

Anoka County

NEWS

Volume 3 - 2008

Anoka County Board sets 2009 budget

Maintaining core services remains a top priority

The Anoka County Board has proposed a 2009 budget of \$269.6 million which would result in a property tax levy of \$117.5 million. If adopted, the budget would likely maintain Anoka County's position as having the fifth lowest per person property taxes in the state, and the second lowest in the metro area.

Because of the new metro-wide quarter cent transit tax, the Anoka County Regional Railroad Authority levy will decrease. The metro-wide transit tax will cover the operating costs of Northstar Commuter Rail which otherwise would have been paid with property taxes.

For many homeowners the Anoka County levy, combined with the reduced Anoka County Regional Rail levy, will result in a property tax decrease of nearly two percent.

"The county board recognizes we are facing a tough economic situation," said Anoka County Board Chair Dennis Berg. "This budget focuses on core services such as public safety, transportation, and care for children and vulnerable adults."

Transportation

The August 28 opening of the new bridge at Main St. (CSAH 14) and Hwy. 65 in Blaine, ahead of

schedule, marked the completion of phase one of a three-phase project along Hwy. 65 that will increase safety, improve traffic flow, and rectify problems at three of the most dangerous intersections in the state. In 2009, \$28 million in major highway reconstruction projects are scheduled including:

- Upgrade Bunker Lake Blvd. (CSAH 116) from Hwy. 65 through Radisson Rd. to a four-lane divided urban highway in the cities of Blaine and Ham Lake.
- Safety improvements to the intersection of Coon Rapids Blvd. (CSAH 1) and Crooked Lake Blvd. (CSAH 18) in the city of Coon Rapids, including new signal and channelization for the entire intersection.
- Safety improvements including improved shoulders, signing, and striping at sharp curves on Lexington Ave. (CSAH 17) between Broadway Ave. and Viking Blvd. in the city of Columbus.
- Installing right and left turn lanes to Norris Lake Rd. (CSAH 24) and TH 47, in the city of St. Francis.
- Reconstruction of Main St. (CSAH 14) from I-35W to I-35E in the cities of Centerville and Lino Lakes.
- More than \$2.8 million in rehabilitation projects including full-depth reclamation, mill and overlay, rut paving, crack sealing, bridge maintenance, signal painting, and railroad crossing repair projects.



Anoka County Commissioner Rhonda Sivarajah visits with a senior during a recent Senior Expo.

- Upgrade of the bridge and interchange at Main St. (CSAH 14) and I-35E in Lino Lakes. This will include safety and capacity improvements for the entire interchange and ramps.
- Upgrade Radisson Rd. (CSAH 52) from 125th Ave. through Bunker Lake Blvd.

"These projects, along with the start of Northstar Commuter Rail service in the fall of 2009, will help create new opportunities for businesses to grow and create jobs," said Anoka County Commissioner Dan Erhart. "Anoka County prides itself on finding innovative solutions to difficult problems and demonstrating leadership and

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Airport improvements near completion

When Scott LeDoux, Anoka County commissioner and chair of the county's Airport Committee, gazes at the new fixed base operation (FBO) at the Anoka County-Blaine Airport, he sees more than a well-appointed executive terminal and 66,000 square foot hangar. He sees opportunity.

"This premier facility is bringing in business jet travelers to the Anoka County-Blaine Airport," LeDoux said. "It has become an invaluable economic development tool that allows us to showcase the business opportunities available in Anoka County."

The FBO's executive terminal features full concierge services and a comfortable business center complete with conference rooms. "Part of what this facility offers the business sector is convenience and time," LeDoux said. "Executives

"Airport" continued on page 5



Interior of one of the new hangars at the Anoka County-Blaine Airport

Anoka County
2100 Third Ave.
Anoka, MN 55303-2265

Transit Update

First Northstar Commuter Rail locomotive delivered

Delivery of additional locomotives, passenger cars to continue through early 2009

The first of five Northstar Commuter Rail locomotives has been delivered to the Northstar vehicle maintenance facility in Big Lake, where all Northstar

locomotives will be stored until the beginning of commuter rail service in late 2009. On its way to Big Lake, the locomotive passed future Northstar station stops under

construction in downtown Minneapolis, Coon Rapids, Anoka, Elk River, and Big Lake.

“Reaching this milestone brings a new level of excitement for area commuters,” said Anoka County Commissioner Dan Erhart, who chairs the Northstar Corridor Development Authority (NCDA). “We’ve seen remarkable progress on the construction of stations and other Northstar facilities this year. The arrival of the locomotive is a reminder that the official launch of Minnesota’s first commuter rail service is fast approaching.”

The MP-36 locomotives are produced at Motive Power, Inc. of Boise, Idaho. Traveling at top speeds of 79 miles per hour, the locomotives will move passengers

along 40 miles of existing BNSF Railway train tracks between Big Lake and Minneapolis in less than 45 minutes. The Northstar Project bought five locomotives at a cost of \$13.3 million as part of a larger and more cost-efficient contract with multiple transit systems across the country. The remaining four locomotives are expected to arrive in Big Lake by the end of 2008. Delivery of 17 Bombardier passenger cars will begin next spring.

