

ANOKA COUNTY NEWS

Volume 2-2021

HOW WE
Serve you



Serving the Public

Residents of Anoka County are probably familiar with some of the services the county offers — during the wintertime they see plows clearing county roads, maybe they visit county parks near their homes throughout the year, and they've likely stopped by one of the county's license centers to renew a driver's license.

Anoka County certainly has some very visible services that are utilized by many residents, but the county also aids residents in a variety of ways with important programs and services that are perhaps a little less noticeable. Did you know Wargo Nature Center offers homeschool programs for kindergarten through 12th grade children? Some residents might not be aware that county public health nurses can provide families with education and support for healthy pregnancies and babies through the Family Home Visiting Program. Perhaps you just moved into a home with a well — did you know the county has a well water testing program to help you protect your drinking water?

Anoka County has more than 40 departments, and employees within many of these departments dedicate their time to overseeing, administering, and even creating programs that serve county residents. The following pages will detail several of these programs and services.

For more information on Anoka County offerings, visit the Anoka County website: anokacounty.us.

Report a Pothole, Other Road Hazards to Highway Department

Say a motorist is driving on one of the more than 400 miles of county-owned roadway in Anoka County, and that driver experiences a somewhat common occurrence: they hit a pothole with their vehicle.

That driver might think, "That could have really damaged my car. I should report that to somebody."

The good news is that there is a way to report potholes, and other highway hazards, directly to the Anoka County Highway Department.

By visiting anokacounty.us/362/Report-a-Concern-or-Request-a-Service, Anoka County drivers can report the location of potholes, dead animals, damaged or missing traffic signs, damaged mailboxes, malfunctioning or damaged traffic signals, or other issues along a thoroughfare.

All a person must do is click on one of the three green tabs on the page, select what they're reporting, provide a location, and supply their contact information. Someone from the Anoka County Highway Department will then work to address the concern and possibly contact the person who reported the issue if more information is needed.

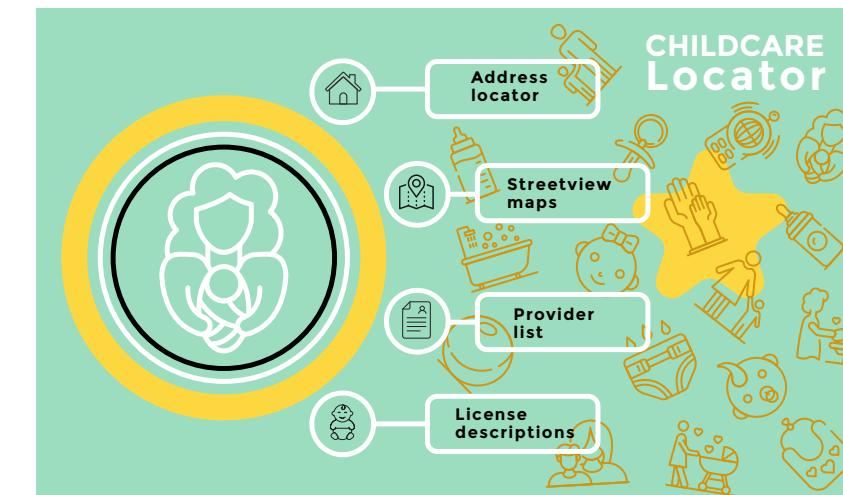
This page also has useful information what to do if a mailbox or garbage can is damaged by a county snowplow, how to remove road striping paint from a vehicle, and it notes that residents should call the Highway Department at 763-324-3100 during normal business hours to report illicit discharges (any discharge that enters the municipal storm sewer system that is not entirely composed of stormwater).

Residents can also call the Highway Department to report signal outages and sign knockdowns during business hours. Outside of business hours, they should call 763-427-1212.

"If there are potholes or other problems along county roadways, our Highway Department wants to know about them," said Scott Schulte, chair, Anoka County Board of Commissioners. "We want to ensure travel along Anoka County roadways is as smooth as possible, and when drivers report concerns to us, it helps our Highway Department quickly address those issues."

Child Care Locator Helps Residents Find Caregivers

Parents with young children know all too well how difficult it can be to find quality, reliable childcare, especially near their homes or places of employment.



