April 2023

LCSC Communicator

Regional News, Views, and Information

LAKES COUNTRY Service Cooperative
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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

COMPOSTING - WE START BY CHANGING BEHAVIORS

A MESSAGE FROM LCSC'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JEREMY KOVASH

OSAKIS - GROWING UP IN A SMALL TOWN AND BECOMING THE CITY CLERK

LCSC WELLNESS APRIL AWARENESS MONTH

WEST CENTRAL COMMUNITIES ACTION READY RIDE

DILWORTH COLLECTIVE COMMUNITY SPIRIT

LEGAL SERVICES OF NORTHWEST MINNESOTA RECEIVES A $25,00 GRANT

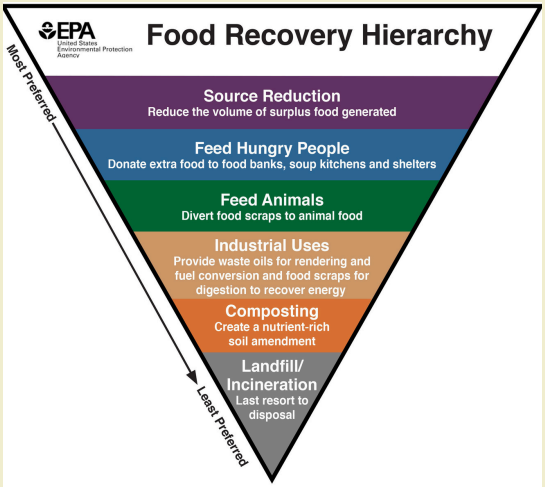
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COMPOSTING

We Start by Changing Behaviors



Cedar Walters grew up in a home where caring for the planet was an everyday practice. "I have a passion for this project!" said Walters about the food composting project in Otter Tail County. Walter's role as Public Information and Education Officer (PIEO) for the Otter Tail County Solid Waste Department is about educating our communities. "It has been a heavier lift than I anticipated," said Walters.

"We are working to change behaviors. First and foremost, we want people to stop wasting food. If food waste needs to be dealt with, using the steps of the food hierarchy model is the best way to ensure proper disposal of the items."
The average American produces roughly 4.4 lbs. of trash daily, and about 1/4 of that is compostable food waste. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), food waste was one of the most significant contributors to landfills in 2018.



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Source: Cedar Walters, Otter Tail County Solid Waste Department Public Information and Education Officer, Otter Tail County Solid Waste Website, Minnesota Pollution Control Website, US EPA Website
Author: Mary Phillipe, LCSC's Communications Generalist

GLACIAL RIDGE FACILITY
IN HOFFMAN MINNESOTA

The Otter Tail County, Solid Waste Department, completed a waste composition study to analyze the substance of the average household garbage. Employees sorted household garbage by hand into separate categories of waste. This analysis concluded that 27% of the trash collected at the household level was preventable food waste and compostable food scraps. Everyone creates wasted food, but it is just as simple not to create it. Both businesses and individuals can learn to effectively prevent wasted food by taking simple steps such as making grocery lists, inventorying supplies, and buying only what you need.



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF FOOD WASTE

- When food is wasted, all the resources used to produce that food are also wasted.
- Eight percent of US agricultural land used to produce food is wasted.
- Twenty-five percent of all freshwater in the US is used to produce food that is thrown away.
- Food waste also has a carbon footprint. Most uneaten food goes to landfills, producing methane, a greenhouse gas 24 times more environmentally harmful than carbon dioxide.

In 2022, nearly 500 Otter Tail County residents received supplies to participate in the Backyard Composting Program. The program aims to help people in rural communities compost at home. This program was supported through a grant from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and in the first nine months of the program, over 60,000 lbs. of food scraps were composted.

Food composting is recycling organic materials (like food scraps, coffee grounds, yard waste, and soiled paper products) into nutrient-rich soil/compost. Composting also supports plant growth, reduces water usage, and decreases the need for chemical fertilizers. Additionally, composting is an easy way to reduce environmental impact and positively contribute to the planet's health. Composting is simple. It happens in nature all the time. If you pile your organic waste in a specific area, it will break down even if you ignore it.