The Northstar Project is a cooperative effort among the NCDA, Metropolitan Council, Metro Transit, and Minnesota Department of Transportation.

For more information, visit www.mn-GetOnBoard.com.



The first of five Northstar Commuter Rail locomotives was delivered to the Northstar vehicle maintenance facility in Big Lake.

Northstar Commuter Rail secures funding for Fridley station

The Northstar Commuter Rail Fridley station is expected to be fully operational when Minnesota’s first commuter rail service begins in late 2009. The Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) recently granted \$9.9 million for construction of the previously deferred station as part of its first round of transportation grants.

“Residents and businesses in southern Anoka County, as well as in neighboring Hennepin and Ramsey Counties, will greatly benefit from having a station located in Fridley,” said Anoka County Commissioner Jim Kordiak, who represents the Fridley area.

The other Northstar stations — downtown Minneapolis, Coon Rapids-Riverdale, Anoka, Elk River, and Big Lake — are under construction using a mix of federal, county, and state funds. While the

Fridley station was included in Northstar’s original plans, the Northstar Corridor Development Authority (NCDA) was forced to defer the station because of cost considerations. Anoka County Regional Railroad Authority (ACRRA) and Fridley area officials worked with the CTIB to secure funding.

The \$9.9 million grant, combined with funds already invested by the ACRRA and the city of Fridley, completes the funding needed for the Fridley station. The construction bidding process for the Fridley station will begin in December. Construction is expected to begin in late winter or early spring 2009.

The station will be ready when Northstar service starts late next year because the ACRRA and city of Fridley have already completed

some of the initial steps. In May 2008, the ACRRA paid for the \$1.5 million construction of a pedestrian tunnel under the BNSF train tracks, and the Fridley Housing and Redevelopment Authority acquired land for the east side park-and-ride lot at the site.

“This is a great day for Fridley,” said Robert Barnette, Fridley city councilman and NCDA member. “Thanks to the support of many people and the financial help from CTIB, station construction can be completed in time for service start-up in late 2009.”

The Fridley station will be located off of East River Road near the intersection of Main St. and 60th Ave. and will include:

- A pedestrian tunnel for safe crossing under the train tracks
- Automated ticket and Metro Transit Go-To Card kiosks

- On-demand heating in covered and enclosed platform shelters
- Bicycle lockers
- Fully ADA compliant platforms
- Security cameras on the platforms, trains, and in parking lots
- Well-lit parking and station facilities

About CTIB

The Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) — comprised of Anoka, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, and Washington Counties — is leading development of light rail, commuter rail, and bus rapid transit lines in the metro area. The CTIB receives its funding through the new ¼ percent metro sales tax and \$20 motor vehicle excise tax passed by state legislators and participating metro counties in early 2008.

Northern Lights Express receives \$1.1 million federal study grant

A proposed high-speed passenger rail line between Duluth/Superior and Minneapolis, running through the heart of Anoka County, has received a \$1.1 million grant from the Federal Railroad Administration. The funds will be used to study the infrastructure improvements needed on existing BNSF tracks to support trains traveling up to 110 mph.

The Northern Lights Express project is one of 15 passenger rail proposals nationwide to receive funding.



All of the proposed passenger rail projects are designed to improve on-time performance, boost capacity on existing intercity passenger rail routes, and help establish new routes where none exist today.

The 150-mile line will cost an estimated \$400 million and could be operational as early as 2012. The

route will terminate at the same station in downtown Minneapolis as Northstar Commuter Rail and will connect with the Hiawatha light rail line.

Early plans call for a stop at Foley Blvd. in Coon Rapids allowing suburban commuters to take the train to downtown Minneapolis.

Work to end the tragedy of domestic violence



by Bruce Andersohn, Anoka County Sheriff

The latest homicide in Anoka County appears to be the result of domestic violence. As Anoka County Sheriff, I have seen incidences of domestic violence repeated far too often over the years. Domestic violence appears to have played a role in four of the six homicides we've experienced in Anoka County in 2008, and in 2007, all three homicides in the county were the result of domestic violence.

Statistics show that one in three women will be a victim of domestic violence. Young women between the ages of 16 to 24 have the highest

rates of violence in their relationships. In the United States, a woman is more likely to be assaulted, raped, or killed by an intimate partner, relative, friend, or acquaintance than anyone else. Domestic violence occurs in all socioeconomic classes, races, and religions. Law enforcement officers in Anoka County see it on a daily basis, in all communities.

People often wonder why abused women don't simply leave their abusive partners. Women encounter many barriers when trying to leave an abusive relationship, including:

- Fear. Women are fearful of what their abusers might do to them or their children.

- Financial pressures. Leaving an abusive relationship is often financially devastating to the victim and other members of the family.

- Low self-esteem. Victims of domestic violence may experience self-blame or self-doubt caused by months or years of living in fear. Living in a continual atmosphere of fear erodes their self-esteem and leaves them feeling helpless and hopeless.

The question then becomes, "What can we as a society and as individuals do to end the tragedy of domestic violence?"

First off, it's important to support community organizations such as Alexandra House, which provide support services to victims of domestic violence. Alexandra House and similar organizations have many volunteer opportunities available and can always use help answering the crisis phone line, working with women and children, and preparing meals for the

residents. Donate to these programs through fundraisers such as the Hope Gala or other opportunities. In times of tight resources, non-profits like Alexandra House find it harder to raise needed funds.

