

# NEWS AND INFORMATION

*McLeod County Newsletter*



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## HANSCH TAKES THE REINS OF JUSTICE

### It's a homecoming for the new McLeod County Attorney

Growing up on a family farm in rural Brownton, Ryan Hansch has always been a part of McLeod County.

He was raised here. He built relationships here through clubs and organizations such as the Brownton Bruins baseball team and Brownton Fire Department. He met his wife here, and now they are raising their three daughters just a few miles from where they both grew up.

The one aspect of Hansch's life that has not been a part of McLeod County has been his professional life. But now that has changed as well after voters this past November elected him to be the new McLeod County Attorney.

"I'm really excited about the opportunity," Hansch said. "I've worked in a few different



Newly-elected McLeod County Attorney Ryan Hansch is ready to step into his new role.

County Attorney's offices since 2010, so moving back here is an interesting experience. Obviously, the communities and the area are very familiar with me, but the innerworkings of this office and some of our local justice system is new. So, I'm busy trying to meet those folks and learn my way around. It's an interesting dynamic. There's a lot that's

**See HANSCH Page 2**

# New County Attorney sets first-term goals

## HANSCH from Page 1

familiar, but I also have plenty to get up to speed on."

Hansch got his first job as an assistant county attorney at Winona County in 2010. Next he took a job as an assistant county attorney at Redwood County in 2011, and for about the past nine years he's worked in Blue Earth County.

Although things will be different in McLeod County, Hansch expects that many of the job's challenges will be similar to what he's dealt with in other county attorneys' offices.

"The makeup of the communities and some of those demographics are

certainly different, but I think a lot of challenges are the same," Hansch said.

To help with the transition to a new county, the incoming County Attorney is shadowing Michael Junge, the current McLeod County Attorney who is retiring after 40 years in the office. Hansch left his job at Blue Earth County in mid-December to take a temporary job as an assistant county attorney up until he is sworn in on January 3, 2023.

"I feel really fortunate that it's worked out that way," Hansch said. "The opportunity to overlap with Mike during this transition has been incredibly valuable to me. It's not just about figuring out what the process and procedures are

in place, but to get the backstory about why some of those things are set up how they are. I think these couple of weeks are going to help me hit the ground running when my term does begin."

Looking ahead to his first term, Hansch has several short-and long-term goals for himself and the office he will lead. He expects there will be some changes, but first he must learn what works and where there are opportunities for improvement.

"That goes back to first getting to know your staff and your team, and what's currently in place so that when challenges and tweaks

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## McLeod County Newsletter

### Issue 12

McLeod County Newsletter is published quarterly. Visit [www.tinyurl.com/3mrj54a](http://www.tinyurl.com/3mrj54a) to see past McLeod County newsletters or subscribe to have the newsletter delivered to your residence or business. The next issue of the newsletter is tentatively published March 29, 2023.

### McLeod County was established in 1856.

Serving the cities of Biscay, Brownston, Glencoe, Hutchinson, Lester Prairie, Plato, Silver Lake, Stewart and Winsted; the townships of Acoma, Bergen, Collins, Glencoe, Hale, Hassan Valley, Helen, Hutchinson, Lynn, Penn, Rich Valley, Round Grove, Sumter and Winsted; and independent school districts #423 (Hutchinson), #424 (Lester Prairie), #465 (Litchfield), #2159 (Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart), #2365 (Gibbon-Fairfax-Winthrop), #2687 (Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted) and #2859 (Glencoe-Silver Lake).

## Contact Information

### Government Center

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p. 320-864-1328 | f. 320-864-1809  
[mcleod.administration@co.mcleod.mn.us](mailto:mcleod.administration@co.mcleod.mn.us)

### Fairgrounds/Parks and Recreation

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p. 320-484-4334 | f. 320-864-1811  
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### Court Administration

830 11th St. E. | Glencoe, MN 55336  
p. 320-864-1281 | f. 320-864-5905

### Environmental Services

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### Law Enforcement Center

801 10th St. E. | Glencoe, MN 55336  
p. 320-864-3134 | f. 320-864-5920

### Public Works/Highway

1400 Adams St. | Hutchinson, MN 55350  
p. 320-484-4321 | f. 320-234-6971



## Save time scheduling appointments with QLess

Planning a visit to the McLeod County Government Center? Save time with QLess, the County's virtual waiting line and appointment scheduler. Simply visit <https://tinyurl.com/b5yey8ds> to schedule your appointment in advance or check for same-day availability. Call 320-864-1426 for assistance.

Use QLess for your License Center, Assessor, Auditor-Treasurer, Recorder and Veterans Services needs.

Once you've scheduled an appointment, QLess will send you live updates on your place in line. Appointments scheduled with QLess are prioritized over walk-in appointments.

