

NEWS AND INFORMATION

McLeod County Newsletter



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SERVING THOSE WHO SERVED

New faces and new director in Veteran Services Office

The McLeod County Veteran Services Office has a new leader, but local veterans won't notice any change in the level of assistance they receive.

After working 10 years as an Assistant Veterans Service Officer, Cassandra Carrigan has taken the baton from her predecessor, former VSO Jim Lauer. Her decade of experience working with Lauer, who retired in June after 19 years, means she was able to hit the ground running the day she was sworn in on June 6, 2023.

"One of the things we strive for is making excellent notes on the veterans we meet," Carrigan said. "So the veterans that Jim was previously working with don't have to worry. He put notes in their files that I can pull up



Cassandra Carrigan, front, is McLeod County's new Veterans Service Officer, and she is aided by new Assistant Veterans Service Officers Grant Christensen, left, and Brianna Lauer, right.

and see what he was working on. We're not going to let them slip through the cracks and forget about them."

Service has long been a passion for Carrigan. Since joining the Army National Guard 20 years ago while in high school, she has served

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

With an overall aging population, labor force trends continue to show a decrease in McLeod County's workforce. According to Minnesota's Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), as of May 30, 2023, McLeod County had 19,257 available workers; a decline of 5.5% (1,131 workers) since 2007. DEED projects McLeod County will continue to see a labor force decline from 2025-2035. DEED also estimates that there are approximately 0.4 workers for every job vacancy, the lowest jobseeker-per-vacancy ratio on record.

These trends are not unique to McLeod County. As this workforce shortage continues, communities are focusing less on business recruitment and more on people recruitment by prioritizing efforts that support workforce growth and retention, such as access to child care, Career Technical Education programs, housing availability and affordability, and life quality amenities such as parks, trails and other recreational options.

If you'd like to learn more, visit DEED's website at mn.gov/deed/data/data-tools/county-profiles/ to see County Profiles showing quarterly reports on local demographic, labor force and economic statistics.

it's made in McLEOD

BUSINESS VISITS

Economic Development Coordinator Liz Danielson is visiting business owners as part of the County's Business Retention and Expansion efforts. For more information email liz.danielson@mcleodcountymn.gov or call 320-455-7112.

BUSINESS SUBSIDIES

The County's Business Subsidy Policy was adopted in December 2022, allowing for county consideration of business subsidies to support economic development. Visit the McLeod County website at www.mcleodcountymn.gov/departments/administration/economic_development/index.php to see the policy and application information.

McLeod County News and Information

Issue 14

McLeod County News and Information is published quarterly. Visit www.tinyurl.com/3mrui54a 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 scheduled to be published September 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

520 Chandler Ave. N. | Glencoe, MN 55336
p. 320-864-1328 | f. 320-864-1809
mcleod.administration@mcleodcountymn.gov

Court Administration

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

Law Enforcement Center

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

Fairgrounds/Parks and Recreation

840 Century Ave. S.W. | Hutchinson, MN 55350
p. 320-484-4334 | f. 320-864-1811
mcleod.parksandrecreation@mcleodcountymn.gov

Environmental Services

1065 Fifth Ave. S.E. | Hutchinson, MN 55350
p. 320-484-4300 | f. 320-484-4315
mcleod.solidwaste@mcleodcountymn.gov

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



ADMINISTRATOR

Sheila Murphy



After a long Minnesota winter, we are grateful to see summer is finally here. Along with town ball, good fishing, and road construction! Thankfully, recent rain is helping our local farmers (and gardeners!) after a dry start to the growing season. If you haven't visited a McLeod County Park yet this season, now is the perfect time.

We are happy to share that we will be welcoming our new McLeod County Parks and Recreation Manager, Jon Jerabek, on July 10! Jon has worked with the City of Silver Lake and is currently with the City of Glencoe. He will office from the McLeod County Fairgrounds Commercial Building offices in Hutchinson. Please join us in giving Jon a warm welcome to his new role.