Talk to your children about the issue of domestic violence. For our daughters, it is important to emphasize that domestic violence is never acceptable and they should seek help if they find themselves in an abusive relationship. We must teach our sons to respect women and to understand that violence is not acceptable in their relationships.

Domestic violence affects individuals and the community at large. It is a major public safety concern that also has a significant financial impact on society as well. Ridding our communities of the scourge of domestic violence is a worthy goal that deserves our full attention and support.



The 2009 Hope Gala, a benefit for Alexandra House, will take place on March 7 at the Tournament Players Club in Blaine. For ticket information, call Amanda Vickstrom at 763-656-1363 or email at avickstrom@alexandrahouse.org.

Seniors enjoy carefree living at the Oaks of Lake George

It was the gorgeous country setting and long list of amenities that first attracted Sandy Wirz to the Oaks of Lake George Senior Housing Complex in Oak Grove. But after living there just one year, Wirz points first to the friendly people and variety of activities as the top reasons she's glad to call "the Oaks" her home. "Plus there's no yard work!" she added, laughing. "And I don't have to worry about keeping the driveway and sidewalk cleared of snow!"



Sandy Wirz, left, and Jean Bettinger enjoy visiting in the large community room at the Oaks of Lake George.

something breaks, I don't have to worry about making repairs. I just make a phone call."

The Oaks of Lake George Complex was built by the Anoka County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (ACHRA) in cooperation with the City of Oak Grove. It opened in the fall of 2006. Units at the

Oaks are not subsidized. Market rate rents range from \$796 to \$1,327 per month, depending on the unit. Currently, a special offer for new tenants guarantees no rent increases for two years.

"That's a great incentive for people thinking about moving into a senior apartment," said Anoka County Commissioner Dick Lang, who represents the Oak Grove area. "This is a beautiful facility close to grocery stores and other shopping, yet located in a quiet, country setting. It's ideal."



The spacious community room at the Oaks of Lake George.

bedroom handicapped accessible units. Other amenities include:

- Full size washer and dryer
- Individual heating and air conditioning units
- Individual decks
- Individual storage areas
- Community room
- Card/game room
- Exercise room
- Library
- Guest suite
- Social activities
- Walking distance to Lake George and nature area
- Heated underground parking
- Underground area to wash cars
- Woodshop/hobby area
- Located minutes from shops, grocery store, and restaurants

Jean Bettinger lived in Princeton before moving to the Oaks. "I saw this place and that was it; my decision was made," she said. "We have a nice bunch of people living here. I love the freedom too. If

The Oaks is located at 21202 Old Lake George Blvd. in Oak Grove. For rental information, contact Great Lakes Management at 763-753-8385.



The guest suite at the Oaks of Lake George

The Oaks of Lake George Complex caters to active seniors age 55 and over who are looking for a "care-free" lifestyle, according to Kathy Downey, the on-site resident manager. "We have a wide variety of activities for residents who choose to participate," Downey said. "We have bingo, potlucks, speakers (a financial advisor offered his expertise recently), pancake breakfasts, and a party for nearly every occasion," she said.

The Oaks offers one- and two-bedroom units, one- and two-bedroom units with den, and one

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Library lovers!

Library users visit county libraries in record numbers

Anoka County residents love their libraries! A whopping 71.5 percent of us have a library card. (This figure excludes residents of Columbia Heights who fund their own city library.) We made more than 1.2 million personal visits to our libraries in 2007, up almost 24,000 from 2006, and the library Web site had more than 18.5 million hits -- 38 percent more than a year ago!



Volunteers for the Anoka County Library summer reading program were honored at a recent Anoka County Board meeting. Front row, from left: Caleb Owusu, Celena Todora, Tyler Falk, William Snyder, Deveny Miles, Jesse Fuhrman, Nehemiah Owusa, Kayla Weiss, Joy Michelson, and Alexa Billadeau. Back row, from left: Brianna Delmont, Alex Hokkanen, Emily Broden, Sarah Anderson, Stephanie Harnan, Anoka County Library Board President Jane Daniels, Anoka County Commissioner Jim Kordiak, Mark Thorsen, Melissa Toensing, and Ratiba Maameri.

Anoka County kids really love our libraries. Last year participants in summer reading program special events topped 10,474. The fun continued as 13,868 younger kids and teens collectively read for more than 84,990 hours as part of the library's summer reading program. "The summer reading programs reinforce the message that reading is fun," said Anoka County Commissioner Jim Kordiak, who also serves as the Library Board liaison.

The Anoka County Board recognized the contributions of hundreds of volunteers and "volunteens" who gave their time to make the summer reading program possible. "Without the more than 400 volunteers, the summer reading program would simply not happen," Kordiak said. "We can't

thank the volunteers enough for the hours they contributed, for the lives they touched, and for the difference they are making in our communities."

Library storytimes continue to be popular with the younger set, with more than 10,696 children attending throughout 2007. Last year for the first time a Spanish language storytime was offered in addition to baby, toddler, preschool, and family storytimes. "Storytimes highlight and reinforce all the early literacy skills children need for success in school," Kordiak said.

