

Sheboygan County News

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Rocky Knoll Is on a Roll

by Adam Payne, County Administrator

With several new leadership positions in place and a highly skilled and dedicated work force, our family, friends and community are fortunate to have a facility like Rocky Knoll.

The patient census at Rocky Knoll is among the highest in the county and an indication of the community's trust in the care and services provided. From a budgetary standpoint, Rocky Knoll has made tremendous progress the past year, and has been better than budget for the past several months. We have worked as a team to establish priorities, gain efficiencies, and generate additional revenue by improving our billing practices and vendor contracts. I am proud of our Rocky Knoll co-workers for the excellent work they do, the improvements made, and the quality of the service provided.

On a more personal note, recently my mom had dou-

ble knee replacement surgery, and I wanted her to receive the best care, so of course I recommended that she choose Rocky Knoll. Though I have had family and friends reside at Rocky Knoll, this was my first skilled nursing home experience with one of my parents.

My mom was born and raised on a century farm in Sheboygan Falls. She now lives in Stevens Point, and is a retired school teacher. She has never been shy to share her concerns and point of view, has a big heart, but is a tough grader. I knew that her experience would provide me with another perspective about Rocky Knoll.

On my mom's second day at Rocky Knoll, I asked what her impression was and how she was being cared for.

After an extensive response, she said, A-. Twenty-three days later when she returned home, I asked her the same question.

My mom went on at length about how

very courteous and helpful the Admissions, Nursing, CNA's, Social Service, Therapy, Life Enrichment, Dietary, House-keeping and Maintenance staff are. The service was excellent, the appearance and cleanliness of her room and the facility exceeded her expectations, and she would highly recommend it. Overall, she concluded, A+.

I'm very thankful for the wonderful care that my mom and all residents receive at Rocky Knoll, and appreciate working with so many wonderful people in our County organization.

Happy New Year and Best Wishes to you and your families.



1st Quarter, 2013

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Inside this issue:

County Department Helps Veterans Find Their Way Through the Maze	2
Jekenewicz Finds Rewards in Service and Family	2
Annual Tree & Shrub Sale	3
Sheboygan County Begins a New Era in Labor Relations	3
Valleskey Brings Her Touch to Rocky Knoll	4
Dolson Assumes Office	4

Sheboygan County Government Helps Make Good Things Happen

by Adam Payne, County Administrator

I'm very pleased to announce that Sheboygan County employees and County Board Supervisors generously donated \$29,791.08 to the United Way of Sheboygan County this year, **an increase of 14.7% over last year**. This marks our highest total participation and contributions

since we started participating in the annual United Way Campaign!

More than 70% of our departments had an increase in contributions, and this is the 7th increase in total contributions over the past 8 years. **Thank you** for helping our neighbors in need. I

am very proud of our organization and appreciate the generosity.

Sheboygan County government has a critically important role helping people in need. However, we can't do it alone; when everyone pulls together, we make good things happen.



County Department Helps Veterans Find Their Way Through the Maze

by Charlene Cobb, Veterans Service Officer

The Veterans Service Office is located in the Courthouse Annex and has a staff of five. We are ambassadors for the residents of Sheboygan County and daily say thank-you to demonstrate appreciation of our veterans' service by being a valuable resource to them.

Our primary mission is to be the veterans' advocate as they work with the state and federal Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA). This includes providing information and assistance on topics such as education, health care, jobs, transportation, food, flags, memorials, discharges, retirements, records, compensation, pension, nursing home, and burial benefits, to name a few. Even though we are the Veterans Service Office we also provide services for their families. By default we are also the "go-to" office for anything dealing with the military and/or veterans. Our motto is, "Every

Day is Veterans Day!"

Our workload has increased tremendously since 9/11, not only due to providing services to those just returning from war (they are now eligible for 5 years of medical care from the VA), but also to all those who served in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam as well as everyone in between. A little known component of our job is the statistics we keep for the state on the numbers of veterans passing away and where they are buried. We also assist our veterans organizations with military honors, flags, and markers for those graves.

