



BLUE EARTH COUNTY

COMMUNICATOR

Effectively & Efficiently Delivering Essential Services

SPRING & SUMMER 2006



COUNTY GOVERNMENT WEEK

Blue Earth County Detective Will Purvis, Sheriff Deputy Don Gabler and Sheriff Brad Peterson educated D.A.R.E. participants from All Saints School in Madison Lake about Blue Earth County Law Enforcement during a special pizza party in March. D.A.R.E is just one way the Blue Earth County Sheriff's Office maintains an active crime prevention and community education program. Learn more about the County's efforts to protect its citizens during County Government Week from April 23 to 29.

THE COMMUNICATOR

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



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

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**Award-Winning
Publication**

by the National
Association of County
Information Officers

IN THIS ISSUE



What's New

- Criminal Justice System
- County Government Week
- County website improvement
- New voting equipment



Public Works

- Road Safety Audits
- Nature Valley Grand Prix
- Conservation a County priority



Corrections

- Drug Court evaluated
- Girls' Group addresses crime



Environmental Services

- Shoreland alteration
- Burning garbage makes poison



Library Services

- Summer Reading Program
- Library website features
- Second Sunday Stories
- Bookmark contest winners



Human Services

- Videoconferencing Network
- Health programs on local cable

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POSTAL PATRON



Blue Earth County Sheriff Brad Peterson received the Minnesota Sheriffs' Association Life Saving Award for saving a man's life on September 15, 2005. While responding to a domestic conflict in Garden City, Peterson found a man hanging by his neck from a cord tied to the rafters of a garage. Peterson lifted the man up to relieve the pressure around the man's neck and removed the cord. Peterson then started doing a sternum rub in an attempt to revive the man until an ambulance arrived and continued his medical treatment.



(L to R) Patrol Captain Rich Murry and Jail Administrator Mike Maurer join Sheriff Brad Peterson (center) after he received the Minnesota Sheriffs' Association Life Saving Award.

Moving the Criminal Justice System forward

By Dennis McCoy, Blue Earth County Administrator

In 2004 the County Board authorized a study of the County's entire criminal justice system. The study identified problems in the Courthouse and the County Jail which need to be addressed.

Building a Justice Center meets the long-term needs of Blue Earth County citizens. A team of County officials and staff; construction managers from Construction Analysis & Management Incorporated (CAM); architects from Klein-McCarthy Architects and Paulsen Architects; and a jail consultant from Liebert and Associates are researching specific elements of building a Justice Center in Blue Earth County including building design options, site location and funding.

Based on the project timeline, the Jail Design Team will begin design development this month which includes: developing and refining the architectural design; conducting special studies for security, communications and kitchen equipment; selecting systems and materials; refining the project budget; and refining staffing and operation budget projections.

Blue Earth County's criminal justice functions are currently held at four different locations: Government Center, Nichols Office Building, Courthouse and Law Enforcement Center. The existing buildings offer little or no room for expansion and none provide quick access to any of Mankato's primary transportation

routes, including Highways 14, 22, 169 and 60. A consolidated facility would increase workforce and workflow efficiencies, improve emergency response and increase public safety by providing much-needed jail and court facility improvements. The Justice Center is scheduled to break ground in May 2007 and will cost approximately \$40 million. ■



The Jail Design Team, a team of criminal justice and architectural professionals and county officials, has researched specific elements of building a Justice Center in Blue Earth County including building design options, site location and funding.

For more information visit www.co.blue-earth.mn.us/dept/justice.php or contact County Administrator Dennis McCoy at 507-304-4284.

Counties protect our communities

Among the most important of County services are those which protect our communities. Counties protect residents from crime and abuse. Counties are the first to respond to emergency situations and are primarily responsible for disaster planning. Counties also work to protect families, children, youth and the disabled.

National County Government Week, from April 23 to 29, highlights the work done by the County to protect its citizens. In conjunction with this year's theme of "Protecting Our Communities" the County has planned the following free events for citizens.

Safety Story Time

6:30 p.m. on Monday, April 24
Blue Earth County Library*

Blue Earth County Patrol Captain Rich Murry will read special stories about being safe. Kids will also see a real squad car, see equipment used to protect people everyday and receive a free coloring book.

Car Seat Safety Training

6:30 p.m. on Monday, April 24
Blue Earth County Library*

Don't wait until you're in an accident to find out if your Child Safety Seat has been installed correctly. Jen Horstmann from Blue Earth County Community Health will train parents and soon-to-be parents on how to properly use a child safety seat in vehicles.

Emergency Preparedness Program

6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 25,
Blue Earth County Library*

Tornadoes, floods, epidemics and other natural disasters happen everyday. Learn how to prepare yourself for an emergency with planning tips from Blue Earth County Community Health Planner Maureen Sop.

Jail Tour

7 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 26 and
Thursday, April 27
Law Enforcement Center*

Here's your chance to see the inside of the jail without an extended stay. Tour groups should meet in the lobby of the Law Enforcement Center a few minutes before tour times. ■



Blue Earth County Patrol Captain Rich Murry will show kids his squad car and equipment used to protect people during a special Safety Story Time at 6:30 p.m. on April 24 at the Blue Earth County Library for National County Government Week.

For more information on County Government Week contact Blue Earth County Administration at 507-304-4284. *See back page for building

HOME Rental Rehabilitation Program

County website improved

The Blue Earth County website is the most effective and efficient way to relay information about services to county residents, visitors and business partners. For the last two years the County website has received national recognition for the quality of the content and layout of the site.

Although already a useful tool, the County continually strives to improve upon the web services it provides and to stay abreast of the latest technology in order to benefit County residents.

Voyageur Web, a local web design company, collected data during a usability study to determine how the County website could be made more user-friendly. Using feedback from the study, the County redesigned the website to include an easier navigation system, a more comprehensive search box, more online forms,



www.co.blue-earth.mn.us

a broad citizen services section, an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant design and much more. ■

Please call the Public Information Office at 507-304-4491 or email info@co.blue-earth.mn.us with any suggestions on how the County could further improve its services through the web site.

The Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership has made it possible for Blue Earth County to participate in the HOME Rental Rehabilitation Program. The HOME program presents lower income residents with an affordable housing option by funding rehabilitation of rental properties with zero percent deferred or forgivable loans through the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency. Owners of these rental properties must comply with rent and income restrictions for a five-year period after the rehabilitation is complete.

Generally, tenant income must be less than 60% of the area median income at the time of funding commitment. Tenants with incomes above the program guidelines may occupy units in the building. However, program funds may be expended only on units occupied by eligible tenants.

For more detailed information visit www.swmhp.org or call the Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership at 507-836-8673, ext. 406.



County buys new voting equipment through Help America Vote Act

By Patty O'Connor, Director of Taxpayer Services

Blue Earth County received over \$380,000 to improve access to polling places for voters with disabilities and to provide statewide voter equality. The funding for the grant comes from the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA).

The County applied the grant money to assistive voting technology equipment and precinct counters for use in all polling locations. New equipment will be used in all federal and state elections beginning in 2006. There will be two machines for voting in every precinct called the ES&S Automark Voter Assist Terminal, one of which provides a voting system that is accessible for individuals with disabilities. The other new piece of equipment is the Model 100 Precinct Ballot Counter. It will reduce the possibility of errors by returning ballots appearing to have voted for too many candidates or to have under voted.

Conversations sparked by the new equipment have encouraged some townships to ask voters to move their March elections to November in order to reduce costs. A few cities and townships have made the decision to discontinue staffing a polling place, and will now conduct all of their elections by mail. ■



Director of Taxpayer Services Patty O'Connor, Blue Earth County Commissioner Katy Wortel, and Deputy Director of Taxpayer Services Karen Myers received a grant of \$381,000 to improve voter quality.

For more information call Blue Earth County Elections at 507-304-4340.

Drug Court receives AMC Award

The Blue Earth County Drug Court received the 2005 County Achievement Award from the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) for exhibiting excellence and innovation in its county. Blue Earth County implemented Drug Court with the mission of reducing crime through the rehabilitation and recovery of drug and alcohol offenders. Drug Court coordinates the efforts of the judge, prosecutor, defense attorney, law enforcement, social services, probation, and treatment specialists to quickly identify and intervene with selected non-violent substance-abusing offenders in order to break the cycle of substance abuse, addiction and crime.

Stoltzman Road receives state-wide award



PUBLIC WORKS

Road Safety Audits prevent accidents

By Alan Forsberg, County Engineer and Public Works Director

The Blue Earth County Public Works Department received the Minnesota County Engineers Association (MCEA) Construction Project of the Year Award for the County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 16/Stoltzman Road Project. Stoltzman Road links CSAH 90, rural areas south of Mankato and several residential neighborhoods to Minnesota State University-Mankato and the central area of Mankato.

Planning for the project began in 2000 and construction was completed in the summer of 2005. The roadway's design is intended to provide sufficient and safe mobility for the next 50 years or more. Project features include a center left turn lane and consolidated driveway entrances for public safety and a trail and sidewalk to improve safety and provide recreational opportunities. Extensive landscaping and aesthetic treatment of retaining walls resulted in an attractive facility the community can be proud of.

The project was a partnership between Blue Earth County and the City of Mankato.

For more information call the Blue Earth County Highway Department at 507-304-4025.



Nearly all of the 720 miles of Blue Earth County highways are rural, low-volume roads. According to the 2004 edition of Minnesota Motor Vehicle Crash Facts, most of these roads have high crash rates including severe injuries. Consequently, the County applied for and received \$50,000 from the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Minnesota Department of Public Safety Central Safety Fund to perform Road Safety Audits on County State Aid Highways and County Roads within Blue Earth County. The ultimate goal of this project is to reduce fatal and serious injury crashes in Blue Earth County.

Road Safety Audits were recognized in the Minnesota Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan as one of 15 critical strategies to reduce traffic-related death and injury in Minnesota. They are an important tool examining the performance, design and operation of roadways and intersections, and also provide suggestions for road improvements.

The County has hired SRF Consulting Group out of Minneapolis to analyze five years of County crash data and provide County officials GIS maps and a list of possible Road Safety Audit locations. The consultant will conduct Road Safety Audits in coordination with law enforcement and emergency response partners; develop findings and suggestions for low-cost safety improvements; and develop a final written report outlining the RSA process and suggested solutions. The cost of this work will be paid for with the safety grant.

Once the analysis is complete County staff will develop a formal response to RSA suggestions, and develop materials and organize a community meeting to present Blue Earth County crash profile RSA findings and information about the State's Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan and Toward Zero Deaths initiatives. ■

For more information on Road Safety Audits in Blue Earth County contact the Blue Earth County Highway Department at 507-304-4025.

Nature Valley Grand Prix coming to Greater Mankato

The eighth annual Great River Energy Bicycle Festival will be coming to Greater Mankato on Saturday, June 17. This professional stage race will bring 300 bicyclists from all over the world to Minnesota June 14 to 18.

The Mankato Road Race will start in downtown Mankato, then travel through Madison Lake, Eagle

Lake, St. Clair, Good Thunder, Garden City, Lake Crystal, and Rapidan for hot spot sprints. The race will finish on a challenging downtown circuit which includes riding up Main Street hill numerous times. There will be entertainment, an expo, an amateur criterion, fun activities for kids, autographs, and food and fun in downtown Mankato. ■

Please contact Kate Winkels at kwinkels@greatermankato.com or 507-345-4519 to learn more about getting involved with the race.