Adults are making extensive use of the library too. With more than 30 online resources, most of which can be accessed from your home computer, the Anoka County Library has something for everyone. Find small engine repair tips, get Standard and Poor's investment advice, or read the current edition of the New York Times from home. Go to www.anoka.lib.mn.us and click on Online Resources.

The Library's catalog of books, periodicals, CDs, and DVDs is available from the Web site too. Use the catalog to see what's in the collection, place holds, and review lists of bestsellers.

In 2007 the Anoka County Library Board initiated a strategic planning process in an effort to gather input from community members and develop plans for the future of the library. "We recognize that the needs of library users continues to evolve and we have plans in place in order to respond to those changing expectations," Kordiak said.



Charde Houston, right, and Nicky Anosike, players for the Minnesota Lynx of the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), recently read to youngsters at the Crooked Lake Branch Library in Coon Rapids. The WNBA and the Minnesota Lynx are partners in "Read to Achieve", a year-round literacy program.

FIND WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR! Online resources include:

- **ALLDATA**
Car and light truck repair plus repair costs from 1982 forward
- **Ancestry Library Edition**
Genealogy, local history, and census images
- **Sam's Photofacts**
Ebook repair manuals on consumer electronics
- **Informe**
Una colección de revistas hispánicas con textos completos
- **Small Engine Repair**
Ebook repair manuals
- **Health & Wellness Resource Center**
Medical reference, periodicals, and videos
- **Novelist**
Detailed subject guide to fiction including author "read alikes"
- **Kid InfoBits**
Kids' reference sources and magazines
- **Reference USA**
Directories of U.S. and Canadian businesses and U.S. residences
- **CQ Public Affairs Collection**
Congressional Quarterly publications on government and politics
- **Educator's Reference Complete**
Reference and periodicals on education
- **New Book of Knowledge**
Kids encyclopedia and games

County receives \$2.37 million for neighborhoods hard hit by foreclosures

Anoka County has been awarded more than \$2.37 million from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for a new program that aims to reduce the number of vacant and abandoned properties in communities hardest hit by mortgage defaults and delinquencies. Anoka County will use the new Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funds to acquire foreclosed, vacant, and abandoned houses to rehabilitate,

resell, or create rental opportunities to stabilize neighborhoods and stem the decline of home values. The county also may offer down payment and closing cost assistance to low to moderate income homeowners and create a land bank for future development projects.

"We will use these NSP funds to target areas in the county hardest hit by the foreclosure crisis," said Anoka County Board Chair Dennis

Berg. "It is a tremendous opportunity to help communities recover from the devastating effects of foreclosure and declining home values."

The money comes from the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008, which included \$3.92 billion in funding for communities to buy foreclosed homes at discounted prices to rehabilitate or redevelop those properties. HUD

awarded the funds based on the number and percent of foreclosures, subprime mortgages, and mortgage defaults and delinquencies.

Anoka County is currently developing a plan to process and distribute the NSP funds based on federal requirements that identify the types of projects that best meet neighborhood needs.

“Budget” continued from page one

ingenuity. Northstar will be the first commuter rail line in Minnesota, and Anoka County and its citizens will be the big winners when the train begins operations in a matter of months.”

Human Services

It is increasingly difficult for individuals and families to make ends meet in today’s challenging economy. Anoka County’s Income Maintenance caseloads, including food support, child support,



Attending the ground-breaking ceremony for the new public safety center are, from left: Anoka County Commissioners Robyn West, Dennis Berg, Scott LeDoux, and Jim Kordiak; Anoka County Sheriff Bruce Andersohn; and Anoka County Commissioner Dan Erhart.

Public Safety

Construction of the long anticipated Anoka County Public Safety Center and Tri-County Forensic Laboratory in Andover at Hanson Blvd. and 133rd Ave. is underway and scheduled for completion in the fall of 2009. The facility will consolidate the majority of the Sheriff’s Office operations and speed response time in emergencies. The county jail and court security will remain in the city of Anoka.

“Providing for the public’s safety is one of a county’s most basic and important mandates,” said Anoka County Commissioner Scott LeDoux, who chairs the county’s Public Safety Committee. “By partnering with Sherburne and Wright Counties on the Forensic Lab, we will enhance our ability to solve crimes and help victims obtain the justice they deserve.” The county received \$3 million in financial support from the state of Minnesota for construction of the forensic lab.

housing referral and healthcare, have increased 60 percent since 2001.

“The fact is, when the economy is struggling, people are struggling and more people seek government assistance. It creates the perfect storm in terms of creating a budget that still allows the county to help those residents who desperately need assistance,” said Anoka County Commissioner Rhonda Sivarajah, who chairs the county Human Services Committee. “In spite of the increased workload, significant cuts had to be made in the wake of state and federal cuts.”

This year, a new federal rule change equates to a 50 percent reduction in federal dollars for child protection, shifting the cost to local taxpayers. The county will continue to provide these essential services through a balance of taxes, use of reserves, and manageable budget reductions in other areas.

Save energy, save money

Anoka County homeowners may be eligible to receive zero interest loans to replace inefficient furnaces, boiler systems, water heaters, and programmable thermostats with more efficient systems under a new Anoka County Energy Program.

