

Anoka County

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News

Sizzling summer fun at Bunker Beach

This summer's hot weather is making Anoka County's Bunker Beach Water Park a popular destination to beat the heat and enjoy outdoor water fun. Along



with Minnesota's only wave pool, Bunker Beach features a zero depth entry "adventure pool" with a maximum depth of two feet. Kids love the large play structure in the pool that allows them to spray water using assorted valves, levers, and handles.

Older children and adults enjoy two 200 foot waterslides, new last year, that wind, twist, and turn, finally ending in a refreshing plunge pool.

The wave pool's air-generated waves are made with eight pattern variations that reach as high as three feet.

Waves are generated every five seconds for 15 minutes, followed by a 10-minute rest period. For a break from water play, youngsters can visit the new sand play area that includes play equipment and sand tables with running water, ideal for building the perfect sand castle. There are also two sand volleyball courts, a picnic pavilion, and shade shelters.

"Bunker Beach is a great summertime destination for families," said Anoka County Commissioner Dick Lang, who chairs the county's Parks & Recreation Committee. "With the opening of the new waterslides, adventure pool, and sand play area last year, Bunker Beach now offers even more options, especially for younger children who may find the wave pool a bit much."

Bunker Beach is a perfect place to hold summer birthday parties or other special events. Birthday party packages that include admission, food, tube rental, and supervised games are available. To make a reservation, call 763-767-2895.

Admission to Bunker Beach is: adult/youth - \$9 per day; guests under 48 inches tall or senior citizens (age 62 and over) - \$6 per day. After 4 p.m.: adult/youth - \$6 per day; guests under 48 inches tall or senior citizens - \$4 per day. Bunker Beach is located within Bunker Hills Regional Park in Coon Rapids. Vehicles require a permit to enter the park: \$5 per day or \$25 for a 12-month permit. For more information, visit www.AnokaCountyParks.com.

Northstar commuter rail funds included in state bonding bill

Gov. Tim Pawlenty signed into law the \$886 million bonding bill, which includes \$37.5 million for

Northstar commuter rail, at a special ceremony April 11 at the site of the future Riverdale Coon Rapids commuter rail station.



Gov. Pawlenty signs the 2005 bonding bill, joined by several legislators including (from left) Senate Majority Leader Dean Johnson, Rep. Jim Abeler, Rep. Kathy Tingelstad, Rep. Alice Hausman, and Rep. Melissa Hortman.

The 2005 bonding bill marks the first time the state has provided significant funding for the project. The \$37.5 million in state funding this year, which matches \$44 million in local funding, was necessary to secure authorization from the federal government for Northstar to move into final design.

"Securing state funding this year was critical to the future of Northstar commuter rail," said Anoka County Commissioner Dan Erhart. "It is the first step toward providing commuters a much-needed transit option by 2008."

At a time when Twin Cities residents rank congestion as the "single most important problem" facing the region, according to a Metropolitan Council survey, many believe commuter rail is long overdue.

The Twin Cities area recently was rated the fifth worst among 26 metro areas of similar size for the rate at which congestion has worsened since 1982, according to a national study by the Texas Transportation Institute. Twin Cities residents wasted 43 hours annually in rush hour traffic at an added "congestion" cost of \$722 per commuter.

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News Briefs

- All travelers from the U.S. to and from South and Central America, the Caribbean, and Bermuda will soon be required to have a passport or other accepted document that establishes their identity and nationality. All Anoka County License Centers process passport applications and passport photos. License centers are open weekdays from 8 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. and Sat. from 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. The license centers are conveniently located throughout the county in Blaine, Coon Rapids, Ramsey, Ham Lake, and Columbia Heights. Visit www.AnokaCounty.us/license or call 763-323-5777 for more information.

- Low interest loans for first time homebuyers in Anoka County are now available through the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA). First time homebuyers who meet income guidelines may use the loan to purchase a new or existing home valued up to \$275,625 anywhere in the county. For more information, call the Anoka County Community Development Office at 763-323-5764 or visit www.AnokaCounty.us/homes.