In addition to residential support for composting, Otter Tail County Solid Waste partners with local schools and businesses to provide food waste pickup. Otter Tail County contracts with Steve's Sanitation in Perham to pick up compost at 20 participating schools and businesses. Schools in Fergus Falls, Underwood, Parkers Prairie, and Henning currently participate in the composting program. The highest volume participants are Pizza Ranch, Lake Region Healthcare, and Kennedy Secondary School in Fergus Falls. Parkers Prairie and Henning schools collected 30,000 lbs. of composted food in their first year of operation.

So where is the food waste deposited? The materials are delivered to the Glacial Ridge facility in Hoffman, Minnesota. The facility, which opened in 2022, supports the composting needs of Douglas, Pope, Grant, Stevens, and Otter Tail counties.

https://popedouglasrecycle.com/glacial-ridge-compost-facility/



To learn more,
visit their website at https://ottertailcountymn.us/content-page/organics-recycling/ or contact Cedar Walters at 218-998-8950.

In Minnesota, the Duluth area pioneered composting, and in the Twin Cities Metro area, composting has been very common for at least 20 years. Now counties all over Minnesota are participating. Minnesota currently has nine large-scale compost sites permitted to accept food waste.

When asked if she feels the program makes a difference, Walters stated, "It is making a difference, but we have far to go. I don't pull my punches as much as I used to. I tell people that we all must do as much as possible to reduce the waste in our landfills, and I ask them if this is what they want to leave their children and grandchildren. Right now, we are leaving them a trashed planet. Every little bit we each do now will help their future."

Do you want to start composting? Otter Tail County offers resources and information on composting, including workshops and classes. Additionally, several options exist for purchasing compost bins or building your own. Following the county's guidelines on what can and cannot be composted is essential. Still, it's a simple and environmentally friendly way to dispose of food waste and yard debris.

Greetings

to our City, County, Other Government and Nonprofit Members!

Lakes Country Service Cooperative Board Chair Jon Karger and I met this week. We talked about his experiences on the Minnesota School Boards Association Board of Directors and my experiences on the Association of Educational Service Agencies Executive Council. The conversation centered on a recent opinion article in the Minneapolis Star Tribune by Pamela Paul from April 2nd entitled "You can't learn from adversaries you've silenced." Jon and I reflected upon the need for discourse and dialogue… the need to listen to both sides… the need to find people who can engage and challenge our current thinking. This is sometimes difficult in a derisive world. It is easier to surround yourself with those who think as you do. Frankly, sometimes it is more fun.



Jeremy Kovash
Executive Director

However, the knowledge gained from people who live in other parts of the state or world, have had different life experiences, have had varied upbringings, and lived in different cultures can only add to our strength as individuals and as a collective whole. In the editorial, Paul recalls her dialogue with Justice Anton Scalia of the United States Supreme Court. She concludes that adults… "shouldn't avoid opportunities to hear other perspectives but should actively seek them out and recon with the humbling fact that what they already know – or think they already know- may not be all there is to know."

On a side note, we believe in the practice of gratefulness at Lakes Country. I recently celebrated my 50th birthday. I spent some time leading up to my birthday, making a list of many awesome people who have been influential in my life. From my long list, I selected 50 people (with whom I do not currently work) and sent 50 notes to my "champions." I reflected on those who had shown me compassion, encouragement, support, challenge, and feedback. In many cases, I reflected upon experiences or conversations (big and small) that made a difference in my life. In some cases, I was saddened that I had not reciprocated the good given to me. In all cases, I was humbled and full of gratitude.



OSAKIS

Source: Angela Jacobson, Clerk, City of Osakis, cityofosakis.com, and the University of Minnesota Extension
Author: Mary Phillipe, LCSC's Communications Generalist



"GROWING UP IN A SMALL TOWN AND BECOMING THE CITY CLERK: A JOURNEY OF GROWTH AND CHANGE."

ANGELA JACOBSON
OSAKIS CITY CLERK

"I love that I know almost everyone I meet when I am out and about in the city," said Osakis City Clerk Angela Jacobson. Jacobson has worked for the city for 20 years and served 17 as the City Clerk. She has lived her entire life in this community and is now raising her family here because of the safety and closeness of the people in the community. "We have a wholesome small-town feel," said Jacobson with a smile.

With a population of 1,771, Osakis is a small town. However, the city clerk's role is no small task. The clerk's job involves managing administrative functions for the local government, maintaining official records, preparing agendas and minutes, coordinating meetings, and assisting with budgeting and finance.