Anoka County has a resource that can help with this search. The Licensed Child Care Provider Search Tool, accessible by visiting gis.anokacounty.mn.gov/childcare, has several useful features, including an address locator; a list of child care providers; street view maps; a function to find nearby providers; a search function that allows people to search by a child care provider's name; and descriptions of license types.

The information posted on the site is updated monthly, which means a provider's license status may have changed since the last update. Before selecting a provider, users of this site should confirm a provider's license status with Anoka County Child Care Licensing at: childcarelicensing.co.anoka.mn.us.

"Searching for affordable, dependable childcare providers can certainly be a time-consuming experience, but that search can be made easier with the Licensed Child Care Provider Search Tool," said District 3 Anoka County Commissioner Robyn West. "This is a resource that's easy to use, and it offers several features for connecting parents with childcare providers."

Well Water Testing Helps Residents Protect Drinking Water

Perhaps you just moved into a house with a well, or maybe you've been living in a home for a while that derives its drinking water from a well, and you've always wondered about what might be in that drinking supply other than H2O.

Anoka County offers a well water testing program that helps inform residents about the possible substances in their water. To take part in the program, residents must do the following:

- Sample kits (sample collection bottle and blue sampling sheet with instructions) must be obtained ahead of time. No kits will be available on the drop-off days.
- A drop-off appointment at Anoka County Environmental Services must be made by calling ahead and paying in advance with a credit card over the phone. Call (763) 324-4260 to make an appointment and pay.
- The blue sampling sheet must be completed ahead of time.
- Specific water-related questions can be directed ahead of time to Abby Shea at (763) 324-4207.
- Only samples for sanitary analysis (bacteria and nitrates) will be accepted at this time. If other testing is desired, it can be performed at a later date or a private laboratory can be recommended.



RENTHELP.MN

mn MINNESOTA

EMERGENCY BROADBAND BENEFIT

The Emergency Broadband Benefit is a temporary FCC program to help households struggling to afford internet service during the pandemic.

- Up to \$50/month discount for broadband service.
- A one-time discount of up to \$100 for a laptop, desktop, or tablet purchased through a participating provider.

See if you qualify and apply.

833-511-0311

fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit

If you have experienced hardship due to COVID-19 and need assistance to pay for your rent or utility bills, you may be eligible for RentHelpMN.

Visit renthelpmn.org

Anoka County | City of Blaine | City of Ham Lake | City of Ramsey | City of St. Francis | City of Woodbury | City of Zimmerman | County of Anoka | City of Blaine | City of Ham Lake | City of Ramsey | City of St. Francis | City of Woodbury | City of Zimmerman | County of Anoka

Well Water Testing Kit PICKUP LOCATIONS



- Andover
- Blaine
- Centerville
- East Bethel
- Ham Lake
- Oak Grove
- Ramsey
- St. Francis
- Blaine Public Works
- Linwood Township

Water testing kits are available at the Andover, Blaine, Centerville, East Bethel, Ham Lake, Oak Grove, Ramsey and St. Francis city halls. They are also available at the Blaine Public Works building and the Linwood Township Hall. Call these locations to check on the availability of tests and manner of pickup.

For updates on this program, visit anokacounty.us/2009/Well-Water-Testing.

"High levels of bacteria and nitrates in water can be dangerous to people drinking that water," said District 2 Anoka County Commissioner Julie Braastad. "Anoka County's well water testing program helps residents determine the safety of their drinking water, which is essential in maintaining good health."



EMERGENCY BROADBAND BENEFIT

FCC

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fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit

Home Records Maintained on County Website



Anoka County provides access to all property records on its website, prtpublicweb.co.anoka.mn.us, including ownership and assessed value.

So when it's time to buy, visiting this site can be helpful to learn information about homes on the market. Anoka County keeps records on more than 140,000 properties and it processes about 75,000 real estate documents annually. Features available on this site include:

- A property overview, which includes information such as the address, lot size, tax district, commissioner district, year built and the parcel status.
- An aerial view of properties, with images taken from multiple angles.
- Property taxes due for the current tax year.
- Property transfer history.

- Property values over the last several years.
- Duplicate property tax statement.

