

FOCUS ON COUNTY GOVERNMENT

MONTHLY UPDATE FROM THE DESK OF WAUKESHA COUNTY EXECUTIVE
DANIEL P. VRAKAS



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Dear Friends,

On January 20th, I had the opportunity to speak at and participate in a Martin Luther King Jr., Day event at La Casa de Esperanza in Waukesha. The event, sponsored by the Waukesha County Department of Health and Human Services Equal Access Group, La Casa de Esperanza, Waukesha County Technical College, ProHealth Care, Carroll University and the NAACP – Waukesha County Branch, attracted nearly 200 attendees.

Waukesha County is a rapidly growing County and we are becoming more diverse. In order to best serve our County and local communities we must understand and embrace this change.

In a 1963 letter Dr. King wrote “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” For this world to truly be a just world, we must work for justice and equality in our own communities.

One of the things that makes this county a great county is that in a time of need we come together as a nation to help our neighbors. In the wake of 9/11 each of us witnessed just how amazing the American Spirit truly is. After hurricane Katrina we saw this again – neighbor helping neighbor, donating food, clothing, money and time. When there is a crisis, anywhere in the world, Americans pull together, raise money, donate materials and time to individuals both domestically and abroad – we do whatever we can to help.

The American Spirit does not consider race, religion or ethnicity – the American Spirit does not stop at local borders – the American spirit is kind, strong and unrelenting.

Let us maintain this spirit in all that we do, may we look for ways to support our neighbors, may we love one another and may we work toward justice everyday.

Sincerely,

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PRESCRIPTION DRUG COLLECTION: SAVE-THE-DATE

Waukesha County will be holding its 6th annual countywide prescription drug collection on Saturday, April 26th in an effort to reduce prescription drug abuse and accidental poisonings in Waukesha County as well as help protect local waterways. Residents are invited to bring unwanted prescription medication, over the counter medication, ointments, sprays, inhalers, creams, vials, herbals and pet medications to the Waukesha County Drug Collection.

Drop off your items on Saturday, April 26th between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. at the following eight locations:

- Community Memorial Hospital, Menomonee Falls
- WCTC, Pewaukee
- Moorland Reserve Health Center, New Berlin
- D.N. Greenwald Center, Mukwonago
- Waukesha State Bank, Downtown Waukesha
- Oconomowoc Memorial Hospital, Oconomowoc
- Muskego Police Department, Muskego
- Highway Department Recycling Center, Brookfield

For more information visit:
waukeshacounty.gov/drugcollection

WILD WINTER NIGHTS

Retzer Nature Center, located at S14 W28167 Madison Street in Waukesha, will hold its annual Wild Winter Night from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. on Saturday, February 1.

Enjoy guided winter night hikes throughout the evening, free snowshoe rentals and an informal sing-along by a warm campfire with s'mores and hot cocoa. There will be indoor activities like the Guess the Scat – candy game, Design a Frame or make Recycled Bird Feeder. Explore the winter sky through an outdoor observation with telescopes, as well as an indoor Planetarium program entitled “Journey to the Stars”.

The guided Owl Prowl hikes are scheduled for 6:15 and 8:15 p.m. Learn about the owl and other nocturnal animals and look for owl pellets. Join in on the Winter Tracking Presentation where you can create an animal track booklet at 6:45 or 7:30 p.m.

This event is held no matter what the weather, so please dress accordingly. There are a limited amount of snowshoes available so there may be a waiting time. A fee of \$2.00 per person is payable at the door. No pre-registration is required.

The Waukesha County Park System is a natural resource based park system that demonstrates stewardship while providing recreational and educational opportunities. For more information, visit our web site at www.waukesha-county-parks.com, follow us on twitter @WaukeshaCoParks or like Retzer Nature Center on Facebook



Attendees at 2013's Wild Winter Nights event at Retzer Nature Center.

“Waukesha County: Leading the Way ...”

STAYING SAFE IN EXTREME COLD

With extreme cold affecting much of the country in the month of January, it is important that residents take necessary precautions to stay safe in this weather.