Economic development is another hat Jacobson wears, and she knows that obtaining funding and creating local buy-in when developing amenities in a community can be challenging.

In 1997, the Osakis City Council established an Economic Development Authority (EDA). Today, an eight-person board works to create jobs, housing, and business opportunities to attract young families and individuals to their community.

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In 2010, the University of Minnesota Extension Research Fellow Ben Winchester, M.S. published a report that rural Minnesota has changing demographics. https://extension.umn.edu/vital-connections/newcomers-mean-brain-gain-rural-minnesota The U of M "Rural Brain Gain" research shows that small communities are seeing a trend of Millennials, younger Gen Xers, and older Gen Zers moving outstate and wanting to leave behind the stress of larger cities and the high cost of living. With the ability to work remotely, many small communities are planning their future infrastructure to attract families and individuals looking for a simpler life, safety and security, affordable housing, outdoor recreation, and quality schools.

Jacobson shared that she works to research grant opportunities with the possibility of improving the community to attract young families and individuals. She and the park committee are pursuing funding for a trail system to border the city and connect active people to the lake. She was excited to reveal that a generous donor would help support the trail's development if approved. Jacobson knows that expanding walking or biking trails can have numerous benefits, such as promoting physical activity for residents, reducing air pollution, enhancing the city's beauty, and boosting the local economy through increased tourism and property values. Jacobson has also worked on grants through the Minnesota Department of Transportation. "Sometimes members of the community can be resistant to change. However, it's important to listen and remember that everyone has unique perspectives and concerns, said Jacobson. "Finding common ground and working toward a mutually beneficial solution is important." Jacobson also shared that she would like to see the development of a campground for visitors who would like to enjoy their beautiful community and surrounding lakes.

The city also works to support its thriving local businesses and employers, such as Alomere Health, Panther Distillery, Ichor Systems, Jacobs Lefse Bakeri, The Hot Rod Shop, and more. As part of its local infrastructure plan, the city is now preparing to update the water treatment system and a makeover for the 20-year-old water tower, which is showing a little rust. Later this year, the water tower will be painted blue and designed with waves to reflect the lakes area community.

Jacobson pours her heart and soul into making Osakis a better place to live for its residents and visitors. "It can be challenging to do everyday activities and find time and energy for economic development. But I know how important this work is," said Jacobson.

When asked what the city needs to help reach its goals, she stated she would like more training opportunities for the city staff. "We need to continue to develop a strong team working toward accomplishing our goals and objectives. We want to make Osakis the best community to live in, in Minnesota."

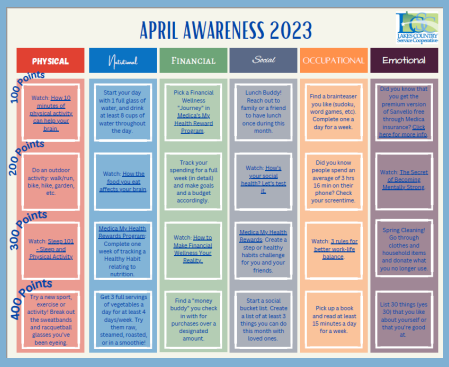
Do you want to learn more about the City of Osakis? Contact Osakis City Clerk Angela Jacobson at 320-859-2150 or visit their website at cityofosakis.com.

LCSC WELLNESS

*Must be in LCSC Insurance Pool to participate.

APRIL IS HERE,

WHICH MEANS IT'S TIME FOR A LITTLE FRIENDLY COMPETITION. ARE YOU READY TO PUT YOUR HEALTH FIRST AND HAVE FUN DOING IT? JOIN US IN APRIL AWARENESS, AND HAVE A CHANCE TO WIN A DAY PASS TO ANY MN STATE PARK. **CLICK HERE FOR INSTRUCTIONS.**



WEST CENTRAL MINNESOTA Communities Action

HELPING PEOPLE. CHANGING LIVES.