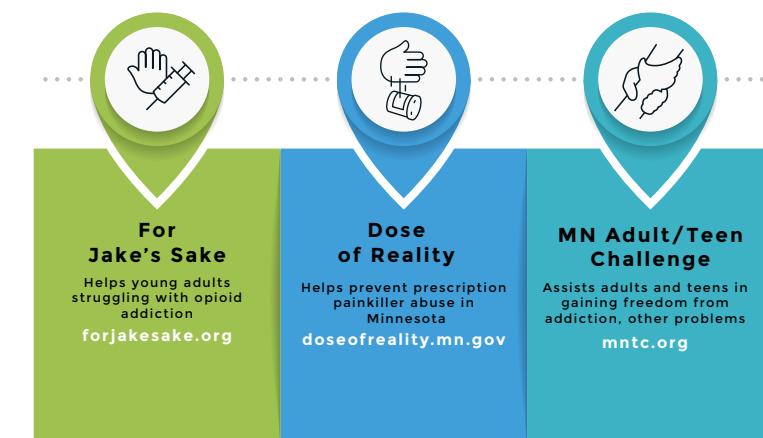
Information on residential homes and other properties is also available by calling the Anoka County Property Records and Taxation department at 763-323-5400.

Note: To use the "reports" function on the right side of the site, a browser's popup blocker needs to be turned off or configured to allow popups from the Anoka County website.

"Those who want to learn more about homes for sale in Anoka County or perhaps do a little research on their home value or taxes can use this feature on the Property Records and Taxation website," said District 4 Anoka County Commissioner Mandy Meisner. "It's a great way to get a comprehensive overview of a home or property before taking the time to visit it in person."

Resources Available to People Battling Drug, Alcohol Addiction

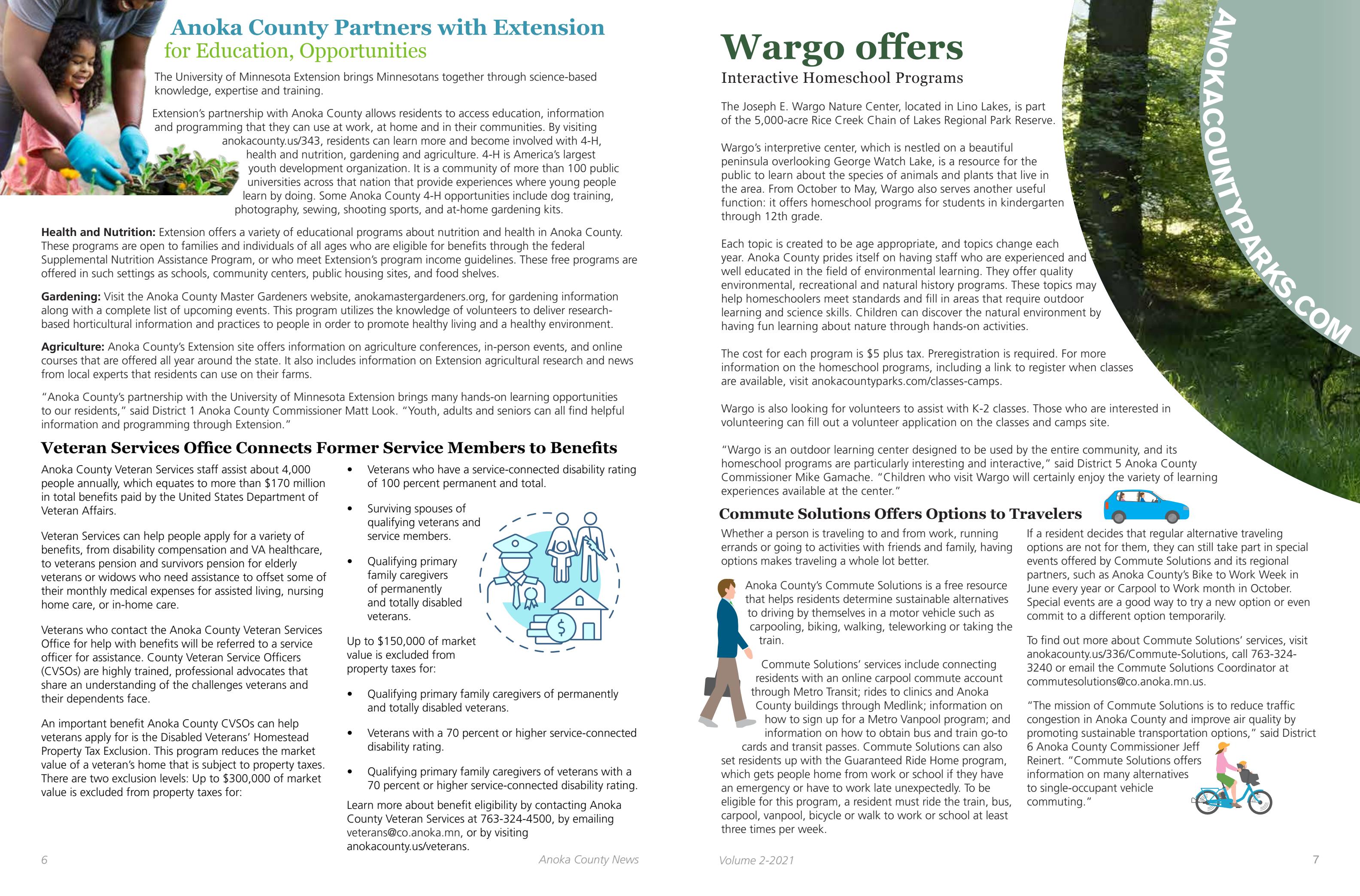
ORGANIZATIONS THAT OFFER HELP For Recovery



