rising living costs make it hard for many residents to afford basic necessities like utilities or maintaining a comfortable home. The Ottawa County Community Action Agency (OCCAA) provides income-eligible residents with utility bill assistance and home weatherization services, reducing financial strain while keeping homes safe and efficient.

Utility Bill Assistance

OCCAA helps cover electricity, heating, cooling, and water costs for eligible residents, easing the burden on fixed incomes and ensuring no one has to choose between utilities and essentials like food or medicine.

Home Weatherization Services

OCCAA improves energy efficiency through insulation upgrades, sealing drafts, possible refrigerator replacement, and optimizing heating and cooling systems—helping residents lower bills and stay comfortable year-round.

How to Apply

Eligibility depends on income, household size, and individual needs.

- Call: 616-393-4433
- Email: info.occaa@miottawa.org
- Apply online: www.miottawa.org/CAA



A contractor fixes a drafty door to prevent heat loss in the winter and heat gain in the summer.

Grow Your Knowledge: Become a Master Gardener

Are you passionate about gardening and eager to share your knowledge? The Michigan State University Extension Master Gardener Program offers a unique opportunity to make a difference in your community while deepening your gardening expertise.

A Master Gardener is a volunteer who receives training in research-based horticulture science. Then, they support their communities by promoting responsible gardening practices, improving food security, enhancing community life, and engaging in gardening education.

It's perfect for those who want to connect with fellow gardeners and improve lives through service-based activities. As a Master Gardener, you'll gain access to horticulture

classes, workshops, and field trips. You'll also contribute to statewide outreach.

To become a Master Gardener:

1. Complete the 10 week online Foundations of Gardening course at miottawa.info/fog.
2. Apply to become a volunteer.
3. Participate in a local onboarding course.
4. Complete 40 hours of volunteer service on approved projects within a year.

Once certified, Master Gardeners maintain their status by completing 20 volunteer hours and 10 hours of education annually.

Whether you're new to gardening or experienced, the Master Gardener Program offers a chance to learn, grow, and give back to the community.

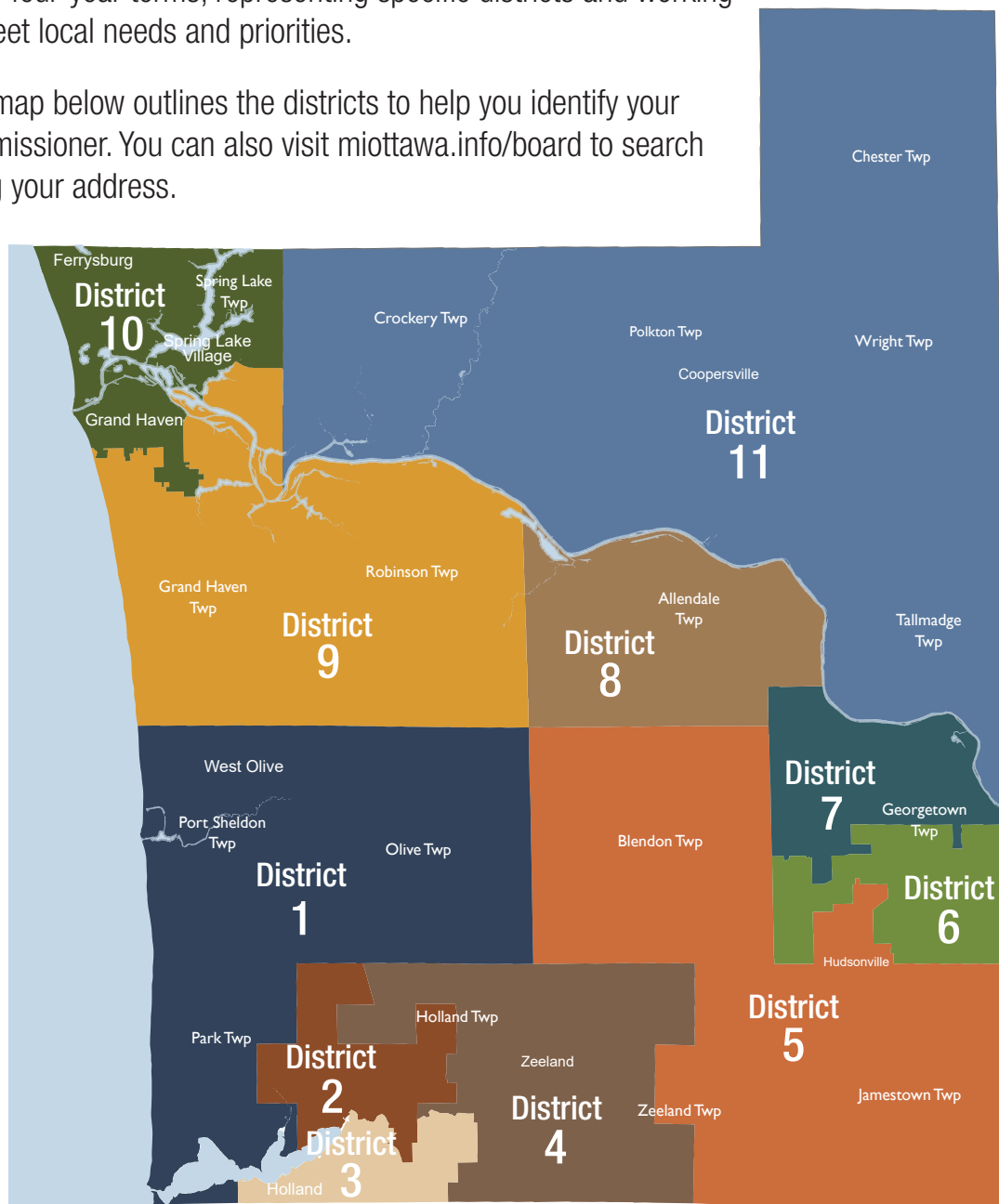
Enroll by January 29 in the "Foundations of Gardening" course at miottawa.info/fog. The course is open to anyone who wishes to learn more about gardening, even those not planning to become a Master Gardener.



County Commissioners & District Map

Ottawa County Commissioners are elected officials responsible for overseeing County government operations and ensuring the delivery of essential services to residents. They serve four-year terms, representing specific districts and working to meet local needs and priorities.

The map below outlines the districts to help you identify your commissioner. You can also visit miottawa.info/board to search using your address.



District 1
Jim Barry
jbarry@miOttawa.org

District 2
Jordan Jorritsma
jjorritsma@miOttawa.org

District 3
Doug Zylstra
dzylstra@miOttawa.org

District 4
Jacob Bonnema
jbonnema@miOttawa.org

District 5
Joe Moss
jmoss@miOttawa.org

District 6
Kendra Wenzel
kwenzel@miOttawa.org

District 7
John Teeples
jteeples@miOttawa.org

District 8
Sylvia Rhodea
srhodea@miOttawa.org

District 9
Phil Kuyers
pkuyers@miOttawa.org

District 10
Josh Brugger
jbrugger@miOttawa.org

District 11
Allison Miedema
amiedema@miOttawa.org

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✉ Subscribe | County news delivered to your inbox. Visit miOttawa.info/subscribe

🔍 miOttawa.org | Online services and answers at your fingertips, 24/7

☎ Call 616-738-4000 for County services

☎ Call 2-1-1 for community services



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