READY RIDE

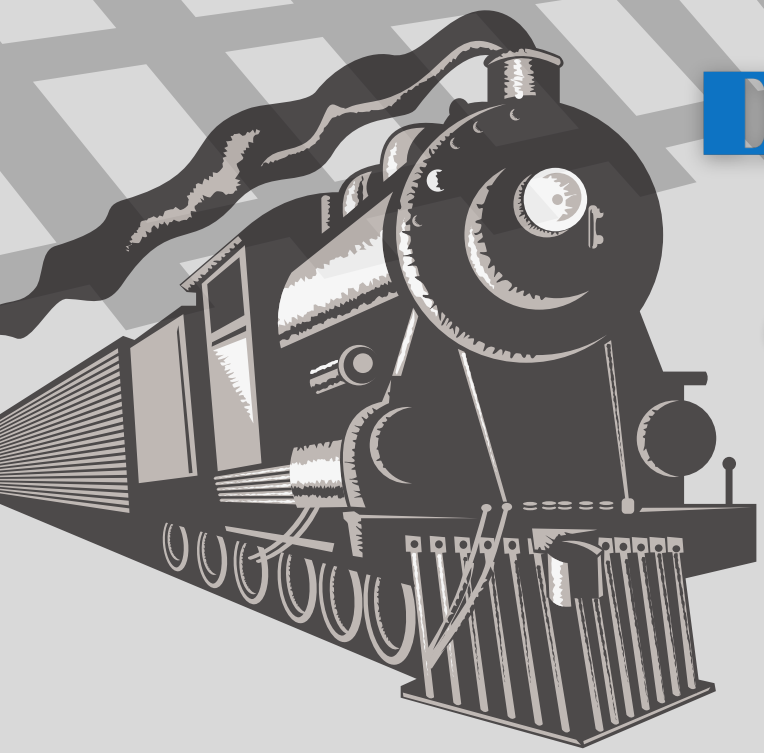
West Central Minnesota Communities Action is in partnership with Minnesota Live Well at Home and PrimeWest, enabling us to offer our Ready Ride Volunteer Driver Program and Home Care and Repair Programs. Ready Ride is available to residents/adults 65 + in Douglas, Grant, Pope, Stevens, and Traverse counties. Ready Ride PrimeWest MA is open to residents/adults 18 – 64 in Douglas, Grant, Pope, Stevens, and Traverse counties for medical rides for approved and active PrimeWest MA Insurance.

Below are a few key points about the program.

- Rides can range from short trips to longer trips for various medical appointments, to pick up medications, or grocery shopping.
- Riders must reside in our five–county service area: Douglas, Grant, Pope, Stevens & Traverse.
- Rides may go outside of the five-county service area for appointments.
- Volunteer Drivers use their vehicles to provide the rides.
- Scheduling rides should be requested a week in advance, which allows time to find a volunteer driver.
- Guidelines, in response to COVID-19, are in place for both volunteer drivers and riders.

Each rider pays an annual cost-sharing fee and a per-mile charge for the ride. The cost per mile is determined by a person's net income within five different tiers. There is an application process for the Ready Ride Program, so please get in touch with West Central MN Communities Action, and we will mail/email the application to you.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR WISH TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE READY RIDE PROGRAM, CALL JOHN AT 218-685-7433.