On June 6, we celebrated Jim Lauer's retirement from the McLeod County Veterans Service Officer position. In honor of Jim's service and dedication to our Veterans, we will be installing two designated "Veteran Parking" spots at both the McLeod County Government Center in Glencoe, and McLeod County Environmental Services in Hutchinson. Thank you for your service, Jim, we wish you the best!

Thank You



Jim Lauer

We are grateful for our dedicated team of service-oriented McLeod County Employees. Here is a photo of our Facilities and Maintenance team, led by Spencer Bauer. We thank them for keeping the lights on each day. This team of dedicated individuals shares responsibility for being on-call 24/7, keeping our buildings safe and operational, and making sure the public has a safe experience at McLeod County facilities. Thank you to our great teams!



Facilities and Maintenance staff are, left to right, Wayne, Ken, Pat, Merlin, Dan, Daryel and Spencer.



Enjoy FREE admission to the McLeod County Fair

For a second straight year, visitors to the McLeod County Fair this summer will save money with free gate admission and parking.

Free gate admission every day of the Fair is made possible in part through an allocation of the County's American Rescue Plan Act dollars, in an effort to increase access to recreation and learning in our community for all.

For more information and schedule of events, visit: www.mcleodcountyfair.com

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 17,
TO SUNDAY AUGUST 20!**



Rural recycling sites closed after misuse

Household Hazardous Waste expands Saturday hours

Rural recycling sites are closed following continued misuse. Rural residents may take recyclables to the Material Recovery Facility at 1065 Fifth Avenue Southeast, Hutchinson. This site has 24/7 access and is under surveillance for illegal dumping, littering, and non-compliance with the single-sort program.

On weekdays, residents may drive to the containers for unloading. On weekends, residents must park and

walk material into the gated area.

The following items are acceptable in these containers: cardboard; boxboard; newspaper; magazines; junk mail; paper; #1, #2 and #5 food and beverage plastics; glass jars and bottles; aluminum cans; steel/tin cans; and aseptic cartons. Recyclables must be loose and not bagged.

Beginning August 5, the Household Hazardous Waste

Facility will be open the first Saturday of each month from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. If a Saturday falls on a holiday weekend, Saturday hours will be on the second Saturday. The HHW accepts household paints, cleaners, and other DIY products; and offers recycling opportunities for items unacceptable in the single-sort program.

You may email questions to mcleod.solidwaste@mcleodcountymn.gov or call 320-484-4300.

Carrigan's dedication to service

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her country faithfully as an IT Specialist, including three deployments. Her first tour of duty was in 2005 in southern Iraq. Her husband, Darren, was also deployed.

"We were newlyweds. That's how we spent the first two years of our marriage," she said. "We figured if we could spend two years in a combat zone together, we could handle a life together."

Her second trip to Iraq was in 2009. Her third deployment to Kuwait was 12 years later, from March 2021 to March 2022. She is still active and was promoted to Captain in June 2022.

Service Officers in Minnesota must be veterans themselves. Carrigan has found this bond between service members to be an important tool when

building trust with the veterans she assists.

"It's that shared connection," she said. "The different eras all experienced something different, but there are some veterans who have never told their story because they just don't think someone will understand it.

"I make sure that I have that connection from the get-go and let them know I'm here to help," she added.

Most of all, Carrigan sees her job as being a good listener and a guide to helping veterans navigate the VA system, which can be overwhelming.

"You need to have empathy," she said. "I love my job, I love being able to get the veteran what they're requesting, and then more, because they don't necessarily know what

that more is. You don't know what you don't know."

She's not doing it alone, either. The McLeod County Veteran Services Office also has two new Assistant VSOs with Brianna Lauer and Grant Christensen. Clients of the Veteran Services Office may already know Brianna, as she temporarily filled Carrigan's position at the County while she was deployed to Kuwait.

Christensen is new to the County, and he and Brianna are both veterans as well.