Heating unit replacements will be of the highest reasonable efficiency rating based on the size and need of the housing unit. Cooling units or other appliances not directly related to heating needs are not eligible. All work must be completed by a qualified professional.

The program offers 10-year term, zero interest deferred loans to qualified homeowners. If the property is sold, transferred, or no longer the principal place of residence within the 10 year period, recipients will be required to repay the loan.

The Energy Program is part of the more comprehensive Anoka County Housing Rehabilitation Program which provides qualified homeowners with zero interest loans to make home repairs and improvements that correct housing code violations, address health and safety concerns, and reduce long-term maintenance and energy costs.

The Energy Program serves property owners in Anoka County whose income is at or below the following limits:

Family Size	Income Limit
1	\$43,050
2	\$49,200
3	\$55,350
4	\$61,500
5	\$66,400
6	\$71,350
7	\$76,250
8	\$81,200

Rehabilitation Program funds are available on a first come, first served basis and may be used to repair or replace the roof, windows, siding, electrical or plumbing systems, insulation, foundation, well or septic system, or water heater. Loans are deferred, due upon sale or transfer of title or if refinanced with a cash out option.

To be eligible for the program, the property must be located in Anoka County and be at least 15 years old. Homeowners are required to be current on all utility bills or payment plans established by the utility company and must occupy the home as their full-time residence.

Both the Housing Rehabilitation and Energy Programs are administered by the HousingResource Center NorthMetro, a program of the Greater Metropolitan Housing Corporation. For more information, call 651-486-7401.

(“Airport” continued from page one)

can fly in from out of town, conduct their meetings right at the FBO, and leave within a few hours.”

With 4,800- and 5,000-foot runways and a precision approach system, the airport can accommodate private jets to ease congestion at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and the St. Paul Downtown Airport.

Located just 15 minutes from downtown Minneapolis, the new facility also includes a 66,000 square foot hangar. “With the new FBO and other



The executive terminal at the new FBO at the Anoka County-Blaine Airport.

recent improvements, the Anoka County-Blaine Airport provides all the amenities needed by the business jet sector of general aviation,” LeDoux said.

The FBO and airport improvements were fast-tracked for completion in time to accommodate increased corporate jet activity related to the

Republican National Convention held in St. Paul in September. The new hangar at the airport also served as the site of a campaign rally for presidential candidate John McCain and his running mate Governor Sarah Palin. A crowd estimated at more than 13,000 attended the September rally.



Exterior of the new FBO at the Anoka County-Blaine Airport.

The FBO at the Anoka County-Blaine Airport is owned and operated by Key Air, a Connecticut-based aircraft management and executive charter company.

Problems with the criminal justice system



by Anoka County Attorney Robert "Bob" Johnson

Our criminal justice system can and should do a better job. It takes too long from crime to conviction. Court hearings and trials may be continued many times from one date to a later date. The procedures are increasingly complex, making for human errors and added work.

Delay is the largest problem. Often – too often – a case is resolved by plea or verdict six to 12 months or longer after the offense. Victims often wonder why they are asked to revisit a painful experience so long after the crime occurred. Many victims have moved on with their lives and now the system is asking for their cooperation. Even offenders who may have committed a crime a year ago may be unhappy about the delay.

How do we reduce delays? Police should be constantly aware of the problem and move cases to the prosecutor as fast as possible. Prosecutors should make charging decisions quickly, recognizing the concern of victims and even offenders. Most of all, the court should develop ways to fast-track criminal cases.

All this is easy to say and hard to do. The number of cases charged in my office has risen from 100 in 1970 when the county had 154,500 people to 1,832 in 2006 when the population had grown to 327,000. This increase was mainly driven by new laws making more conduct criminal, more focus on intra-family crimes, and the "war" against drugs. The jump in the number of cases, together with an increasingly complex system, has made it more difficult to respond quickly.

We continue to work at making timely decisions. We are very aware that victims are waiting for resolution. My office is tracking delays in making charging decisions and requiring assistants to make decisions in a timely manner. We object to defense requests where the apparent aim is to delay trials or find more favorable judges. As prosecutors, we must do our part to reduce delays in achieving justice.

"Take Heart Anoka County" aims to save lives

A new community approach to saving lives is under way in Anoka County. *Take Heart Anoka County*, a coalition of doctors, nurses, paramedics, health educators, and community leaders aims to dramatically increase the likelihood of survival after sudden cardiac arrest by training more people in cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and placing automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in public places throughout the community.

An estimated 350,000 people in the U.S. die from sudden cardiac arrest annually. The survival rate for sudden cardiac arrest is low -- just five percent. If untreated, death results in as little as six minutes from the time of collapse, rarely enough time for emergency responders to arrive. By training more people in CPR and having more AEDs available in public places, the *Take Heart Anoka*



County initiative hopes to increase survival rates.