2006 Construction Projects

- Pavement on County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 10, 16, 22, 26, 74, 77, 78 and 79.
- CSAH 57 from Trunk Highway (TH) 14 to TH 22 – Grading, drainage facilities and paving
- CSAH 26 from CSAH 12 to Madison Lake – Grading and overloading of soft areas.
- CSAH 20 & County Road 124 at Lake Crystal – Grading, curb and gutter and paving.



Courtesy of Sport Pix Photography.

Conservation land a County priority

By Dean Ehlers, Park Supervisor and Al Forsberg, Public Works Director

Together the Blue Earth County Board and its Public Works Department have established a premier system of parks for its citizens to enjoy. Whether it's hiking, biking, boating, camping, fishing or scenic enjoyment, there is a park for everyone to enjoy in any season. Conservation lands that preserve our precious natural resources and provide opportunities for citizens to learn about and enjoy our natural environment have also been established.

As the County develops as a regional center, there has been a recognized need to acquire and preserve unique and valuable recreation and natural resource lands. Through the joint effort of the County Board, the Parks Department, the Highway Department, volunteer community groups and State and Federal Grant programs, several acres of parks and conservation land have been acquired and improved over the last few decades.

Over the years, about 926 acres of river corridor lands adjacent to the Blue Earth and Watonwan Rivers have been acquired and set aside for conservation. Native

grass areas have been planted at Bray Park, Indian Lake, Schimek Park, Rapidan Dam Park, Hungry Hollow roadside stop and selected areas adjacent to the Red Jacket Trail. Wildwood, Williams Nature Center, Johnson Wildlife Area and Indian Lake total over 210 acres of conservation lands which includes 46 acres of restored wetland and a trail for non-motorized vehicles at Indian Lake. Rain gardens have been constructed to catch and clean water before running into Lake George at the Lake George Park and the LeSueur River canoe landing. And an estimated 7,000 trees have been planted on park lands over the years. Currently the Parks Department is completing a program to replace all the septic systems serving our parks.

Conservation elements such as canoe landings, sediment ponds, wetlands and extensive erosion/sedimentation features have also been incorporated into highway construction projects where feasible.

The County's commitment to the environment and parks has been a high priority and remains so as we move forward. ■



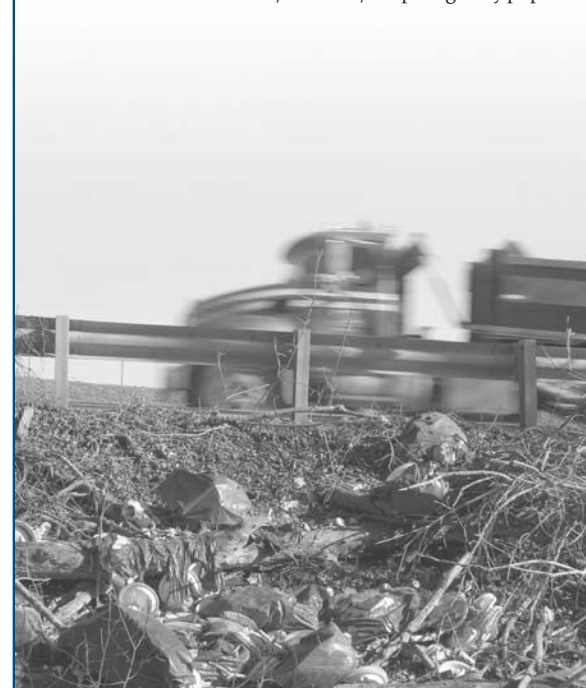
For more information on conservation in Blue Earth County contact the Highway Department at 507-304-4025.

HIGHWAYS AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION

The Blue Earth County Adopt-A-Highway Program improves the beauty of our highway roadsides through volunteers like you. Companies, clubs, families or organizations can keep Blue Earth County looking good by "adopting" segments of highway and pledging to keep them litter-free.

Blue Earth County provides signs at the boundary of the group segments to recognize the volunteer efforts. Segments are typically two miles in length and groups are asked to pick up litter three times a year.

For more information on how your group can sponsor a section of Blue Earth County highway, contact Blue Earth County Highway Department at 507-304-4025 or visit www.co.blue-earth.mn.us/involved/adoptahighway.php.



SUMMER ACTIVITIES AT BLUE EARTH COUNTY PARKS!

PARKS	ACTIVITIES																							
	Tent Camping Sites	Mobile Camping Sites	Electrical Hook-ups	Bathhouse	Boat/Canoe Launch	Canoe Rental	Drinking Water	Dump Station	Fire Rings/Grills	Fishing	Fishing Dock	Horseshoe Pits	Interpretive Center/Log Cabin	Nature Trail	Paddleboat Rental	Picnic Shelters	Picnic Tables	Playground	Primitive Restrooms	Resident Caretakers	Restrooms	Swim Beach	Tennis Courts	Volleyball Courts
BRAY (102.3 ACRES)	10	33	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
DALY (92.41 ACRES)	15	71	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
DUCK LAKE (31.66 ACRES)				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
LAKE GEORGE (4.2 ACRES)					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
RAPIDAN (38.69 ACRES)	20				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
RED JACKET TRAIL PARK (4 ACRES)					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
WILLIAMS NATURE CENTER (65 ACRES)							•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

CAMPING RESERVATIONS: Camping reservation systems are available at Bray and Daly Parks. Reservations are taken by phone or in person at the park for which the reservation is requested. Park personnel will take reservations from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. A deposit is required to hold each camping site.

Daly Park:
11056 571st Lane
Mapleton, MN 56065
507-524-3000

Bray Park:
2214 Oriole Rd.
Madison Lake, MN 56063
507-243-3885

24-HOUR HOTLINE

24-Hour Waste and Recycling
HOTLINE: 304-4242

Call for waste and recycling information including facility hours, directions, and what is accepted at each facility.





By Gary Evenson, Director of Veterans Services

Veterans may be eligible for health care benefits from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. Medical services are available at the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis, MN or the Community Based Outpatient Clinic located in St. James, MN. Generally, eligibility for health care benefits is dependent on the veteran's income and net worth. However, there are several factors which can enhance a veteran's eligibility. These factors are service connected disabilities, POW status, Agent Orange exposure, Purple Heart award and exposure to ionizing radiation.