With three full-time VSOs on staff, Carrigan is excited about the possibilities of expanding services with later hours and alternate meeting locations around the County.

"I don't intend on making things totally different," she said. "We have a smooth operation here."

Slow down, save lives

Risky driving behavior led to another year of high death and injury rates on McLeod County roads in 2022

A higher incidence of motor vehicle fatalities and injuries on McLeod County roads that began with the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 continued into 2022, according to crash data collected by the county's law enforcement agencies.

Five people were killed in motor vehicle crashes on roads within the county last year, while 146 people were injured.

Higher speeds and other risky driver behaviors are mainly to blame, according to Scott Wawrzyniak, a Sergeant for the McLeod County Sheriff's Office and a member of the McLeod County Toward Zero Deaths Safe Roads Coalition.

"I think we all hope this is not a trend or pattern, but I do believe this is in line with what we have been seeing since the Covid 'shutdown' era when we saw a large increase in speeding on Minnesota roads," Wawrzyniak said. "Since that time, it seems that the higher speeds of motorists have remained steady and in turn, when vehicles crash at those higher speeds, it leads to more severe injuries."

Higher numbers of motor vehicle crashes during the past two years mark a reversal from previous years. During the past 10 years, the county has reported, on average, three fatalities per year. Lower traffic volumes



During an event in Glencoe this spring, members of the McLeod County Toward Zero Deaths Safe Roads Coalition invited participants to take a ride on the Seat Belt Convincer, which simulates the feeling of riding in a motor vehicle during a low-speed crash. The hope is to convince people to diligently wear seat belts.

during the early days of the pandemic generally kept crashes down for most of 2020. But that changed in 2021, when seven people lost their lives, and 193 people were injured on county roads.

McLeod County Toward Zero Deaths Safe Roads Coalition — a nonprofit that works to decrease traffic-related injuries and fatalities through partnerships that promote safety — notes the county's 2022 fatality total aligns with state and national increases. Compared to 2020, when 394 people died on the state's roads, Minnesota's road

death toll of 458 in 2021 was 16% higher while 2022's 414 toll was 5% higher.

The message for the county's motorists?

"Slow down, make driving your priority when you are on the roadway, put the phone down, wear your seatbelt, and drive sober," Wawrzyniak said. "The message has been the same for years and that is because we continue to see those same issues when investigating motor vehicle crashes."

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Law enforcement step up

SAFE DRIVING from Page 5

As expected, roads with higher traffic volumes continued to see the highest number of collisions. "I don't believe there are any particular roads where a person should be more cautious, but a good idea is to slow down and pay attention," Wawrzyniak said. "Pay attention to the actions of other drivers as well and drive defensively."

Driven by data, best practices and research, Minnesota's Toward Zero Deaths mission is to create a culture for which traffic fatalities and serious injuries are no longer acceptable. It aims to do this by bringing together driver education, engineering, enforcement, and emergency

medical trauma services.

The long-range goal has been to reduce fatalities on the state's road to no more than 225 by 2025.

Several law enforcement agencies in the county participate in the Toward Zero Deaths traffic enforcement program, which is paid for by state and federal grants. The stepped-up patrol puts more law enforcement on the roads during times of higher travel, such as around holidays when people are traveling more.

"This has local police departments, the Sheriff's Office, and the Minnesota State Patrol partnering to saturate areas within the

county to add traffic enforcement and deter the traffic violations that are the leading causes of serious and fatal crashes," Wawrzyniak said.

McLeod County Toward Zero Deaths Safe Roads Coalition's activities include distributing safe driving messages through the media, promoting safe driving before high school prom, painting "buckle up" stencils in school parking lots, and using demonstrations at fairs and other public gatherings to illustrate how drugs, alcohol and drowsiness can impair driving.

For more information about the coalition, call Scott Waibel, the coalition's chair, at 320-484-9326.



2022 McLeod County Vehicle Crash Data

● A total of **428** crashes, **100** involving injuries, were reported.