Many residents use space heaters to help keep themselves and their homes warm. Here are some tips on how to safely utilize space heaters:

- If you use an electric space heater, only use those that are UL approved for indoor use.
- Do not plug heaters into extension cords.
- Do not use multiple space heaters, as this may overload the electrical circuits in your home and create a fire hazard.
- Clear the space around the heater of combustibles and other fire hazards.
- Place the heater on a level, noncombustible surface to prevent it from tipping over.

Additional information on staying safe in extreme cold is available on the Waukesha County website at www.waukeshacounty.gov/severecold.

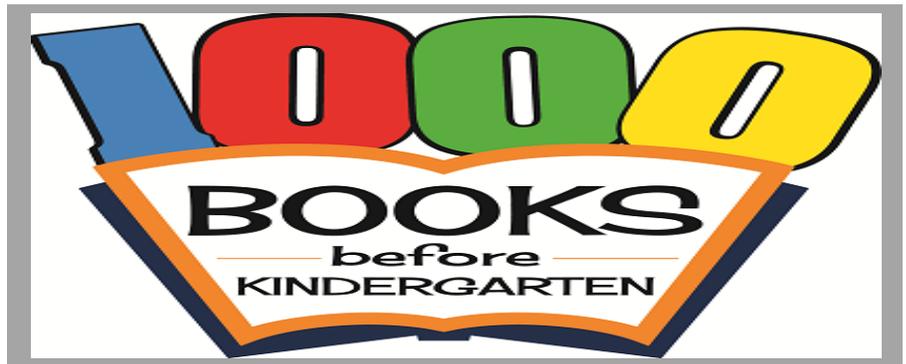
1,000 BOOKS BEFORE KINDERGARTEN

Public libraries in Waukesha County announce the launch of their 1000 Books before Kindergarten program. The libraries are offering this fun and exciting reading program for preschoolers up to age five. This program was developed to increase awareness of the importance of early literacy as well as encourage parents to embrace their role as their child's first and most important teacher.

Brain research "reveals that synapses, the connections between neurons, are twice as plentiful at 24 months as in adulthood. Reading to babies helps 'wire in' those synapses so that babies get an early intellectual boost. In other words, early reading promotes early literacy."

The 1000 Books before Kindergarten program is a pre-literacy effort to encourage families to read at least 1,000 books to their child before they enter school. Starting now, families can sign up at their local public library. The child receives a reading log to record books read and will receive small incentives along the way to mark milestones, like reading 100 books. One thousand books sounds like a lot, but reading just one book every day to a child adds up to 1,000 books in three years. Favorite books can be read over and over. Repetition is one of the ways a child learns language.

For more information, contact your local public library in Waukesha County or contact Waukesha County Federated Library System at (262) 896-8080 or wcfls@wcfls.lib.wi.us.



Visit your local library to enroll in the program.

“Waukesha County: Leading the Way ...”

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ACCESS TO DEAL FLOW EVENT

The Waukesha County Economic Development Corporation hosted an event titled “Access to Deal Flow” on Wednesday, January 29th. The event, which attracted about 150 attendees, featured multiple Waukesha County organizations involved in supporting economic development, including Waukesha County’s Small Business Leverage Loan Program.

Waukesha County’s program, which launched in 2011, has since assisted 8 businesses leverage loans to assist with growth and job creation. The County has committed \$390,000 in loans which has resulted leveraged over \$7 million in private bank loans. Businesses utilizing the leverage loans have, in turn, created 73 new jobs, and retained 239 full time and 60 part time jobs.

Businesses assisted by the loans have used the dollars for things such as building improvements, equipment purchase and installation, technology upgrades and product line expansion.



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WISCONSIN PROPANE SHORTAGE

The entire Midwest is experiencing a propane shortage, including Wisconsin. Due to the shortage, please take the following steps:

- Contact your propane vendor when your tank reaches 30% full. Due to the limited propane supply, propane vendors are not able to fill tanks completely right now. They also need more advance notice on delivering propane to your home since there is a high demand for the heating fuel. If you wait to call until after your tank is below 30%, you may not be able to get propane delivered before your tank runs out.
- Apply for heating assistance, if you have not done so already. Contact Energy Services by calling 262-549-9666.

Visit EnergyIndependence.WI.gov for updates on Midwest propane supply situation.

“Waukesha County: Leading the Way ...”