# Administrator's Message

## A NEW SEASON

Thank You McLeod County

ADMINISTRATOR

Sheila Murphy



### FAREWELL TO A DEDICATED ELECTED OFFICIAL

Michael Junge has been in the McLeod County Attorney's Office since 1982. He was appointed to replace former County Attorney Pete Kasal in 1987, and has held the office since. Mr. Junge announced his decision not to file for re-election this last term; he is being replaced by Ryan Hansch, former Blue Earth County Assistant Attorney and longtime resident of rural McLeod County. We want to thank Mr. Junge for his years of dedication and support in the many duties of the County Attorney.

County  
Attorney

Michael Junge



Although many may think the County Attorney only represents the County in the courtroom, that is definitely not the extent of the services provided. By statute, the County Attorney has many duties in supporting the McLeod County Board of Commissioners. McLeod County offices, Elected Officials, and Department Head staff have been fortunate for many years as Mr. Junge is a first point of contact who is always responsive in providing legal support, advisement, and historical context. With his departure from the role, we extend our gratitude and recognize the years of dedication and knowledge leaving the office. We look forward to Mr. Hansch's commitment and expertise. Mr. Junge was recently awarded a high honor from the Minnesota County Attorney's Association when he was chosen as this year's recipient of the MCAA Johnson Distinguished Service Award. His years of significant leadership in mentoring and support of the role of County Attorney throughout the State of Minnesota helped make him the ideal recipient to be acknowledged. Thank you to Mr. Junge, and best wishes to Mr. Hansch as he enters his newly elected role.

### PREPARING FOR A BIG CHANGE IN PUBLIC WORKS

Since 2001, John Brunkhorst has served as the appointed McLeod County Engineer. Mr. Brunkhorst, a Licensed Professional Engineer, took the role with McLeod County after working several years in Renville County and the North Dakota Department of Transportation. Mr. Brunkhorst has been an important part of the team at McLeod County, earning several accolades in his industry. In 2018 he was named the Rural County Engineer of the Year by the National Association of County Engineers, and he was the 2015 Outstanding County Engineer of the Year recognized by the Minnesota County Engineers Association. Mr. Brunkhorst made the decision to end his current role in public service and will start a new career in the private sector at the end of January. We thank him for his service and wish him the best in his new role. McLeod County will soon start the replacement process for the Public Works Director and County Engineer role. Watch for updates, and please reach out to myself, our Board of Commissioners, Mr. Brunkhorst, or Andrew Engel, the Assistant Public Works Director and County Engineer, with questions.

Public Works  
Director

John Brunkhorst



THANK YOU TO OUR CITIZENS, OUR CITIES & TOWNSHIPS, OUR STAFF,  
COMMITTEE MEMBERS, AND ELECTED OFFICIALS FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT  
OF MCLEOD COUNTY. HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!





## McLeod County Announcements

### Upcoming office closures

McLeod County offices will be closed on the following days:

- Monday, January 2, 2023, for New Year's Day
- Monday, January 16, 2023, for Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Monday, February 20, 2023, for President's Day

Normal office hours will resume the following business days.

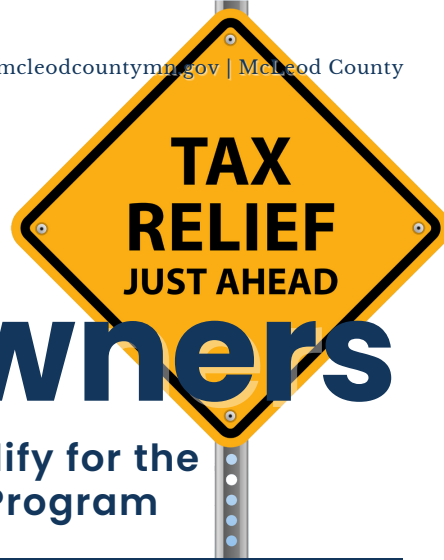
### Keep snow off Highways

John Brunkhorst, McLeod County Public Works Director, reminds everyone that moving snow from private property onto public roads, streets and shoulders is against the law and may be punishable as a misdemeanor. It can create hazardous traffic obstructions for plows and the public. People responsible for moving snow on the road may be liable in a civil lawsuit if damages or injuries occur as a result of their actions.

### Camping and shelter reservations open March 1

Camping and shelter reservations at McLeod County parks open at 8:00 a.m. Wednesday, March 1, for the 2023 season. Prices have changed. The cost is now \$30 per day for an electrical camping site, \$23 per day for a non-electrical camping site, and \$50 per day for a picnic shelter. Visit [www.mcleodcountymn.gov](http://www.mcleodcountymn.gov) to make a reservation with McLeod County's online reservation system.