- Kids of all ages participate in the Anoka County Library's summer reading program, "What's Buzzin' At Your Library?" Children can earn a free pass to Bunker Beach by reading five books during the summer. All kids who complete and return a reading record to the library by August 31 receive a certificate and a chance for a special prize drawing. Check the library's Web site at www.anoka.lib.mn.us for a full schedule of programs and events.

- Anoka County commissioners received an update on educational

programs offered by the Anoka Technical College's Secondary Technical Education Program (STEP) for high school juniors and seniors, and Customized Training Program providing specific training to adult students in conjunction with area businesses for jobs available in the community. Fields of training include



From left: Anoka County Commissioners Dan Erhart, Dennis Berg, and Rhonda Sivarajah and Mike Hilber, STEP Instructor, Machine Shop.

emergency medical response, building trades, fire and rescue, glass technician, pet grooming, and healthcare. The STEP building was built with assistance and support from the Anoka County Board.

- Residents may drop off yard and tree waste at Anoka County's two compost sites, operated by NRG Processing Solutions. There is no charge for residents to dispose of yard waste, but there is a variable fee for tree waste disposal. Residents also may pick up free finished compost on a first-come, first-served basis. The Bunker Hills Compost Site is located at 13285 Hanson Blvd. in Coon Rapids. The Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Compost Site is located at 7701 Main Street in Lino Lakes. Call Anoka County Integrated Waste Management at 763-323-5730 for more information.

- Mental health is as important as physical health. That's the message of Anoka County's Mental Wellness Campaign, aimed at increasing public awareness of mental health and fighting the stigma associated with mental illness. Mental health problems are real, common

and treatable, according to Anoka County Commissioner Rhonda Sivarajah, co-chair of the campaign. For more information, call 763-422-7007.

- The Metropolitan Radio Board and the Metropolitan 911 Board have merged to form the Metropolitan Emergency Services Board, a move that will save money and increase efficiency. The board plans, constructs, sets policy for, and oversees operation of the seven-county 800 MHz public safety radio system as well as the metropolitan regional 911 system. Anoka County Board Chair Margaret Langfeld serves as chair of the new board.

- The seventh annual Anoka County Senior Expo was held recently at Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Ramsey. This free event for senior citizens and their families offered information and resource booths for seniors, along with stroke screenings, blood pressure checks, bone density scans, mini massages, food, and entertainment. The expo travels to a different part of the county every year.



Seniors received free blood pressure checks at the recent Senior Expo held in Ramsey.

- Mediation Services for Anoka County provides a voluntary, confidential method for resolving disputes such as disagreements between neighbors, landlords and tenants, businesses and consumers, and employers and employees. In 2004, Mediation Services -- which receives funding from Anoka County -- conducted 146 mediations with 435 participants; referred nearly 3,000 cases for additional legal services; and trained 544 adults and youth in mediation and conflict resolution. For information, call 763-422-8878.



Sheriff's Office awards ceremony honors officers, citizens

by Anoka County Sheriff Bruce Andersohn



A great delight for me as Sheriff is the annual awards ceremony which provides public recognition for deputies who have performed with distinction. This year six Sheriff's Office deputies were

recognized for their actions.

Detectives Bryon Fuerst and Kurt Klosterman were awarded Letters of Recognition for their efforts in the arrest of a murder suspect. In September 2004, two random murders by an unknown suspect occurred in the city of Ramsey. Detectives Fuerst and Klosterman interviewed numerous witnesses and the suspect. Their investigative efforts

gathered enough evidence to permit charging the suspect with the murders.

Deputy Bruce Hatton has worked in the Sheriff's Crime Lab for 23 years. For his accomplishments throughout the years, Deputy Hatton was awarded an Office Commendation. Deputy Hatton has developed a crime scene training program for new deputies and is a highly regarded crime scene diagrammer. Deputy Hatton has drafted several hundred diagrams for the County Attorney's Office for use in courtroom prosecution. His personnel file includes 46 letters of recognition or commendations.

Three patrol deputies were awarded Office Commendations for their efforts in saving a newborn infant born prematurely and

not breathing. Responding to a medical situation call, Sergeant Michael Longbehn and Deputies Wayne Hunt and Travis Bolles arrived to discover the newborn was not breathing and had no pulse. They immediately began resuscitation and the infant soon had a heartbeat and was breathing.