Reservists and National Guardsmen who have served in Iraq should know that they are eligible for VA Health benefits for two years following release from active duty for any conditions which may have developed while on active duty. Normal eligibility requirements would apply after two years.

Veterans who do use the VA Health System for health care and receive their prescription drugs from the VA should be aware that this benefit is considered creditable coverage for Medicare Part D purposes.

If you have any questions about eligibility for VA health benefits, please contact the Blue Earth County Veterans Service Office at 507-304-4246. For more information visit www.va.gov/healtheligibility/home/hecmmain.asp.



New Minnesota License Plate for Veterans

Show your pride. Show your support. Purchase the new Minnesota License Plate for Veterans.

The Support Our Troops license plate is available from the Minnesota Deputy Registrar offices for a \$10 license plate fee and an \$8.50 filing fee. Along with the fees, a minimum, tax deductible annual contribution of \$30 is required. Proceeds provide assistance to military families, needy and homeless veteran programs.

For more information visit www.co.blue-earth.mn.us/dept/license_plate.php.

Drug Court's first year evaluated

By Brenda Pautsch, Juvenile Correction Supervisor

A comprehensive evaluation report of the Blue Earth County Drug Court's first year of operation was recently released. The independent evaluation studied Drug Court's impact on, reducing substance abuse, reducing crime in the community and reducing the amount of time people spend in jail or prison.

As of December 2005, there were 16 Drug Court participants ranging in age from 22 to 56. Four clients were terminated from the program. The twelve clients who reported using methamphetamine prior to entering the program had been using alcohol and other drugs (AOD) for an average of 13 years.

Frequent drug testing of participants is a major program component. Drug Court has had a substantial impact on reducing drug and alcohol use among participants. In 2005 there were 1,425 drug tests administered to participants with only 28 positive AOD test results.

According to the evaluation, the program has had a positive effect on community safety. Six months

prior to entering drug court, participants admitted to having been arrested a collective 99 times and sent to jail 87 times. Since entering the program there has been only one participant who has committed a new offense. If all of the current clients are successful there will be an overall savings of 433 months of incarceration time in jail or prison. ■



Cindy Binder
Substance Abuse Counselor



Kevin Mettler
Drug Court Agent

For more information or a copy of the full report contact Brenda Pautsch at 507-304-4568.

Girls' Group responds to growing crimes

By Jennifer Pierskalla, Probation Officer

Blue Earth County Community Corrections has started a new program targeting the County's youth. Girls' Group responds to a growing number of female offenders and re-offenders coming through the Corrections system. The program addresses juvenile female offenders on probation and those violating their probation. Most offenses include assaults, disorderly conduct and truancy.

In small group settings, including Girls' Circle and Young Miss-Chat, girls ages 13 to 18 work through topics like relationships, dating violence, sexuality, goals, drug use and stress management through discussion and creative activities. Additionally, the girls have opportunities to participate in prosocial activities in the community. Group meetings and activities support the cognitive, social, moral and competency development of participants so they are able to successfully complete their probation and reduce the risk for re-offending.

Girls have different pathways into delinquency and therefore need prevention, intervention and treatment alternatives that address the root causes of delinquent behavior. In response to the increase in numbers and unique needs juvenile female offenders represent, a gender specific caseload was developed allowing for more intensive and wraparound services to girls and their families.

The goal of Girls' Group is to enhance girls' abilities so they are able to take full advantage of their talents, academic interests, career pursuits and potential for healthy relationships. Feedback from the participating girls has been positive. The girls feel their circles are a safe environment to express thoughts and ideas without judgment. They also feel better informed about relationships, gender issues and the value of self-respect. ■



Participants of Girls' Group, a new program targeting the County's youth, learn how to curl during a planned community activity.

For more information contact Blue Earth County Juvenile Correction Supervisor Brenda Pautsch at 507-304-4568 or visit <http://www.co.blue-earth.mn.us/dept/girls.php>.



Shoreland alteration and vegetation management

By Veryl Morrell, Land Use Administrator

Shoreland property owners in Blue Earth County are cautioned that the protection of natural vegetation within shoreland areas, in particular along river, stream and lake banks, is critical to the affected landowner as well as the general public. The trees, shrubs and ground cover that develop under natural conditions serve to safeguard against soil erosion and bank slumpage. In addition, this vegetation provides valuable screening of homes and other structures as well as important habitat for songbirds and other animals.

The Shoreland zone by definition includes all land that lies within 1,000 feet of the Ordinary High Water Mark of a lake and all land that lies within 300 feet of the Ordinary High Water Mark of a river or stream.

Minnesota's State Shoreland Management Act and Blue Earth County zoning regulations provide for the protection of vegetation within Shoreland areas. Specifically, landowners are prohibited from clearcutting or the intensive removal of vegetation within the shore impact zone as well as on steep slopes. By definition, the shore impact zone includes that land located between the lake's edge and one-half of the normal structural setback.

A limited amount of trees and shrubs may be cleared or pruned to accommodate stairways and access paths. However, the applicable standard for vegetation removal is that the screening of

structures, vehicles or other facilities as viewed from the water may not be substantially reduced. The above restrictions do not apply to dead or diseased vegetation.

In addition permits are required for grading and filling and/or alteration of topography in Shoreland areas. Conditional Use Permits requiring public hearings are required for the movement of 10 cubic yards of material (earth, aggregate, or rock) within Shoreland areas and for the placement of 50 cubic yards of material outside the Shoreland zone if it is not in conjunction with another permitted activity. ■



Photo provided by the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Please contact the Blue Earth County Environmental Services at 507-304-4381 before proceeding with any lakeshore alterations or cutting.