about chemical health services answered by calling this number.

The Chemical Health Collaborative, anokacounty.us/2502/Chemical-Health-Collaborative, Anoka County's partner hub, contains resources and a list of programs and initiatives in Anoka County, such as drug and alcohol awareness series events, links to organizations that focus on educating the public and offering help, and even information on tobacco reduction strategies.

Properly disposing of prescription medications can lessen the impact of drugs in the community. Both the Chemical Health Resources and Chemical Health Collaborative pages have a link on the righthand side to prescription drug takeback sites around Anoka County. This page includes a list with phone numbers and hours during which prescription drug takeback is available. There is no charge for this service, and people dropping off prescription drugs can remain anonymous. There's also information available on this page on how to order Stericycle envelopes, which are U.S. postage paid and pre-addressed, to mail prescriptions to takeback sites.



Anoka County Partners with Extension for Education, Opportunities

The University of Minnesota Extension brings Minnesotans together through science-based knowledge, expertise and training.

Extension's partnership with Anoka County allows residents to access education, information and programming that they can use at work, at home and in their communities. By visiting anokacounty.us/343, residents can learn more and become involved with 4-H, health and nutrition, gardening and agriculture. 4-H is America's largest youth development organization. It is a community of more than 100 public universities across that nation that provide experiences where young people learn by doing. Some Anoka County 4-H opportunities include dog training, photography, sewing, shooting sports, and at-home gardening kits.

Health and Nutrition: Extension offers a variety of educational programs about nutrition and health in Anoka County. These programs are open to families and individuals of all ages who are eligible for benefits through the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or who meet Extension's program income guidelines. These free programs are offered in such settings as schools, community centers, public housing sites, and food shelves.

Gardening: Visit the Anoka County Master Gardeners website, anokamastergardeners.org, for gardening information along with a complete list of upcoming events. This program utilizes the knowledge of volunteers to deliver research-based horticultural information and practices to people in order to promote healthy living and a healthy environment.

Agriculture: Anoka County's Extension site offers information on agriculture conferences, in-person events, and online courses that are offered all year around the state. It also includes information on Extension agricultural research and news from local experts that residents can use on their farms.

"Anoka County's partnership with the University of Minnesota Extension brings many hands-on learning opportunities to our residents," said District 1 Anoka County Commissioner Matt Look. "Youth, adults and seniors can all find helpful information and programming through Extension."

Veteran Services Office Connects Former Service Members to Benefits

Anoka County Veteran Services staff assist about 4,000 people annually, which equates to more than \$170 million in total benefits paid by the United States Department of Veteran Affairs.

Veteran Services can help people apply for a variety of benefits, from disability compensation and VA healthcare, to veterans pension and survivors pension for elderly veterans or widows who need assistance to offset some of their monthly medical expenses for assisted living, nursing home care, or in-home care.

Veterans who contact the Anoka County Veteran Services Office for help with benefits will be referred to a service officer for assistance. County Veteran Service Officers (CVSOS) are highly trained, professional advocates that share an understanding of the challenges veterans and their dependents face.