# Help for homeowners



## Rising taxes? You may qualify for the Homestead Credit Refund Program

Homeowners searching for relief this tax season should be aware of the Homestead Credit Refund Program.

Property values and levy amounts are set for the assessment year 2022 taxes payable in 2023. McLeod County, like many Minnesota counties, saw unprecedented increases in values as the housing market took off. This led to significant increases to some property owner taxes.

The Homestead Credit Refund Program was created to assist homeowners whose property taxes are high relative to their incomes. If the property tax exceeds a threshold percentage of income, the refund equals a percentage of the property tax over the threshold, up to a maximum amount.

To qualify, you must have a valid Social Security Number, own and occupy a home, have your home classified as a homestead with your county, and pay or arrange to pay your property taxes.

There are two types of Homestead Credit Refunds, regular and special. The regular refund is the most common and is based on

### REFUND REQUIREMENTS

#### Regular:

- Owned and lived in home on January 2, 2023
- Household income for 2022 was less than \$128,280

#### Special:

- Owned and lived in the same home on January 2, 2022, and January 2, 2023
- Home's net property tax increased by more than 12% from 2022 to 2023
- Net property tax increase was at least \$100
- Increase was not due to improvements made to the property

your income and property taxes. The special refund is based on how much your property tax increased. Each has further requirements, and you may qualify for either or both refunds.

Homeowners will need their 2023 tax statement to apply, which will be sent out in late March. Visit the Minnesota Department of Revenue website at [www.tinyurl.com/yaxb8h7j](http://www.tinyurl.com/yaxb8h7j) to learn more about the Homestead Credit Refund Program and to apply.



# What does the PACT Act mean for veteran benefits?

Veteran Services  
Director

Jim Lauer

**More veterans and their family members are eligible for benefits than ever before**

Veterans and their families should be aware of recent legislation that has had the greatest impact on benefits since the end of World War II.

The PACT Act of 2022 grants broad relief to veterans suffering from the effects of exposure to toxins such as ionizing radiation, chemicals employed as herbicides and defoliants, contaminated water, and burn pits. These wide-ranging exposures span from World War II through today, and new benefits apply not only to veterans, but their families as well.

In addition to expanding the list of medical conditions recognized as being caused by established exposures such as atomic testing and Agent Orange, the PACT Act expands the locations where these exposures are assumed to have occurred. It also confirms additional exposures and presumptively related medical conditions for service at Camp Lejeune/Marine Corp Air Station New River in North Carolina, and for military service around the world during the Persian Gulf War



McLeod County Veterans Service Officers are ready to help veterans and their families answer important questions about the PACT Act and what it means for their benefit eligibility.

and War on Terrorism.

The potential benefits created by this legislation include access to health care for exposed veterans, even without a current chronic condition. In some cases it also provides health care for spouses and children.

The new legislation also provides disability compensation for the recognized conditions related to these exposures, and potentially significant survivor benefits for the families of veterans whose deaths were directly caused by or contributed to by these conditions.

How does a veteran or family member find out if the PACT Act applies to them? For local residents, the easiest way is to contact McLeod County Veteran Services for free

assistance. A Veteran Service Officer (VSO) can help with reviewing the veteran's service record to document their exposures, assist with obtaining private medical records confirming the diagnosis of one of the recognized chronic conditions, and then prepare the appropriate applications for benefits.

Even if a previous claim was denied or the veteran passed away many years ago, this does not preclude new applications under this legislation.

Even if you don't think that the PACT Act applies to you, VSOs are a great resource for finding out what programs are available. Call 320-864-1268, or email [mcleod.veterans@co.mcleod.mn.us](mailto:mcleod.veterans@co.mcleod.mn.us) to set up an appointment today.

# SERVING ALL SMILES

## McLeod County and Children's Dental Services team up for those in need

While most people understand the importance of a healthy heart and other organs, many may not realize that taking care of their teeth and mouth is just as crucial to their wellbeing.

It's more than just bad breath. According to the Mayo Clinic, oral health is a window to a person's overall health. Our mouths are teeming with bacteria, most of which is harmless. However, the mouth is the entry point to a person's digestive and respiratory tracts, and some bacteria can cause disease. Without proper oral hygiene, bacteria can reach levels that might lead to infections and contribute to other conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, pneumonia, complications during pregnancy and more.

Along with brushing and flossing daily, the American Dental Association recommends regular dental exams for prevention and treatment of oral disease. For some, however, there are financial barriers to this important step in overall health. Fortunately, McLeod County partners with Children's Dental Services (CDS) to increase access to dental care for children, pregnant women and families in need.

CDS provides people of all ages with services such as exams



Did you know McLeod County Health & Human Services teams up with Children's Dental Services to increase access to dental care for children, pregnant women and families in need?