Burning garbage makes poison

By Jean Lundquist, Waste Management Specialist

If you're burning garbage, you're making poison. It's that simple. Although most people know burning garbage is illegal in Minnesota, they continue to burn garbage either in a burn barrel or a pile. It's been illegal to burn garbage in the entire state since 1969, with very few exceptions.

Burn barrels burn at low temperatures and are often left to smolder, meaning the pollution is even worse. A scientific study in Duluth found that one burn barrel creates more pollution than 11 commercial incinerators. Burn barrels also lack the pollution control devices required on incinerators.

Living in an agricultural area, these pollutants, many of which cause cancer, land on the food we eat and the food eaten by meat animals. This means the person doing the burning is harming not only themselves and their families, but their neighbors, too. As the food moves across the country and across the globe, the poisons from burning garbage

move with it, meaning our garbage can cause harm all over the world.

Some people point out that garbage has been burned for generations on farms, and no one ever died from it. While that may be true, it's also true that more chemicals are in our garbage today than ever before. Even paper contains more chemicals today. Most paper is bleached with chlorine compounds, and is extremely toxic when burned.

Burning plastic is against the law because of the poisons it creates when burned. Since more of our household waste is plastic than ever before, however, much of it makes its way into burn barrels, spewing cancer-causing chemicals into the environment around our homes.

Burning garbage does more than just stink. It creates pollution that can cause cancer, worsen asthma, and create other harmful long-term effects. ■

For more information about open burning, contact the Blue Earth County Environmental Services Department at 507-304-4381. For permits to burn brush, contact the Blue Earth County Sheriff's Department at 507-387-8710.

By Jean Lundquist, Waste Management Specialist

Junk cars set in a yard are not only an eyesore, but may also be illegal. Having three or more non-working, unlicensed cars is a junkyard, and is not allowed except in an area zoned "heavy industrial." Junkyards also require a special permit that outlines how any scrap reclamation project may be operated.

Junk cars are not the only things that constitute a junkyard, however. Major appliances, like washers and dryers, freezers and air conditioners, to name a few, are also allowed only with a special permit and proper zoning distinctions. By state law, all appliances designated as "major appliances" must be recycled properly.

Vehicle parts, like engines, tires, and lawnmowers, ATVs and motorcycles also count in defining a junkyard.

Many illegal junkyards often include other trash, like household garbage. In addition to creating an eyesore, accumulation and storage of garbage may be illegal and is a health hazard for those who live nearby if it draws rats and other vermin.

For storage of trash to be legal, it must be removed every two weeks. While it is being stored, it must be "...in durable, rust resistant, non-absorbent, water tight, rodent proof, easily cleanable containers."

Spring is a good time to clean up waste vehicles and trash. While the weather is cool, the work is a lot easier.

For information about proper disposal of these items, call Blue Earth County Environmental Services Department at 507-304-4381.





Blue Earth County Library

507-304-4001

Mon. – Tues.: 10am-8pm
Wed. – Sat.: 9am-5pm
Sun.: 1pm-5pm (Follows School Schedule)

Lake Crystal Public Library

507-726-2726

Mon.: 1pm-5:30pm Tues.: 12pm-5:30pm
Wed.: 9:30am-6:30pm Thurs.: 1pm-5pm
Fri.: 9:30am-6:30pm Sat.: 9:30am-12pm

Mapleton Public Library

507-524-3513

Tues.: 1pm-5pm Wed.: 10am-12pm
Thurs.: 1pm-5pm Fri.: 1pm-5pm; 6pm-8pm
Sat.: 10am-12pm

www.beclibrary.org

Reading Program beats summer boredom

By Jennifer Cassman, Blue Earth County Library Specialist

Keeping kids busy is what the Blue Earth County Library is famous for in the summer. For years the Library has offered the Summer Reading program which provides incentives for area youth to keep reading throughout the summer. Starting June 5 kids can enjoy the seventh year of the Library's Summer Reading Program.

This year's theme, "Catch the Beat at your Library," offers a variety of free programs and musical performances for kids ages zero to 18 to enjoy. Performances run from June 13 to August 3. This year's headliner is musician Phil Baker. Baker has performed all over the country, including a recent visit to the White House. There are several other new acts, including: Nancy, Eddie and Friends Ventriloquism Fun; a magician known as the Amazing Christopher; and Julie's Traveling Story Bag, a program about

multicultural folktales from around the world. Crowd favorites including the Minnesota Zoomobile, the Science Museum of Minnesota, Jason the Juggler, the Silly Sisters, Brian Richards, the Zoo Man, Charlene Bradley from Zoo to You, and many others will return with new programs.

The basic reading goal for the summer is 12 hours, recorded by participants on take-home calendars. At the end of the summer children who read in excess of 12 hours can earn extra points for the bonus prize drawings. Prizes will be available until August 31. Youth of all ages are encouraged to participate. The Summer Reading Program, which provides a critical academic bridge from one grade level to the next, is made possible by generous community sponsors who care about literacy including Coughlan Companies and Friends of the Deep Valley Libraries. ■



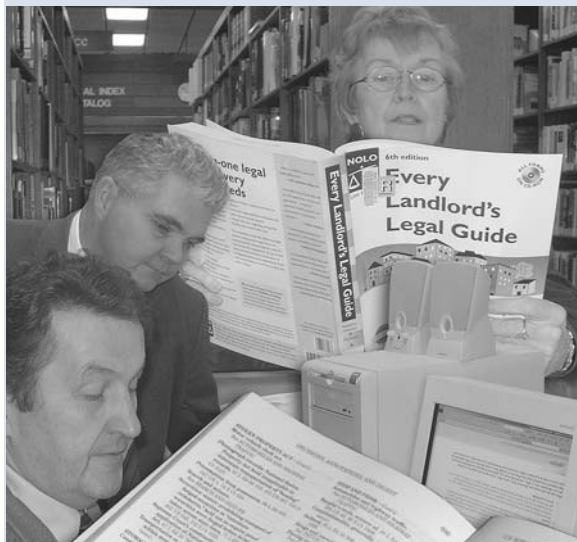
Law Library isn't just for attorneys

By Ross Arneson, County Attorney

Free and convenient legal research is available to the public at the Blue Earth County Library. Citizens will find a computer terminal with "Westlaw" access for legal research, and basic law books provided by the Blue Earth County Law Library Board. The legal books deal with common legal matters, like landlord/tenant, probate, divorce, small claims court and estate planning.