I am proud of these deputies and their efforts as Anoka County law enforcement officers. If you should meet one of them, please take a minute to say thanks for a job well done.

In addition to the officers, two citizens -- Scott Adamsi, Ham Lake, and Daniel Sivula, East Bethel -- each were awarded a Citizen Award of Merit for their efforts in apprehending a burglary suspect.



Drug crime prosecutions increase

by Anoka County Attorney Robert "Bob" Johnson

Drug cases continue to account for a growing percentage of serious crimes prosecuted in Anoka County. Last year 1,611 people were charged with a felony. Of these cases, 495 involved drugs.

Drug crime prosecutions have risen as a percentage of the total crimes charged from eight percent in 1984, to 15 percent in 1994, to 31 percent to 2004. The growth in drug crimes is largely due to an increase in the use of methamphetamine (meth). In 1994, of 150 drug cases prosecuted, meth was involved in 43, with marijuana and cocaine making up the balance. In 2004, of 495 drug cases prosecuted, meth was the drug in 345 cases with cocaine second highest with 55 cases.

The number of people charged with all

felony crimes has risen significantly in the last 20 years. In 1984, 465 people were charged with a felony. By last year, that number had more than tripled to 1,611 felony charges. The higher number of felonies can be explained by a number of factors beyond the increase in drug use. Certainly population growth is part of the reason. New felony crimes like fleeing police in a motor vehicle, DUI, and identity theft add to public safety, but increase the number of people charged. Police are better now at catching criminals than they were 20 years ago. It is rare for there to be unsolved major crimes in Anoka County.

The increase in felony charges does not mean the level of public safety has decreased. As I work with prosecutors across the country, I continue to be impressed with how safe we are living here. We are indebted to law enforcement for keeping our communities safe.

Communities, businesses honored for recycling

Anoka County municipalities recycled more than 140,404 tons of residential waste in 2004.

Of the county's 21 municipalities, 12 met or exceeded their 2004 recycling goals: Andover, Blaine, Burns, Centerville, Circle Pines, Columbia Heights, Coon Rapids, Fridley, Ham Lake, Lexington, Lino Lakes, and Ramsey.

The Anoka County Solid Waste Abatement Advisory Task Force recently hosted an awards ceremony to acknowledge their achievement. The task force, which includes representatives from each municipality in the county, advises the Anoka County board on issues related to recycling and solid waste management.

The task force also specially recognized Connexus Energy; BTW, Inc.;

Shamrock Recycling & Transfer, Inc.; and Blaine High School for their efforts to reduce waste and recycle.

"Anoka County is a better place today because residents are doing a better job of recycling and properly disposing of items that could harm our environment," said Anoka County Commissioner Jim Kordiak, chair of the county's Waste Management and Energy Committee. "Without our recycling and processing efforts, more than 316,000 tons of material would have ended up in landfills last year."



A partnership of Blaine High School and Connexus Energy was recognized for recycling success. From left: Anoka County Commissioners Rhonda Sivarajah and Margaret Langfeldt; Larry Peterson, Connexus Energy; Amber Petersen, Teacher, and Jacyn Davidson, Student, Blaine High School; Raquel Berg, Connexus Energy; Norm Handle, Blaine High School Principal; and Commissioner Dick Lang.

New signs aim to reduce school zone speeding

The Anoka County Highway Department has received a \$208,333 state grant from the Local Road Improvement Program to provide "active" school zone speed limit signs and warning systems in school zones. The traffic control device consist of a school zone speed limit sign, a flasher system, and a feedback sign that indicates a driver's actual speed. This project will provide enhanced school zone speed limit traffic devices for up to 18 schools in four school districts in the county including Anoka-Hennepin, Centennial, Forest Lake, and St. Francis.

The traditional, passive school zone speed limit signs are ineffective in achieving compliance with school zone speed limits, according to Anoka County Commissioner Dennis Berg, who chairs the county's Public Works Committee. "Many times drivers are unaware of how fast they actually are going," Berg said. "The feedback sign immediately lets drivers know

their speed, creating greater awareness of the need to slow down in school zones." Statistics indicate that a one mile per hour reduction in speed can reduce accident severity by five percent.