An important benefit Anoka County CVSOS can help veterans apply for is the Disabled Veterans' Homestead Property Tax Exclusion. This program reduces the market value of a veteran's home that is subject to property taxes. There are two exclusion levels: Up to \$300,000 of market value is excluded from property taxes for:

- Veterans who have a service-connected disability rating of 100 percent permanent and total.
- Surviving spouses of qualifying veterans and service members.
- Qualifying primary family caregivers of permanently and totally disabled veterans.



Up to \$150,000 of market value is excluded from property taxes for:

- Qualifying primary family caregivers of permanently and totally disabled veterans.
- Veterans with a 70 percent or higher service-connected disability rating.
- Qualifying primary family caregivers of veterans with a 70 percent or higher service-connected disability rating.

Learn more about benefit eligibility by contacting Anoka County Veteran Services at 763-324-4500, by emailing veterans@co.anoka.mn, or by visiting anokacounty.us/veterans.

Wargo offers

Interactive Homeschool Programs

The Joseph E. Wargo Nature Center, located in Lino Lakes, is part of the 5,000-acre Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Regional Park Reserve.

Wargo's interpretive center, which is nestled on a beautiful peninsula overlooking George Watch Lake, is a resource for the public to learn about the species of animals and plants that live in the area. From October to May, Wargo also serves another useful function: it offers homeschool programs for students in kindergarten through 12th grade.

Each topic is created to be age appropriate, and topics change each year. Anoka County prides itself on having staff who are experienced and well educated in the field of environmental learning. They offer quality environmental, recreational and natural history programs. These topics may help homeschoolers meet standards and fill in areas that require outdoor learning and science skills. Children can discover the natural environment by having fun learning about nature through hands-on activities.

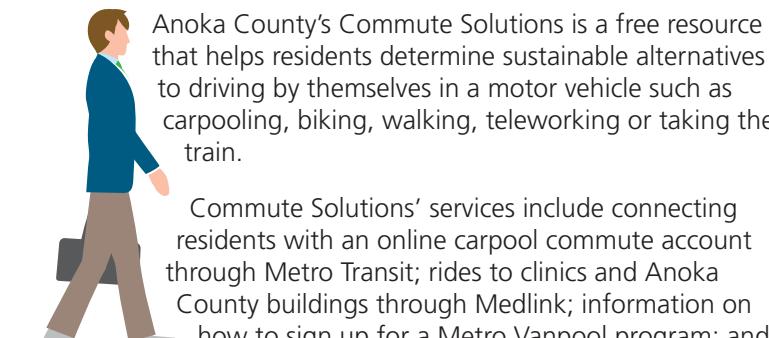
The cost for each program is \$5 plus tax. Preregistration is required. For more information on the homeschool programs, including a link to register when classes are available, visit anokacountyparks.com/classes-camps.

Wargo is also looking for volunteers to assist with K-2 classes. Those who are interested in volunteering can fill out a volunteer application on the classes and camps site.

"Wargo is an outdoor learning center designed to be used by the entire community, and its homeschool programs are particularly interesting and interactive," said District 5 Anoka County Commissioner Mike Gamache. "Children who visit Wargo will certainly enjoy the variety of learning experiences available at the center."

Commute Solutions Offers Options to Travelers

Whether a person is traveling to and from work, running errands or going to activities with friends and family, having options makes traveling a whole lot better.



Commute Solutions' services include connecting residents with an online carpool commute account through Metro Transit; rides to clinics and Anoka County buildings through Medlink; information on how to sign up for a Metro Vanpool program; and information on how to obtain bus and train go-to cards and transit passes. Commute Solutions can also set residents up with the Guaranteed Ride Home program, which gets people home from work or school if they have an emergency or have to work late unexpectedly. To be eligible for this program, a resident must ride the train, bus, carpool, vanpool, bicycle or walk to work or school at least three times per week.

If a resident decides that regular alternative traveling options are not for them, they can still take part in special events offered by Commute Solutions and its regional partners, such as Anoka County's Bike to Work Week in June every year or Carpool to Work month in October. Special events are a good way to try a new option or even commit to a different option temporarily.

To find out more about Commute Solutions' services, visit anokacounty.us/336/Commute-Solutions, call 763-324-3240 or email the Commute Solutions Coordinator at commutesolutions@co.anoka.mn.

"The mission of Commute Solutions is to reduce traffic congestion in Anoka County and improve air quality by promoting sustainable transportation options," said District 6 Anoka County Commissioner Jeff Reinert. "Commute Solutions offers information on many alternatives to single-occupant vehicle commuting."