These materials provide introductory understanding of some legal topics. For serious legal matters, consult with competent legal counsel.

For more information visit www.beclibrary.org/onlineresources/legalresources.php.



For more information call the Lovelace Wing of the Blue Earth County Library at 507-304-4020.

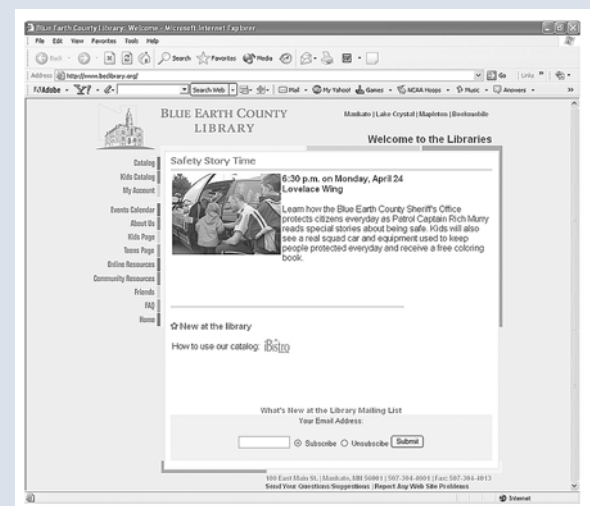
Library website offers more to citizens

The Blue Earth County Library website has undergone recent changes in order to make the website a more effective tool for citizens.

The new website design offers customers an easy way to use the Library from home. Library customers can access online services like viewing their account, renewing an item, placing a hold on an item and much more.

The new design also features a comprehensive events calendar, a weekly listing of new books at the Library and an opportunity for people to sign up for email notices of events. ■

www.beclibrary.org



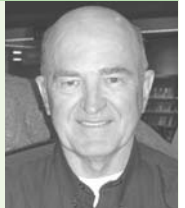
Sign-up for emails on new events as well as new books available to library customers.

Visit www.beclibrary.org today and find out what services the Blue Earth County Library can offer you.

Meet Your Library Board

The Blue Earth County Library Board meets at 4 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month at the Blue Earth County Library.

Robert Herickhoff
(507) 546-3005
robert.herickhoff@mnsu.edu



Bob Roberts
(507) 726-6816
bob.roberts@co.blue-earth.mn.us



Jane Schwickert
(507) 387-2870
jschwick3@hotmail.com



Linda Stowel
(507) 524-4632
lindas@prairie.lakes.com



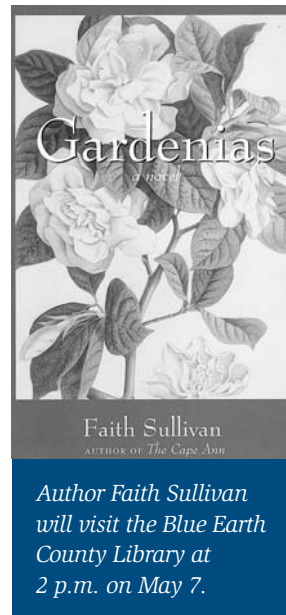
Second Sunday Stories focuses on adults

The Blue Earth County Library has always been known for its children's events. Recently, the Library began hosting Second Sunday Stories, a series of author events for adults. At 2 p.m. on the Second Sunday of every month, authors from Minnesota and beyond will visit the library. Each author will take time to share portions of their latest and greatest books, participate in a question and answer session, sign books and have books for sale.

Faith Sullivan is the author of several novels including *The Cape Ann*, *The Empress of One* and *What a Woman Must Do* and currently resides in Minneapolis. A sequel to *The Cape Ann*, *Gardenia* follows the Ernhardt family as they migrate to California during the 1940s war years. Arlene and Betty, determined to establish new lives for themselves, find work in the war plants. Nine-year-old Lark, a keen observer and patient narrator of life's twists, learns that some decisions and events forever change one's life.

Leave the kids at home and take advantage of a "story time" for adults. 

For more information on upcoming events at the Library visit <http://www.beclibrary.org/events.php> or call Library Specialist Jennifer Cassman at 507-304-4020.



Author Faith Sullivan will visit the Blue Earth County Library at 2 p.m. on May 7.

Bookmark Abundance

Young artists never cease to amaze during the annual Blue Earth County Bookmark Contest. Nearly 1,400 area students, ages preschool through 12th grade, entered the contest sponsored by Paragon Printing and Mailing and Paulsen Architects. First-place designs were professionally printed and are available at all Blue Earth County Libraries. Winning entries are on display on the Blue Earth County Library website at www.beclibrary.org. Thank you to Kevin McLaughlin, Commercial Art Instructor at South Central College, for helping to judge this year's contest.