### Need dental assistance?

Call McLeod County Health & Human Services at 320-864-3185 to schedule an appointment for one of these 2023 clinics:

- Friday, January 20
- Friday, March 17
- Friday, May 19
- Friday, July 21
- Friday, September 15
- Friday, November 17

(including X-rays) cleanings and restorative work. All forms of insurance are accepted, and reduced-cost care under an income-based sliding scale is available.

Clinics are 8:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m. on the third Friday of every other month, at the McLeod County Government Center, 520 Chandler Avenue North, Glencoe, Minnesota.

To schedule an appointment, call McLeod County Health & Human Services at 320-864-3185. You can also call CDS at 612-746-1530, or toll free at 1-866-543-6009.

In 2022, 36% of the 59 total patients were pregnant women, and 59% were children age 17 or younger.

Of those served, 89% were also on Medical Assistance, 7% were uninsured, and 4% had commercial insurance, although most had deductibles high enough to qualify for sliding scale services.

If you or someone you know is in need of dental assistance, Children's Dental Services and McLeod County Health & Human Services wants to help everyone take care of their smile.



# Commissioners and conservationists

## McLeod County Board members recognized for conservation efforts

Conservation has always been a priority for the McLeod County Board of Commissioners. This year, however, the Board went above and beyond in its promotion of the work done by the McLeod County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). For its support of local conservation efforts, the Commissioners were recognized as the 2022 McLeod County Outstanding Conservationists.

The annual award, which is sponsored by the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, allows each of Minnesota's 90 SWCDs to recognize individuals, conservation organizations, and others for outstanding accomplishments with implementing conservation practices and improving Minnesota's natural resources.

According to the nomination,



The McLeod County Board of Commissioners were named this year's McLeod County Conservationists of the Year by the McLeod County Board of Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Pictured are, from left: Ryan Freitag, SWCD Manager; Coleton Draeger, SWCD Resource Conservationist; Mark Schnobrich, SWCD Supervisor; Nathan Schmalz, Commissioner; Daryl Luthens, Commissioner; Doug Krueger, Commissioner; Paul Wright, Commissioner; Joe Nagel, Commissioner; and John Adamek, SWCD Supervisor.

this year's McLeod County Outstanding Conservationists were chosen for being "excellent collaborators with McLeod County SWCD to rehabilitate County Ditch 11."

As members of the McLeod County Drainage Authority, the five Commissioners partnered with SWCD to quickly complete the first phase of the CD11 project, which included a subset of repairs and upland treatment.

"That has allowed the project to promptly advance to the second phase, which includes more repairs further

upstream," according to the nomination.

Thanks to this partnership, conservation efforts and increased efficiencies were successfully incorporated into repairs of the ditch.

"The County Ditch 11 project provided a serendipitous opportunity for cooperation to benefit soil and water protection efforts in McLeod County," the nomination said. "We thank the five McLeod County Drainage Authority members for being dependable conservation allies."

## Public safety is a top priority for Hansch

### *HANSCH from Page 2*

are made you do it with their insight and their experience in mind," Hansch said.

He must also build up communication lines with system stakeholders such as law enforcement, County agencies and departments, as well as city and township leaders.

"It's really making sure this office is accessible to the

communities that we serve," he said. "Rather than it just being what I think is important, I want that communication to help me decide where our areas of focus need to be moving forward."

As for long-term goals in his first term, Hansch wants to continue developing staff and open lines of communication. He considers this crucial due to how much the County Attorney's Office

relies on everyone working as a team.

In the end, all of these goals lead back to the central mission of the County Attorney's Office – to provide high-level legal services to the County, and to promote public safety in its communities.

"These other pieces are really just stepping stones of achieving that end," he said.



# McLEOD COUNTY

# BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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### DISTRICT TWO

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## Daryl Luthens

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### DISTRICT FOUR

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## Sheila Murphy

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### COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

520 Chandler Ave N  
Glencoe, MN  
55336  
320-863-1320

## UPCOMING MEETING DATES

COUNTY BOARD MEETING | 9:00 A.M. JANUARY 3, 2023  
McLeod County Government Center

COUNTY BOARD MEETING | 9:00 A.M. JANUARY 17, 2023  
McLeod County Government Center

COUNTY BOARD MEETING | 9:00 A.M. FEBRUARY 7, 2023  
McLeod County Government Center

COUNTY BOARD MEETING | 9:00 A.M. FEBRUARY 21, 2023  
McLeod County Government Center

COUNTY BOARD MEETING | 9:00 A.M. MARCH 7, 2023  
McLeod County Government Center

COUNTY BOARD MEETING | 9:00 A.M. MARCH 21, 2023  
McLeod County Government Center



### MCLEOD COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER

520 CHANDLER AVENUE N  
GLENCOE, MINNESOTA 55350