Take Heart Anoka County has two grants available funded by the Mercy & Unity Hospitals Foundation to help train the public in CPR and AED use. The first

Sally Cleveland, Adult Programs Manager, Income Maintenance, learns the proper way to open the airway during a CPR class held recently for employees at the Anoka County Government Center. Anoka County has provided CPR training for 237 employees.

allows people to buy a CPR Anytime kit for \$10 (normally \$30) that teaches CPR and AED use in less than an hour using a DVD and inflatable mannequin. If someone uses that kit to train at least three people in CPR and AED use, they get their \$10 back. The other grant allows the purchase of a \$2,000 AED and mounting cabinet for \$400. If grant recipients show that the AED has been placed in a public location and at least 25 people have been trained in CPR and AED use, they get their \$400 back.

For more information visit www.TakeHeartAnoka.org or call 651-228-8470.

Moody's affirms Anoka County's strong Aa2 bond rating

Conservatively managed finances, strong annual growth, and major commercial and residential developments are key reasons Moody's Investors Service recently affirmed Anoka County's strong Aa2 bond rating. The rating is a measure of the county's creditworthiness and determines what interest rate the county pays on loans to fund major projects. Moody's is one of the largest bond rating services in the nation.

The Moody's report highlighted the county's rapidly growing tax base, prudent budgeting, and close proximity to Minneapolis and St. Paul as important strengths. Moody's analysts expect the county to continue to experience strong commercial and industrial growth given the "ample availability of appropriately zoned property within the Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA)." Completion of the Northstar Commuter Rail line in late 2009 will also fuel continued growth and development, according to

Moody's. National bond underwriter Oppenheimer & Co. Inc. reports the Anoka County name is well-received in the tax exempt marketplace. "Anoka County is viewed as not only a stable, but strong and growing credit," said Ralph McGinley, managing director of Oppenheimer's Minneapolis branch.

"We are extremely pleased with this strong bond rating," said Anoka County Board Chair Dennis Berg. "With the favorable interest rates this bond rating makes available, Anoka County will realize significant savings in the cost of the new Sheriff's Office and Regional Forensic Lab as well as improvements at the Anoka County-Blaine Airport. Taxpayers are the ultimate winners with these savings."

Only five of the 87 counties in the state have a higher credit rating than Anoka County.

Incumbents re-elected to county board seats

All three incumbents won re-election November 4 to their seats on the Anoka County Board.

In District 5, which includes portions of Andover and Coon Rapids, Scott LeDoux defeated challenger Becky Fink. "I am very grateful to have the opportunity to continue to serve the citizens of Anoka County," LeDoux said.

In District 6, which covers Centerville, Circle Pines, Columbus, Lexington, Lino Lakes,



Scott LeDoux



Rhonda Sivarajah



Dan Erhart

Linwood and portions of Blaine, Rhonda Sivarajah defeated her opponent Kevin Ryan. "I am humbled by the overwhelming support I received in the general election and consider it an honor and a privilege to have the

opportunity to continue to represent the citizens of District 6," Sivarajah said.

In District 7, which covers portions of Coon Rapids and Anoka, Dan Erhart defeated Bjorn Skogquist. "We have much to look forward to in Anoka County, particularly the start of Northstar Commuter Rail in 2009, and the continuation of work on the Northern Lights Express Passenger Rail line through the heart of Anoka County," Erhart said.



A child is waiting...

Anoka County Adoption Services
2100 3rd Ave.
Anoka, MN 55303
763-422-7095
www.AnokaCounty.us/adoption



NEWS BRIEFS

- **Volunteer drivers honored:**

61 volunteer drivers were recognized at a recent luncheon in their honor at VFW Post #363 in Fridley. In the past year, volunteer drivers provided transportation for more than 1,300 passengers, all of whom are elderly, veterans, or county clients. Volunteer drivers have logged more than 154,761 miles on 6,270 trips. Many of the trips were to veterans' medical facilities in St. Cloud, Maplewood, and Minneapolis, as well as to Mercy and Unity Hospitals and other medical facilities. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer driver, or if you are in need of driving services, please call Jeannine Tyler, volunteer transportation program coordinator, at 763-422-7075.

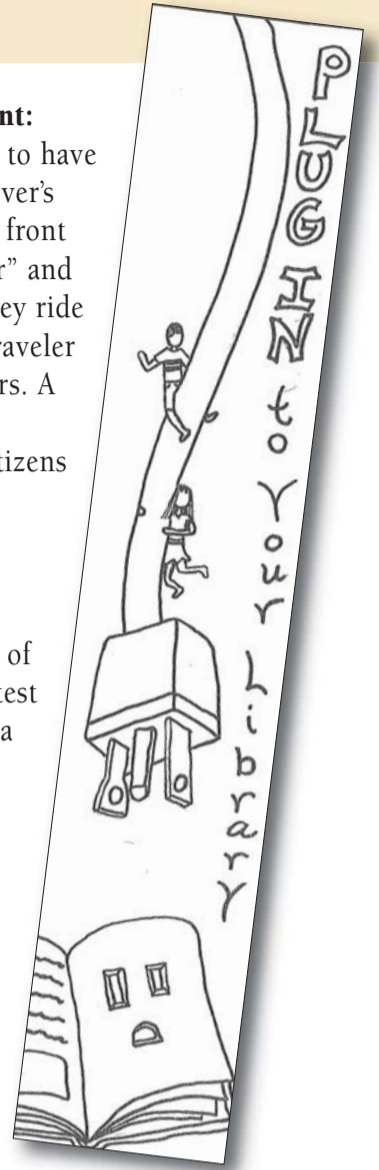


Several drivers were recognized for their many years of service with the Anoka County Volunteer Transportation program. From left: Commissioner Rhonda Sivarajah; Drivers David Conger and Roland Zacharias; Commissioners Robyn West, Jim Kordiak, and Scott LeDoux; Drivers Shirley Olson and Fkiruan (Gus) Gutzmer; Commissioner Dennis Berg; Drivers Lucy Schalwig and Milt Setzler; and Commissioner Dan Erhart.