Preschool & Kindergarten Category

1st Place – Rebecca Grenz (Kindergarten), Lake Crystal Welcome Memorial Elementary; Bridgette Kollos (Kindergarten), Maple River East Elementary

2nd Place – Isabel Becker (Kindergarten), Lake Crystal Welcome Memorial Elementary; Jordan Schmitt (Kindergarten), Hoover Elementary; Celestte Eichers (Kindergarten), Washington Elementary

3rd Place – Tom Lawton (Kindergarten), Franklin Elementary; Andrea Schreiber (Preschool), Epiphany Preschool

1st-2nd Grade Category

1st Place – Abby Leasman (1st Grade), Kennedy Elementary; Haley Reasor (1st Grade), Lake Crystal Welcome Memorial Elementary

2nd Place – Jordan Weis (1st Grade), Roosevelt Elementary; Bailey Murphy-Zernechel (2nd Grade), Roosevelt Elementary

3rd Place – Erin McGraw (1st Grade), Notre Dame Elementary; Marissa Swenson (2nd Grade), Jefferson Elementary; Cheyenne Walters (1st Grade), St. Clair Elementary

3rd-5th Grade Category

1st Place – Summer Boettcher (5th Grade), Jefferson Elementary; Andrew Murray (4th Grade), Fitzgerald Elementary

2nd Place – Mackenzie Lach (4th Grade), Hoover Elementary; Allison Lease (3rd Grade),

Mt. Olive; Anna Nolan (5th Grade), Bridges Community School

3rd Place – Kennedy Zellmer (5th Grade), Maple River East Elementary; Bethany Rigdon (3rd Grade), Notre Dame Elementary; Tera Braun (5th Grade), St. Clair Elementary

6th-8th Grade Category

1st Place – Laura Stromberg (8th Grade), Mankato East Junior High; Lindsey Voss (8th Grade), Mankato East Junior High

2nd Place – Amanda Vaneps (8th Grade), Mankato East Junior High; Jessica Johnson (8th Grade), Mankato East Junior High; Julia Gimmer (8th Grade), Mankato East Junior High

3rd Place – Ashley Steinberg (8th Grade), Maple River West; Sami Onsomu (8th Grade), Mankato East Junior High; Kristi Schulz (8th Grade), Maple River West

9th-12th Grade Category

1st Place – Nicole Frisk (11th Grade), Mankato West High; Kyra Moniz (10th Grade), Mankato East High

2nd Place – Paul Blaschko (11th Grade), Mankato East High; Ketturah Gemlo (12th Grade), Mankato West High; Liz Macrafie (10th Grade), Mankato West High

3rd Place – Tom Wagner (11th Grade), Mankato West High; Carrie Bluth (12th Grade), Mankato West High; Tricia Lewis, (12th Grade), Mankato West High



Bookmark design by Nicole Frisk, Mankato West High

Property Tax Drop-off Sites:

Citizens can take their property tax payments directly to Blue Earth County Taxpayer Services, or may use any of these convenient drop-off sites:

- Taxpayer Services 24-hour drop box, Fifth Street entrance (410 Jackson St., Mankato)
- Cub Foods, 1800 Madison Avenue, Mankato
- Downtown Hy-Vee, Mankato
- Community Bank, Vernon Center
- MinnStar Bank, Lake Crystal & Good Thunder
- Peoples State Bank, Madison Lake
- Pioneer Bank, Mapleton
- St. Clair State Bank, St. Clair
- US Bank, Amboy

Bank locations are accessible during the operating hours for that particular bank.

Real estate property taxes are due May 15 and October 15, agricultural property taxes are due May 15 and November 15 and mobile home property taxes are due August 31 and November 15. Please check your property tax statement for the appropriate due date.



**By Maureen Sop,
Community Health Planner**

Blue Earth County Community Health encourages individuals and families to prepare for emergencies before disaster strikes using four easy techniques.

Develop an emergency health information sheet with telephone numbers and medications.

Compile extra non-perishables and supplies at home.

- Bottled water and fluids with electrolytes
- Non perishable and high protein foods
- Extra prescriptions, vitamins and medical supplies
- Soap or alcohol-based hand wash
- Flashlights
- Portable radio with extra batteries
- Tissue, toilet paper, disposable diapers

Adopt habits to limit the spread of germs

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water
- Cover your coughs and sneezes
- Stay home from work, school and errands when sick
- Eat healthy foods and drink plenty of water

ICE your cell phone

- In a crisis your cell phone can help emergency workers identify you and notify your loved ones.
- Go to contacts on your cell phone and select "add contact."
 - Under name, put **ICE1** for the first person you want contacted as well as their first name (example: **ICE1 Tom**).
 - Enter their telephone number
 - Repeat for additional emergency contacts.

Don't wait for an emergency to happen. Prepare your family today.

For more detailed information call Blue Earth County Community Health at 507-304-4411 or attend the Emergency Preparedness Program at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 25 in the Blue Earth County Library Auditorium. The Library is located at 100 East Main Street in Mankato.

How is your child doing?

Every child develops at a different pace, but there are some skills that children should develop by certain ages. Early Intervention is available to help little ones, ages birth to six years, learn skills appropriate for their age and ability. Call the Interagency Intervention Committee (IEIC) at 507-387-1818.

Help at an early age can make all the difference.

Telemedicine Videoconferencing Network

By Barb Durbahn, Mental Health Supervisor

Walking into Dr. Michael Farnsworth's office a patient would likely first notice the massive large screen television. However, Dr. Farnsworth, a consulting Psychiatrist for Blue Earth County, assures it is not for football games.

Recently Blue Earth County began offering telemedicine videoconferencing to its mental health patients. Early intervention is key to reducing the severity of a crisis for individuals with mental health needs. In our region community providers are often unable to meet the demands for emergency psychiatric care. When an individual needs a psychiatric visit, they could wait weeks or months before the appointment. Although all providers try to address mental health needs in a timely manner, clients often need to reach a crisis in order to get care quickly. The crisis may have been diverted or lessened if access had been quickly and efficiently provided in their community.

After an initial face-to face consult, clients can use the Telemedicine Videoconferencing Network to meet with their out-of-area providers without leaving their community. This exciting initiative addresses the increasing organizational and regional capacity to respond to the mental health needs of the ten-county area. Videoconferencing benefits clients and the County by assuring access to qualified mental health providers in rural areas, improving coordination amongst providers, improving communication, enhancing appropriate care decisions and decreasing the dependence on law enforcement agencies to transport consumers to care providers. The system also decreases costly

and unnecessary ambulance transport of clients to a community hospital for a mental health evaluation when a video conference would suffice.