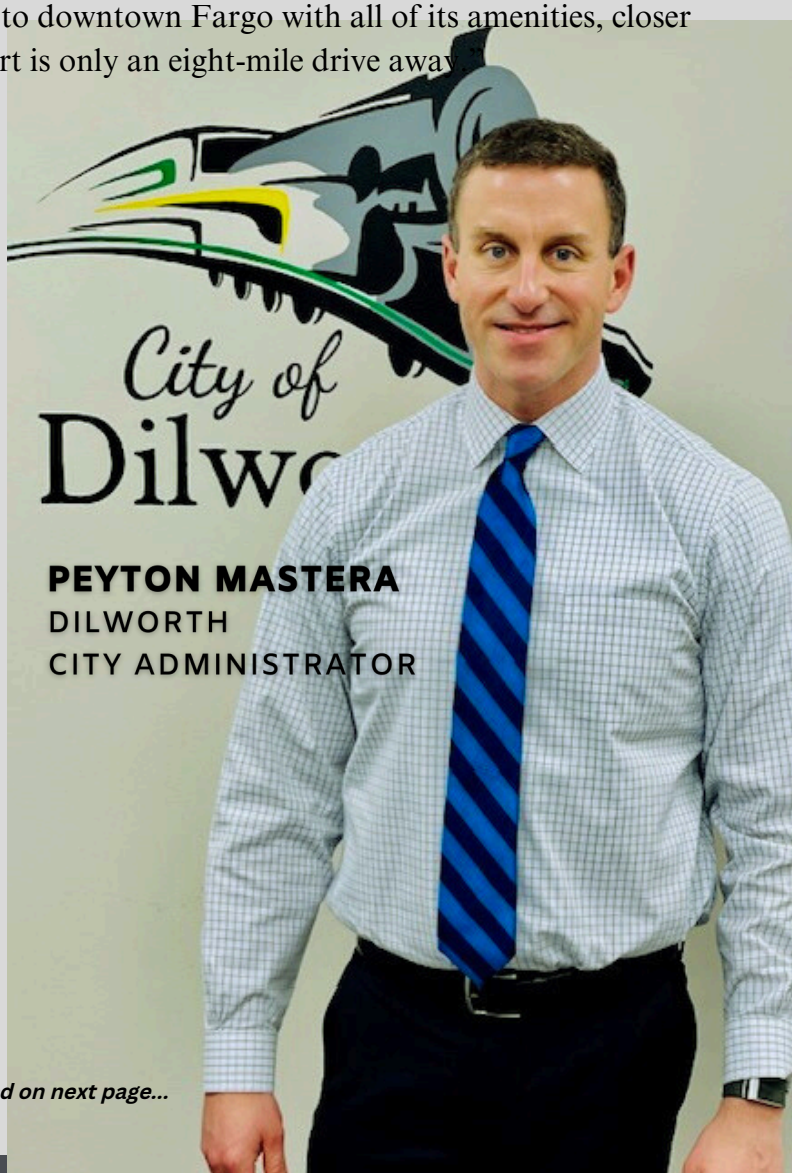


DILWORTH

Collective Community Spirit

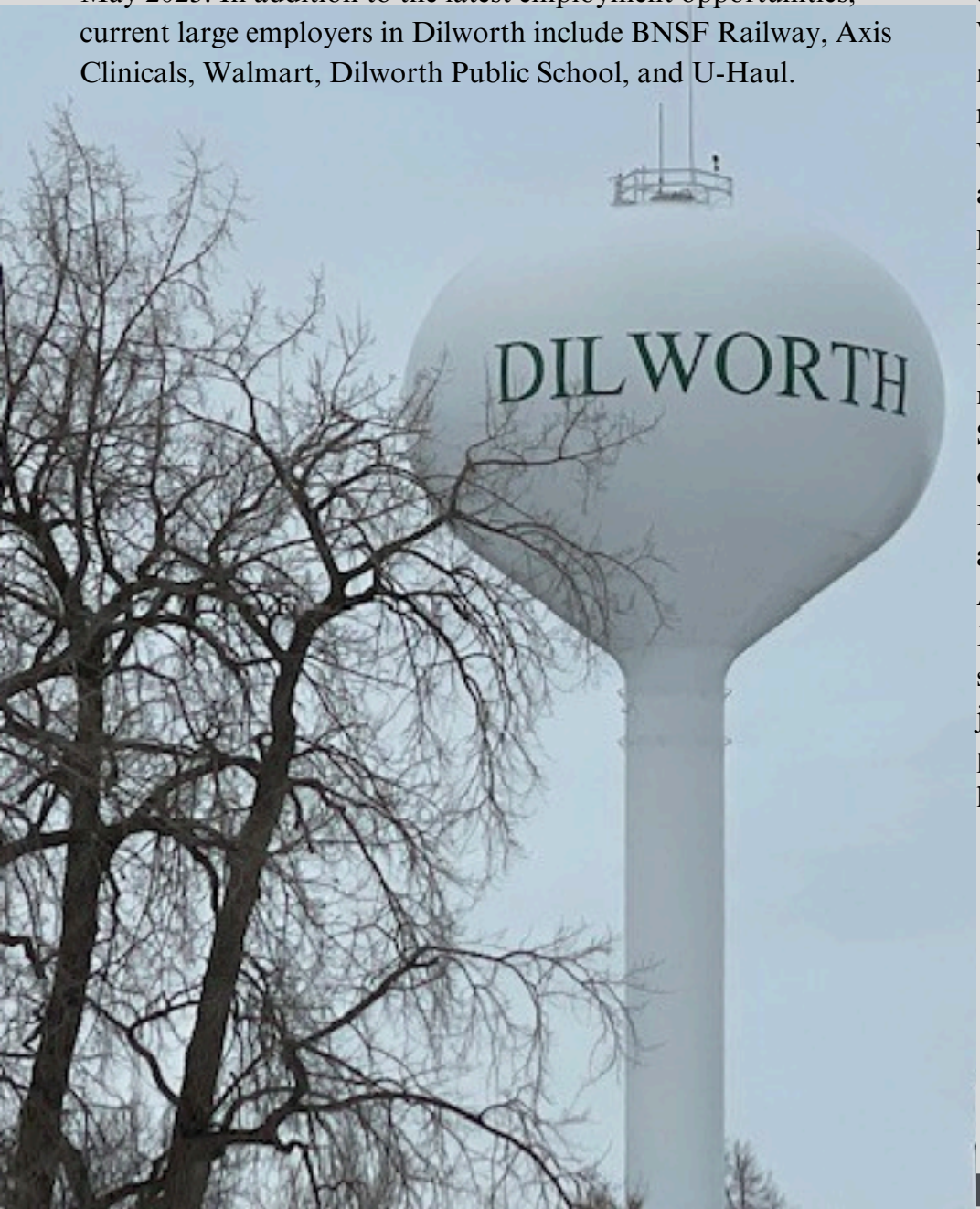
Source: Peyton Mastera, City Administrator, Dilworth, 2020 US 10 / US 75 Corridor Study, City of Dilworth website, US 10/ US 75 2020 Corridor Study
Author: Mary Phillipe, LCSC's Communications Generalist