● Commercial vehicles were involved in **44** crashes, and **2** crashes occurred in work zones.

● The fewest crashes occurred in **April**, the most in **December**.

● The highest number of crashes occurred on **Thursdays**.

● The busiest time for crashes was **4 p.m.**, and **3 a.m.** was the time for the fewest.



McLeod County Announcements

Upcoming office closures

McLeod County offices will be closed on:

- Tuesday, July 4, 2023, for Independence Day.
- Monday, September 4, 2023, for Labor Day.

Normal office hours will resume the following business day.

HHW extended hours

McLeod County's Household Hazardous Waste facility at 1065 Fifth Avenue Southeast, Hutchinson, will be open 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday, August 7.

Upcoming curbside pickup events

McLeod County Environmental Services is hosting several upcoming appliance and E-waste curbside pickup events. The following dates are part of the Fall schedule:

- Lynn and Hassan Valley Townships — 6 a.m. Wednesday, September 13
- City of Stewart, and Collins and Round Grove Townships — 6 a.m. Wednesday, September 20
- City of Glencoe and Glencoe Township — 6 a.m. Wednesday, September 27
- Acoma and Hutchinson Townships — 6 a.m. Wednesday, October 4.

RSVP and pre-payment is required. Visit the Solid Waste Events page at www.mcleodcountymn.gov for more information.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Plato Woodwork salutes 130 years

Family businesses that reach the century mark are a rare testament to hard work and dedication. And while farms usually come to mind here in McLeod County when we think of century and sesquicentennial family businesses, they are not alone.

This year marks the 130th anniversary of Plato Woodwork, which manufactures custom cabinetry for clients throughout the United States. The company was founded by Theodore Pinske in 1893.

Theodore, or "Tader" as he was known, emigrated with his family from Germany the same year he was born, 1870. After working with Schaefer Carpentry of Green Isle, the owner of the Plato Lumber Yard talked Theodore into organizing a carpentry crew to build a barn in the area. This was the start of Theo Pinske Contractor and Builder, which would later become Plato Woodwork.

Today, his great-great-grandson Karl represents the fifth generation of Pinskes to own the business, and Karl's son Mitch is on his way to becoming the sixth generation of family owners after joining the company three years ago out of college.

Headquartered in one of McLeod County's smallest cities, Plato Woodwork proves that great things can come from unassuming places. From humble beginnings, Plato Woodwork has become a multi-million dollar business serving clients from coast to coast.

"Our main market channels are independent showrooms and design-build firms around the country," Karl said. "Sixty percent of our work is large-scale remodels. Our largest market currently is the mountain states of Colorado, Montana and Wyoming, as well as eastern states of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania."

Since 1977, 100 percent of Plato Woodwork's manufacturing is done at its home on Third Street in Plato, although that home has grown over the years. Today its facility covers 127,000 square feet, with an 8,000-square foot addition scheduled for completion this summer.

You don't get to be this successful without help. Plato Woodwork currently employs 197 people with an average of about 16 years of experience. That average would be more, but the business has had to hire more new employees as it continues to grow.

McLEOD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Sheila Murphy

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COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

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320-863-1320

UPCOMING MEETING DATES

COUNTY BOARD MEETING | 9:00 A.M. JULY 5, 2023
McLeod County Government Center

COUNTY BOARD MEETING | 9:00 A.M. JULY 18, 2023
McLeod County Government Center

COUNTY BOARD MEETING | 9:00 A.M. AUGUST 1, 2023
McLeod County Government Center

COUNTY BOARD MEETING | 9:00 A.M. AUGUST 15, 2023
McLeod County Government Center

COUNTY BOARD MEETING | 9:00 A.M. SEPTEMBER 5, 2023
McLeod County Government Center

COUNTY BOARD MEETING | 4:30 P.M. SEPTEMBER 19, 2023
McLeod County Government Center



MCLEOD COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER

520 CHANDLER AVENUE NORTH
GLENCOE, MINNESOTA 55336