- **Seniors save with T-endorsement:**

Anyone age 65 and over may request to have a "T" endorsement added to their driver's license. The "T" endorsement on the front of a driver's license stands for "senior" and saves seniors \$1 - \$1.50 each time they ride a local or express Metro Transit or Traveler fixed route bus during non-rush hours. A "senior" designation is automatically added to ID cards issued to senior citizens but the "T" endorsement must be specially requested.

- **Winning bookmark design:** 7th grader Sophia Skoglund is the winner of the 2008 Teen Bookmark Design Contest sponsored by the Friends of the Anoka County Library. Skoglund's winning bookmark, at right, is available free at all Anoka County Libraries.



- **Sheriff's Office lends a hand at the RNC:** The Anoka County Sheriff's Office sent 44 deputies to St. Paul during the Republican National Convention in September. Officers from across Minnesota and the entire country were needed during the four-day event to assist with security, provide crowd control during protest marches, and to man mobile field units. A \$50 million federal grant provided to both the Republican and Democratic conventions is being used to reimburse the Sheriff's Office for personnel costs.

- **Area youth recognized:** Andy Hofer, Lino Lakes, has received a Lt. Governor Red Wagon Award from the Minnesota Alliance With Youth. The award was presented by Lt. Governor Carol Molnau, honorary chair of the Alliance, in recognition of Hofer's academic achievement,

- **Ham Lake License Center growing:** The Ham Lake License Center has more than doubled in size to better accommodate the more than 60,000 clients it serves each year. The license center office leased additional space at its current location in the Crosstown Shopping Center so the mailing address (17565 Central Ave. N.E.) and phone number (763-413-9717) remains the same.



Andy Hofer receives the Lt. Governor's Red Wagon Award from Lt. Governor Carol Molnau, center, and Rachelle Jensen, Duluth, youth co-chair of the Minnesota Alliance With Youth.



Robyn West

- **Robyn West appointed to board:** Governor Tim Pawlenty has appointed Anoka County Commissioner Robyn West to the Minnesota Ultra High-Speed Broadband Task Force. The Task Force is studying the proposal to provide statewide high-speed Internet access by 2015.

- **Financial reporting honors earned:** The Anoka County Finance and Central Services Division recently received two awards from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), a professional organization representing 15,000 government finance professionals in the United States and Canada. The "Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting" and the "Distinguished Budget Presentation Award" are the highest form of recognition for governmental budgeting, accounting, and financial reporting.



Finance and Central Services Division staff members were recognized for their achievement at an Anoka County Board meeting. From left: Donna LeClair, Accountant; Cevin Petersen, Finance and Central Services Division Manager; Patti Hetrick, Budget Director; Tricia Johns, Accountant; Sandy Carroll, Office Operations Coordinator; Colleen Carlson, Accountant; Brenda Pavelich-Beck, Accounting Director; Anoka County Board Chair Dennis Berg; and Anoka County Administrator Terry Johnson.

- **Job Center grant renewed:** A Minnesota Job Skills Partnership grant for the Anoka County Job Training Center has been renewed through June 30, 2010. The grant provides more than \$153,000 over the next two years to retrain low income workers for higher paying jobs as health care workers in older adult services. An estimated 85 low income or unemployed people will be served under the grant program.

exceptional civic engagement, and outstanding leadership. Hofer was one of 19 young people and six groups of young people from across the state to receive the award.

- **Reducing bad checks:** A new partnership between the Anoka County Sheriff's Office and Financial Crime Services (FCS), a private firm, aims to reduce the number of bad checks being passed and also help merchants recover losses from worthless checks. Under the new initiative, when a bad check is passed, FCS contacts the check writer and requests that restitution be paid to the merchant. If the bad check writer agrees, he or she may avoid prosecution. If not, FCS files paperwork on behalf of the merchant to pursue prosecution. The goal of the partnership is twofold: to help merchants get their money back without having to take legal action and to make people who write bad checks realize their actions will not be tolerated.

- **That was then, this is Nowthen:** Burns Township is now the city of Nowthen. Residents decided on the new name for their community in the fall of 2007 and officially incorporated as the city of Nowthen on July 8, 2008. For more information about Nowthen, visit www.nowthenmn.govoffice2.com.

- **Veterans access services:** A record 1,300 veterans made their initial contact with the Anoka County Veterans Services Office in the first nine months of 2008, an 11 percent increase over the total number of first contacts for all of 2007. Veteran Services Director Duane Krueger attributes the increase to more soldiers being discharged, a jump in post traumatic stress disorder claims, and negative effects of the economic downturn. The Anoka County Veterans Services Office assists more than 5,000 new and returning veterans each year.