One of the VA's programs is an income based pension that assists some of our senior veterans or their surviving spouses if they need medical care. This program provides a monthly stipend to help with those medical related expenses. Our office assists the

veteran or their family member in

verifying eligibility and compiling the paperwork needed by the VA.

If you have family, friends, or neighbors that are/or were wartime veterans and now are struggling due to the costs of nursing home, assisted living, or other medical care, they may qualify for assistance from the VA.

The Veterans Service office helps citizens unfamiliar with government systems make their way through that maze. Whether they acknowledge it or not, we make a difference in customer satisfaction when we provide good service.



Jekenewicz Finds Rewards in Service and Family

by Julie Jekenewicz, Veterans Service Office Secretary

I am surprised and honored to be the featured employee. I've worked for Sheboygan County for over thirty years. I started in 1980 with Data Processing, which is now called "IT", and then in 2000 transferred to Child Support. In April 2008, I again sought the opportunity to learn a new job and went to work in the Veterans Service Office—my most fulfilling and rewarding work experience.

I was born and raised in Sheboygan, the youngest of six children, and graduated from South High. I have three children, seven grandchildren and three step-grandchildren. Being with my grandkids is the GREATEST joy of my life.

Spending time with my family and friends is extremely important and I relish any opportunity we have to get together. My son has a campsite in Crivitz that I love "running away" to so I can relax and enjoy the outdoors and spend quality time with my family. My oldest daughter and her family recently made a work-related move to North Carolina. I miss not having them near but, as a result, I'll get the opportunity to travel to the East coast and experience some of the beauty of our great country.

I am a very passionate Packer Fan. Years ago, I went to many out of state games and enjoyed cheering them on which I still like to do to this day (GO PACK!). My other hobbies include

doing crossword puzzles, reading, walks along the Riverfront &

Marina (Sheboygan is gorgeous!) and entertainment at the Stephanie Weill Theatre (we're so lucky).

Over the years I have worked with so many wonderful people and made some close friends. I'm grateful to Sheboygan County for all the opportunities I was given to learn, to expand my horizons, and experience new challenges.



Annual Tree & Shrub Sale

by Eric Fehlhaber, Planning & Conservation Department, Engineering Supervisor

The Sheboygan County Planning & Conservation Department began its annual Tree and Shrub Sale Program in 1997. That year, we had just over 100 orders totaling 26,000 trees. By 2002, the program had grown impressively to over 600 orders totaling 130,000 trees.

Since its inception, a jaw-dropping one million trees have been sold and planted. Last year, we had over 600 orders and over 60,000 trees and shrubs sold. Over the years the popularity of the tree sale has increased regionally, with many of our orders now coming from adjacent areas such as Fond du Lac County, Calumet County, Manitowoc County, and even Illinois.

Revenues from the program are used to offset departmental costs and to fund conservation education activities.

The tree program has also helped to provide the County's Water Quality Improvement Program—one of only a handful in the state—with needed

equipment, such as a seeder and disk, grass seed mixtures, and buffer marking posts. This has resulted in important water quality and habitat improvements along miles of our county's water bodies.

The 2012-2013 tree sale is currently underway. Over 40 different tree and shrub species as well as numerous planting aids are available for sale. Trees available for the first time now include Eastern Red Cedar, Little Leaf Linden, Elderberry, Serviceberry, and Silver Maple.

Two specialty packets, the Sequential Flowering Packet and the Bird and Butterfly Packet, are also available. Approximately four foot apple trees can now be ordered individually. Trees are sold in bundles of 25's and 10's depending upon the species. One gallon (15" - 24") container potted stock is offered for six types of evergreens.

Tree planting aids that are available include fertilizer pellets, planting root gel, various sizes of tree shelter tubes with or without stakes, and both plastic

and fabric weed mats.

For hunters and wildlife enthusiasts we are selling food plot seeding mixtures for deer and upland game birds.

Although orders cannot be placed online, order forms and additional tree program information may be downloaded at <http://www.co.sheboygan.wi.us/html/treesale/treesale2012.asp>. For any additional questions or to request an order form, please contact the Planning & Conservation Department—Conservation Division office at (920) 459-1370.

Trees may be ordered from now through Monday, February 25, 2013. Pick-up dates are scheduled for late April and will take place at the County's Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) located at 650 Forest Avenue, Sheboygan Falls.