Dilworth is the second largest city in Clay County, only separated from the City of Moorhead by the very busy 34th Street. "Dilworth is the best place to live in the Fargo, Moorhead Metro area," stated Peyton Mastera, Dilworth's City Administrator, "You are close to downtown Fargo with all of its amenities, closer to the lakes area than our metro neighbors, and the airport is only an eight-mile drive away." Mastera, now in his ninth year as Dilworth City Administrator, is currently working on plans to impact the downtown Dilworth area for pedestrians and businesses. In 2022, the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Government facilitated the US 10 Corridor Study through Dilworth. US 10 is the main corridor and moves a substantial amount of traffic daily through Dilworth. From this study, and with input from the community, Dilworth has formulated a plan to change the corridor with a recommended three-lane design. The narrow sidewalks along US 10 currently make snow removal impossible for business owners and limit pedestrian use. In addition to providing easier snow removal, changing from a four-lane to a three-lane highway will have additional benefits. These street improvements will reduce congestion and increase safety by reducing the number of lanes drivers must cross to turn or exit the roadway. It also creates space for bike lanes and wider sidewalks for pedestrian use. The improvements will also support Dilworth's investments in developing parks and downtown revitalization efforts.



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Dilworth is growing fast due to its proximity to Moorhead and Fargo, and its 4,600 residents are excited to have many new business and community improvements. However, this charming "rail" community still offers a small-town feel and can provide affordable housing options while being close to the job opportunities of the two larger communities. "I am sure this sounds like a typical small-town description, but Dilworth has a collective community spirit with generous and civic-minded people," said Mastera. The most notable business addition to the community is the Rail District. The Rail District is a new "downtown" concept the City is working with developers on along the east end of town. The first phase of construction of the strip mall features a butcher shop, home-decor store, coffee shop, and a stand-alone restaurant, The Silver Spike. A second strip mall is nearing completion, with a business opening in the strip mall in May 2023. In addition to the latest employment opportunities, current large employers in Dilworth include BNSF Railway, Axis Clinicals, Walmart, Dilworth Public School, and U-Haul.



Mastera shared that what he loves about his job is the people he works with and the connections that he makes. "We have a great team of people that work for the city. They do all the work and make it easy for me," he said with a smile. In his role as City Administrator, Mastera is responsible for managing the daily operations of a city, including overseeing budgets, public services, and its 18-member full-time staff. He works closely with elected officials to implement policies, coordinate projects, and ensure the city runs smoothly. When asked what keeps him up at night, Mastera stated, "There is not much to worry about right now. We are always looking to the future and how to keep up in a progressive community."

Before his move to Dilworth, Mastera attended Murray State University in Kentucky and received his degree in Political Science and later his MPA (Master of Public Administration.) Following his education, he worked as a City Planner and Projects Administrator for the City of Murray, Kentucky. Mastera shared, "When interviewing for the job in Dilworth, I found the local people were so welcoming, which helped me decide to move here."