The Mental Wellness Campaign for Anoka County recently unveiled a new poster promoting local resources for the more than 27,000 veterans living in Anoka County. From left: Bill Pinsonnault, Anoka County Social Services and Mental Health Director; Anoka County Commissioner Dick Lang; Anoka County Veterans Services Director Duane Krueger; Aundrey Sanchez, Supervisor of Outreach for the MN Department of Veterans Affairs; Anoka County Commissioners Dennis Berg and Scott LeDoux.

Enjoy the great outdoors in Anoka County Parks

OPEN SPACES IN NEARBY PLACES!

With more than 10,000 acres, the Anoka County Parks system is one of the largest in the state. Visitors can choose from a wide variety of outdoor activities including swimming, hiking, biking, interpretive nature programming, canoeing, horseback riding, kayaking, cross country skiing, camping, and even catching a wave at the popular Bunker Beach Water Park, which features Minnesota's only wave pool.

"Our parks are a great, low cost place to spend quality time outdoors with family and friends," said Anoka County Commissioner Dick Lang, chair of the county's Parks Committee. "No matter where you live, there's a county park nearby."

Park passes entitle you to enter all county and regional parks in Anoka County as well as Carver and Washington Counties. An annual pass is \$25 for the first vehicle and \$15 for the second. Passes are good for 12 months from the date of purchase. You also may purchase a \$5 daily entry pass.

Cross Country Ski Season

With temperatures dropping, now's the time to get your cross country skis ready for the season ahead. Anoka County Parks maintains groomed cross country ski trails at

the following four park locations (assuming we receive sufficient snowfall): Bunker Hills Regional Park in Andover; Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park; Chomonix Golf Course in Lino Lakes; and Rum River Central Regional Park in Ramsey. Check trail conditions at www.anokacountyparks.com.

Skiers must have a State of Minnesota cross country ski trail pass when using a county cross country trail. Daily ski trail passes are \$5 and can be purchased at the Bunker Hills Activities Center, Bunker Hills Campground, Chomonix Golf Course Clubhouse, or Coon Rapids Dam Visitor Center. (Season ski trail passes must be purchased through the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. For more information, go to www.dnr.state.mn.us.)

Don't know how to cross country ski? Anoka County Parks offers low cost learn to ski programs. The next class is scheduled for Saturday, December 27 at Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park. The fee is \$8 for adults and \$6 for children 12 and under. Space is limited. Call 651-429-8007 to register.

Looking for a way to entertain guests for the holidays? Give them a taste of Minnesota winter fun with the "Holiday Sampler" program offered on Sunday, December 28, at the Wargo Nature Center in Lino Lakes. You'll have the chance to try kick sledding, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, winter games and more. Cost is just \$5 for adults and \$3 for youth. Pre-registration is required by calling 651-429-8007.

Anoka County Parks and Recreation offers many more winter programs and activities for adults and children alike. Pick up a

free activities guide at any Anoka County Library or view it online at www.anokacountyparks.com.

MORE PARKS NEWS

Bunker Beach to add lazy river

The addition of a 900-foot long lazy river feature will make Anoka County's Bunker Beach Water Park the largest outdoor water park in Minnesota.

Visitors to Bunker Beach have long asked that a lazy river be added to the amenities at Bunker Beach, according to Anoka County Commissioner Dick Lang, chair of the county's Parks Committee. "The lazy river appeals to everyone, from seniors to toddlers," he said. "It's a more passive, relaxing way to enjoy the water park."

The lazy river proposal also includes an island with two tube slides and water spray and shooting water features to add interest.

The lazy river will be built in a wooded area directly north of the existing Bunker Beach Water Park. Construction is scheduled to begin in early 2009 with completion in time for the 2010 season.

As with previous expansion projects at Bunker Beach, the \$3.4 million project will be paid for with revenues generated by the added feature. "No tax dollars will be used for the project," Lang said.

Adding the lazy river is expected to boost the capacity at Bunker Beach from 1,500 to 2,400.

Heritage Living History Labs

More than 3,000 schoolchildren learned about life among the Dakota and Ojibwe Indians in early Minnesota at the Heritage Living History Labs sponsored by Anoka County Parks and Connexus Energy. The Heritage Labs are held each fall at a permanent site in the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Regional Park Reserve.

Eight presenters dressed in period costumes provided information at stations about various aspects of Native American life. Students learned about traditional healing



Interpretive Naturalist Andy Jones teaches students how Native Americans used medicinal plants and herbs.

techniques using plants and herbs; listened to Ojibwe and Dakota stories passed down over generations; played a traditional moccasin game; learned how Indians communicated with each other using pictures; tried their skill at archery, practiced harvesting wild rice and more.

For more information about the Heritage Labs, call 651-429-8007 or visit www.anokacountyparks.us.



Dennis D. Berg
District 1



Dick Lang
District 2



Robyn West,
District 3



Jim Kordiak
District 4



Scott LeDoux
District 5



Rhonda Sivarajah
District 6



Dan Erhart
District 7

Board meetings are generally held the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at 9:30 a.m. in Room 705 of the Anoka County Government Center. Agendas are available prior to the meeting at www.anokacounty.us.

Anoka County Board of Commissioners 763-323-5700