The Blue Earth County Mental Health Unit is committed to addressing consumer needs when and where it is necessary. The County received grants from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota, Blue Earth County Public Health, and the South Central Community Based Initiative for the Telehealth Development. Recently developed services such as the new Crisis Center in Mankato and the Mobile Crisis Services will truly be enhanced with the availability of a telemedicine communication system. ■



Consultant to Blue Earth County Mental Health Center Dr. Michael Farnsworth and Director of LeSueur County Human Services Sue Rynda demonstrate the Telemedicine Videoconferencing Network.

For more information contact the Blue Earth County Mental Health Unit at 507-304-4271.

Health and safety programs available for ethnic community

Emergency and Community Health Outreach (ECHO) is dedicated to making sure Limited-English speaking residents receive life-saving information about important health and safety topics. With the help of Blue Earth County Public Health, ECHO is able to provide programs on CCTV, Mankato's local cable station, for three ethnic audiences including Spanish, Hmong and Somali.

Programs can be viewed on CCTV Cable Channel 13 at 9:30 a.m. on Thursdays and 2 p.m. on Saturdays. Each week of the month is directed toward a different ethnic group in our communities. The first week of the month the ECHO program will be in Spanish, the second Hmong and the third Somali. ■

For more information contact Cathy Sandmann, Blue Earth County Human Service Supervisor-Community Health, at 507-304-4372 or for more information about ECHO visit www.echominnesota.org.

April

Family Emergency Preparedness Plans

May

Preventing Food-Borne Illnesses

June/July

West Nile & Lime Disease

August/September

Child & Teen Checkups & School Health

October

All About Flu & Pandemic Flu

November

Winter Safety

December

Mental Health Care During Crisis

January

Mass Dispensing of Medicine

February

Household Poisons & Hazardous Chemicals

March

Severe Weather Warnings

THE PEOPLE



Colleen Landkamer
District 1 Commissioner
349 Parry St.
Mankato, MN 56001
345-4444 (H) / 304-4283 (O)
colleen.landkamer@co.blue-earth.mn.us



Tom McLaughlin
District 2 Commissioner
1129 Broad St.
Mankato, MN 56001
388-7647 (H) / 304-4282 (O)
tc_mclaughlin@hotmail.com



Katy Wortel, Chair
District 3 Commissioner
1411 Pohl Road
Mankato, MN 56001
345-4494 (H) / 304-4282 (O)
katy.wortel@co.blue-earth.mn.us



Bob Roberts
District 4 Commissioner
18929 Mary Lane
Lake Crystal, MN 56055
726-6816 (H) / 304-4282 (O)
bob.roberts@co.blue-earth.mn.us



Kip Bruender, Vice Chair
District 5 Commissioner
204 Joan Lane
Eagle Lake, MN 56024
257-2116 (H) / 304-4282 (O)
kip.bruender@co.blue-earth.mn.us



Brad Peterson, Sheriff
Law Enforcement Center
710 S. Front St.
Mankato, MN 56001
387-8711
brad.peterson@co.blue-earth.mn.us



**Ross Arneson,
County Attorney**
Blue Earth County Gov. Center
410 S. Fifth St.
Mankato, MN 56001
304-4352



**Dennis McCoy,
County Administrator**
Blue Earth County Courthouse
204 S. Fifth St.
Mankato, MN 56001
304-4284
dennis.mccoy@co.blue-earth.mn.us

Board Information

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

www.co.blue-earth.mn.us/board/schedule.php

Citizens who wish to address the Board of Commissioners at a meeting must contact the County Administrator at 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 e-mail info@co.blue-earth.mn.us

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!**

Blue Earth County COMMISSIONER DISTRICTS



SERVICE DIRECTORY



County Government Center
410 S. Fifth St., Mankato



Nichols Building
410 Jackson St., Mankato



Public Works Department
35 Map Dr., Mankato

Taxpayer Services – License Center/Elections

Lower Level 304-4340

Driver's licenses
Motor vehicle/Boat registration
Fishing/Hunting licenses
Birth/Death certificates
Marriage licenses
Passports
Voter registration/Absentee ballots
Filing of notices

Veterans Service

Lower Level 304-4246

Federal and State benefits
Transportation to VA Hospital

Information Technology

Lower Level 304-4204

Human Services

1st/2nd/3rd Floors

Financial Assistance 304-4335
Social Services 304-4319
Community Health 304-4319
Mental Health Center 304-4319
Sexual Violence Resource Center 304-4319
South Central Children's Project 304-4311
Child Support 304-4166

County Attorney

2nd Floor 304-4352

Environmental Services

3rd Floor 304-4381

Planning and Zoning
Building and Feedlot Permits
Shorelands/Flood plains
Water wells/Septic systems/Wetlands
Recycling Center/Compost Site/Landfill
Household Hazardous Waste Center
911/Rural Addressing

Corrections

1st Floor 304-4550

Restitution/Restorative justice
Adult & juvenile probation
Diversion/Prevention

U of M Extension

1st 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

Taxpayer Services – Property Information

2nd Floor 304-4251

Property assessment and tax collection
Abstracts/Certificates for registered land
Mapping
Ditch Management

Roads and 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



Courthouse
204 S. Fifth St., Mankato



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

Physical Plant/Safety

Lower Level 304-4249

Finance

Lower Level 304-4181

Administration

1st Floor

Administration 304-4284
Human Resources 304-4288
Public Information 304-4491

5th Judicial District Court

1st/2nd/3rd Floors 304-4050

Traffic tickets
Small claims court
Civil and criminal court



Law Enforcement Center
710 S. Front St., Mankato

County Sheriff 387-8710
Burning Permits 387-8700
Civil Process Office 387-8713
Request a Crime Report 387-8702
Report a Crime 911

Serving Citizens Through County Government

Other County Facilities/Numbers



BLUE EARTH COUNTY
www.co.blue-earth.mn.us

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