"The Driver Feedback Signs in school zones appear to be the next step in improving safety to our students, parents, and staff," said Chuck Holden, Director of Operations for the Anoka-Hennepin School District. "In our highly congested school zones, this new signage is a very welcome improvement. It has proven to be a benefit in raising awareness of the motoring public in other locations."

Signs are expected to be in place by the time classes resume in the fall. For additional information, call the Anoka County Highway Department at 763-862-4200 or visit www.AnokaCounty.us/highways.

Become a

foster parent



A foster parent is:

- A caring adult over age 21
- Dedicated to helping children
 - Single or married
- An Anoka County resident
- A renter or homeowner

To become a licensed foster parent, call 763-422-7144.

www.AnokaCounty.us/fostercare

Home repair funds for eligible homeowners

Eligible homeowners may qualify for interest-free loans to make home repairs to meet building codes, or to conform to health and safety standards. Improvements may include modifications to improve accessibility, eliminate lead exposure, or repair windows, plumbing, wiring, or the roof.

Qualifying homes must be a single-family, one unit dwelling and must be a minimum of 15 years old. Family income and home value limits apply. The countywide program is administered by the Anoka County Community Action Program. Call 763-783-4721 for information. Another program for the city of Coon Rapids only is administered by the Greater Metropolitan Housing Corporation. For information on the Coon Rapids program, call 651-486-7401.

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NFL Commissioner Tagliabue praises Anoka County's "can do" attitude

National Football League Commissioner Paul Tagliabue was the guest speaker at a 350-seat North Metro Chamber of Commerce luncheon, hosted by the National Sports Center's new Schwann's Conference Center in April.



In his speech, Tagliabue made some clear statements about the significance of the Anoka County/Blaine proposal:

"Your plan here and your vision is one of the most comprehensive and thoughtful plans that I've seen in all of the many states and communities where we've been in an effort to develop new stadiums."

"We can guarantee that our product will be of great interest and the team will be of economic value to the public. The team will be an economic asset to the community. It will bring resources into the community."

"(Making) a public-private partnership work requires vision, planning, respect for partners, and an element of trust for people to look at a complex set of ideas and jump 10 or 15 years ahead and say if we invest our resources here, we will get the kind of return we're looking for."

"...We have the soundest economic structure in any sports league, probably in the world...What comes in from national sources here to the Vikings is far and away much more significant in economic terms than what a baseball, basketball or hockey team brings in to any community."

"To come here today and to see first-hand the leadership, the plan and the can-do attitude is very refreshing and very reassuring."

"For our teams to be successful and for our teams to accomplish what they want to accomplish in the community, the business community and labor unions and other non-profit organizations need to be a part of the partnership."

Repairs scheduled for Coon Rapids Dam

An underwater inspection of the Coon Rapids Dam last winter revealed the presence of a large void under the apron of the dam on the Anoka County side of the river. The damage was caused by erosion of the riverbed, according to the Three Rivers Park District, which operates the dam. Repair work is expected to take a minimum of three months, though adverse weather conditions could extend the completion date into next year.

In a typical year, the Park District raises the gates of the dam to create a recreational pool that extends six miles upstream from the dam. However, this year the Park District will keep the recreational pool at the lower winter levels in order to complete the repair work.

Without the recreational pool, boating, fishing and other recreational uses of the river will be severely restricted, according to Anoka County Commissioner Dick Lang, who chairs the county's Parks &

Recreation Committee. "The boat launch will close and some fishing tournaments and other special events may be cancelled," he said. "In addition, the dam walkway may close periodically while repairs are being made."

Anoka County attempted to organize a consortium of government agencies to build a cofferdam that would have allowed the reservoir to be kept at its normal higher summer level. However, the county was unable to secure commitments to share the \$400,000 estimated cost of the cofferdam.

"Unfortunately, it appears we have run out of options," Lang said. "Hopefully the weather will cooperate so repairs can be completed this year."

The cost to repair the dam is expected to top \$500,000. The Three Rivers Park District is responsible for the maintenance and management of the dam.

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