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THE RAIL DISTRICT

Dilworth is competitive in the vibrant metro communities of Fargo, Moorhead, West Fargo, and Horace and offers much to families and individuals looking for big-city amenities. You can find a safe place to raise a family and easy access to the lakes area, which provides opportunities for outdoor activities such as fishing, hiking, and skiing. If you want to learn more about this community's growth and future plans, visit their website at cityofdilworth.com or contact the City of Dilworth at 218-287-2313.



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LSNM RECEIVES $25,000 GRANT



TO IMPLEMENT HEAL PROJECT

Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota (LSNM) is pleased to announce it is one of ten Enhance Alexandria grant program recipients and has been awarded $25,000 by the Alexandria City Council to help fund the Housing Eviction Advocacy Law (HEAL) Project.

The HEAL Project will provide an attorney for legal representation and advice for low-income families in Douglas County, develop strong connections with landlords and educate landlords about cost-effective and mutually beneficial alternatives to court evictions available for low-income families to avoid evictions, and work with Court Administration and other stakeholders to create a Douglas County Coordinated Housing Calendar.

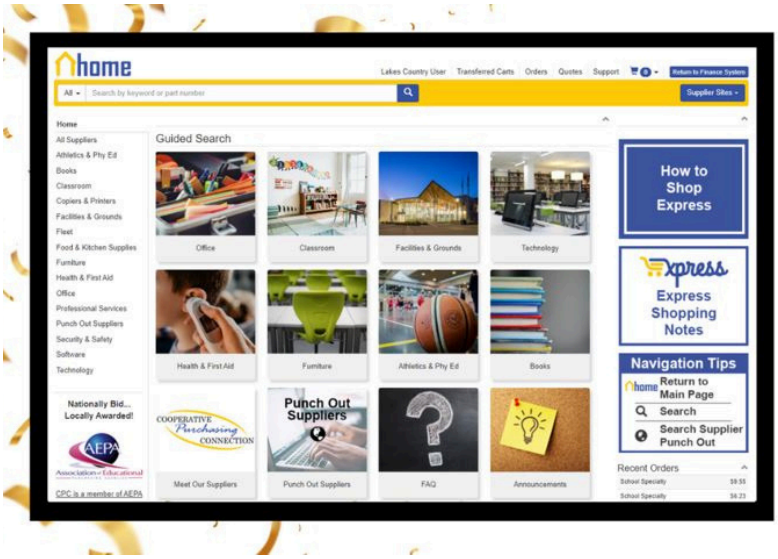
LSNM has worked toward a right to counsel with Coordinated Housing Calendars in much of its 22-county service area. Coordinated Housing Calendars, which offer remote eviction hearings on consistent days and times, have eliminated the need for tenants to travel to court hearings and have removed barriers such as childcare, gas money, lack of transportation, and missed work. However, Douglas County residents have not yet benefitted from this service. This is where LSNM and its HEAL Project are hoping to make an impact.

Implementation of the HEAL Project will allow representation in Douglas County to start immediately and aims to increase the number of clients receiving a favorable case outcome, have an improved quality of life, housing that is preserved, or whose housing conditions have improved.

LSNM Executive Director Anne Hoefgen states, “This coordination would allow LSNM to leverage a small legal staff to appear at every first appearance for eviction in Douglas County. Instead of putting the burden on a family that is facing a housing crisis to find the resources, call, and apply for services, LSNM lawyers are available for legal advice and representation at the hearing. Giving tenants immediate access to legal advice aids the process, educates judges about housing law, increases the efficiency of the court hearings, ensures that the law if followed, helps landlords receive the rent owed to them, and importantly, avoids homelessness for low-income families and individuals.”

Stable housing is essential in maintaining the health, safety and well-being of individuals and families. With support from the Enhance Alexandria grant program, the HEAL Project can bring a right to counsel in housing cases in Douglas County and maintain housing stability for low-income families in Alexandria.

If you or someone you know is in need of civil legal help, please reach out to us at 1-800-450-8585, visit our website at www.lsnmlaw.org, or find us on social media. For additional civil legal information, visit www.LawHelpMN.org.
LSNM is a non-profit organization established to provide free legal services to low-income people in non-criminal cases across twenty-two counties in northwest Minnesota.



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