Sheboygan County Begins a New Era in Labor Relations

by Michael Collard, Human Resources Director

As collective bargaining agreements expire on December 31, 2012 for six of our eight bargaining units in Sheboygan County, many of the rules are changing. Moving ahead, we are looking at an uncertain landscape. Many legal issues about collective bargaining continue to percolate, and we can expect further judicial and possibly legislative actions in the year ahead. The County will continue to react to such developments as best we can.

Based on the current situation, here are some things that will and will not change for 2013:

- Many of the specific rules previously found in bargaining agreements **will** stop being in effect.
- Supervisors **will not** be free to take arbitrary actions without good reason. They will be held responsible for making good decisions following appropriate procedures.
- Base wages **will** still be subject to negotiations, although not interest arbitration.
- Most pay rules, such as differentials, **will not** go away unless a specific change is proposed and approved.
- Overtime rules **will** change for many employees.
- Employees **will not** be deprived of having any voice in the County organization. Communication will continue both with union representatives and through many other means.
- Sheboygan County **will** maintain its commitment to treating employees fairly, making the County an employer of choice and preserving our ability to attract and retain excellent staff.

The full Personnel Policy Manual and questions and answers about Act 10 are available on the Human Resources Department's intranet page.

Valleskey Brings Her Touch to Rocky Knoll

by Rachelle Valleskey, Rocky Knoll Administrator

It's hard to believe I've been working for Sheboygan County for only a few short months. I've been made to feel so welcome and right at home working at Rocky Knoll that I feel a part of the family. My background in nursing, and specifically in the long term care arena, started in the early 90's when I was a nursing student working as a nurse aide for an agency. While I was a student I worked at many nursing homes in Sheboygan and Manitowoc counties and, as a result, learned where I wanted to work once I graduated.

I began my career as a staff RN at Hamilton Memorial Home in Two Rivers. I advanced through the ranks rather quickly and assumed the roles of Supervisor, Assistant Director of Nursing, Nurse Aide trainer, Director of Nursing, and finally Nursing Home Administrator (NHA). Ultimately, my employer asked

me to work for the corporate office in a traveling position that took me to 18 privately owned nursing homes throughout Wisconsin. I served in the capacity of Interim Administrator for several of those homes in times of new acquisitions or when they were in the process of recruiting for a permanent administrator. In between times when I was not assigned to an administrator position, I conducted mock surveys and assisted the facilities in survey preparedness and regulation compliance.

The experience I gained has allowed me to make some positive changes in the daily operations at Rocky Knoll. We are focusing on operational efficiencies and productivity. The caregivers are finding they now have more time in a day to interact with the residents and engage in meaningful activities. Mother Teresa once said, "People in nursing homes are



not dying of old age, they're dying from a lack of touch." We, at Rocky Knoll,

believe in loving our residents and making a positive difference in their lives each and every day. It's who we are and why we chose to work in the health care field.

On a personal note, I am married to George and we have four lovely children ranging in age from 15 to 26. We have lived in my husband's home town of Manitowoc for 26 years after leaving the west coast where I grew up. I'm grateful to have raised my children in the Midwest, and to be able to work with such a fantastic group of dedicated professionals at Rocky Knoll on a daily basis.

Dolson Assumes Office

by Adam Payne, County Administrator

Please welcome Jon Dolson as our newly elected County Clerk! His term will begin on January 7th. Jon's background is in the financial sector as a private banking officer at Johnson Bank and M&I Bank, and he was most recently a self-employed financial advisor. Jon shared, "I look forward to serving Sheboygan County and working with the seasoned staff in the Clerk's office."

Jon and his wife, Carmen, have two grown children, Bailey (23), who recently graduated from Adrian College (Art/Marketing), and Davis (20) who is a junior at Marquette University studying for a double major in the business school, Marketing and Economics, with a minor in Art



through the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design. Jon said, "My whole family loves Sheboygan and all it has to offer, especially getting to the beach or on the water as much as possible. Since moving here over 17 years ago, we fondly call Sheboygan County our home and brag about it whenever we can."

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