(MEET THE PARKS)

RESERVA (SAVE THE DATE)

DOMINGO 22 DE AGOSTO (SUNDAY, AUGUST 22)

2-5 PM • LOCKE PARK • 840 71st Ave NE, Fridley, MN 55432

TODOS SON BIENVENIDOS (EVERYONE IS WELCOME)



COMIDA
FOOD



ACTIVIDADES AL AIRE LIBRE
OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES



MÚSICA
MUSIC

Los Parques del condado de Anoka realizan el primer evento, Ven a conocer el parque el Domingo 22 de Agosto. Este evento gratuito está organizado por los parques del Condado de Anoka, Ciudad de Fridley, Outdoor Latino Minnesota, y la Comunidad Latina. El evento espera comprometerse con la comunidad Latina y animarlos a visitar los parques. Todos son bienvenidos a participar en las actividades del evento (recreación al aire libre y educación ambiental) música, y Puestos de comida. ¡Si aún no has venido, ven y conoce los parques!

PREGUNTAS SOBRE EL EVENTO
(QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EVENT)
info@outdoorlatinominnesota.com

**ANOKA
COUNTY
PARKS**

@anokacountyparks



@CityofFridley



@outdoorlatinominnesota
Anoka County News



PADDLE ON

Introduction to Kayaking

4 – 6 p.m. July 27

Rice Creek Chain of Lakes, Centerville Beach

4 – 6 p.m. Aug. 2

Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park

6 – 8 p.m. Aug. 31

Rum River South

Stand Up Paddle Boarding

3 – 4:30 p.m. July 21

2 – 3:30 p.m. Aug. 30

Rice Creek Chain of Lakes, Centerville Beach

Womens Summer Workshop

1 - 3 p.m. Aug. 18

(Canoeing)
Wargo Nature Center

Canoe and Kayak Rental at Wargo

Rental for all boats is

\$20 for 2 hours or \$30 per day

Wargo Nature Center

(Must reserve boat rental online)

ANOKACOUNTYPARKS.COM



CALL WARGO NATURE CENTER FOR MORE INFORMATION 763-324-3350


NATURE PRESCHOOL

Forest Kids Club

Wednesdays, 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Wargo Nature Center

Ages 4-5 Join us for a season, or register for the school year! We will spend Wednesday mornings adventuring and learning out on Wargo's wooded peninsula, exploring different nature topics and seasonal changes along the way. In addition to guided activities, each week will include a free-explore time where participants will be encouraged to follow their senses and create their own adventure with new friends! This is a great hands-on experience for young children.

Pre-registration is required. \$110/session +tax

Fall Session: Sept. 8 - Nov. 14

Winter Session: Jan. 5 - March 16

Spring Session: March 30 - June 8



CHOMONIX GOLF COURSE

MONIKER OPEN
GOLF TOURNAMENT

FEATURING THE COMMON MAN, DAN COLE, FROM KFAN

FRIDAY,
AUGUST

13

\$59 INCLUDES LUNCH, 18 HOLES, CART, DRIVING RANGE, AND CONTEST HOLE PRIZES

Volume 2-2021

SIGN UP AT CHOMONIX.GOLF@CO.ANOKA.MN.US // 763-324-3434

All Anoka County Libraries Are Now Open Six Days a Week

NEW HOURS

Monday: 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Tuesday: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Wednesday: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Thursday: 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Friday: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Saturday: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

*Sunday: Noon to 4 p.m.

*Northtown only



Pick up holds even when the library is closed at any locker location

Locker hours (daily): 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Northtown, Johnsburg, Mississippi, St. Francis (reopens Aug. 2021)

More convenient computer and printing access

- Reserve a computer up to 24 hours in advance to ensure a spot is available when you need it.
- Send a print job to the library up to 7 days in advance.
- Download the Smart Alec app and send jobs from your device.
- Pay with a credit card directly at the printer (no minimum charge amount).



St. Francis Library is Reopening in August

The library will offer new hours, including Saturdays year round! The project will refresh the interior to create a more welcoming and comfortable space for patrons. While the footprint of the library will not change, the new layout will improve traffic flow and create improved workspaces for staff to better serve the community. During the renovation, there is no access to the lockers or the return bin.

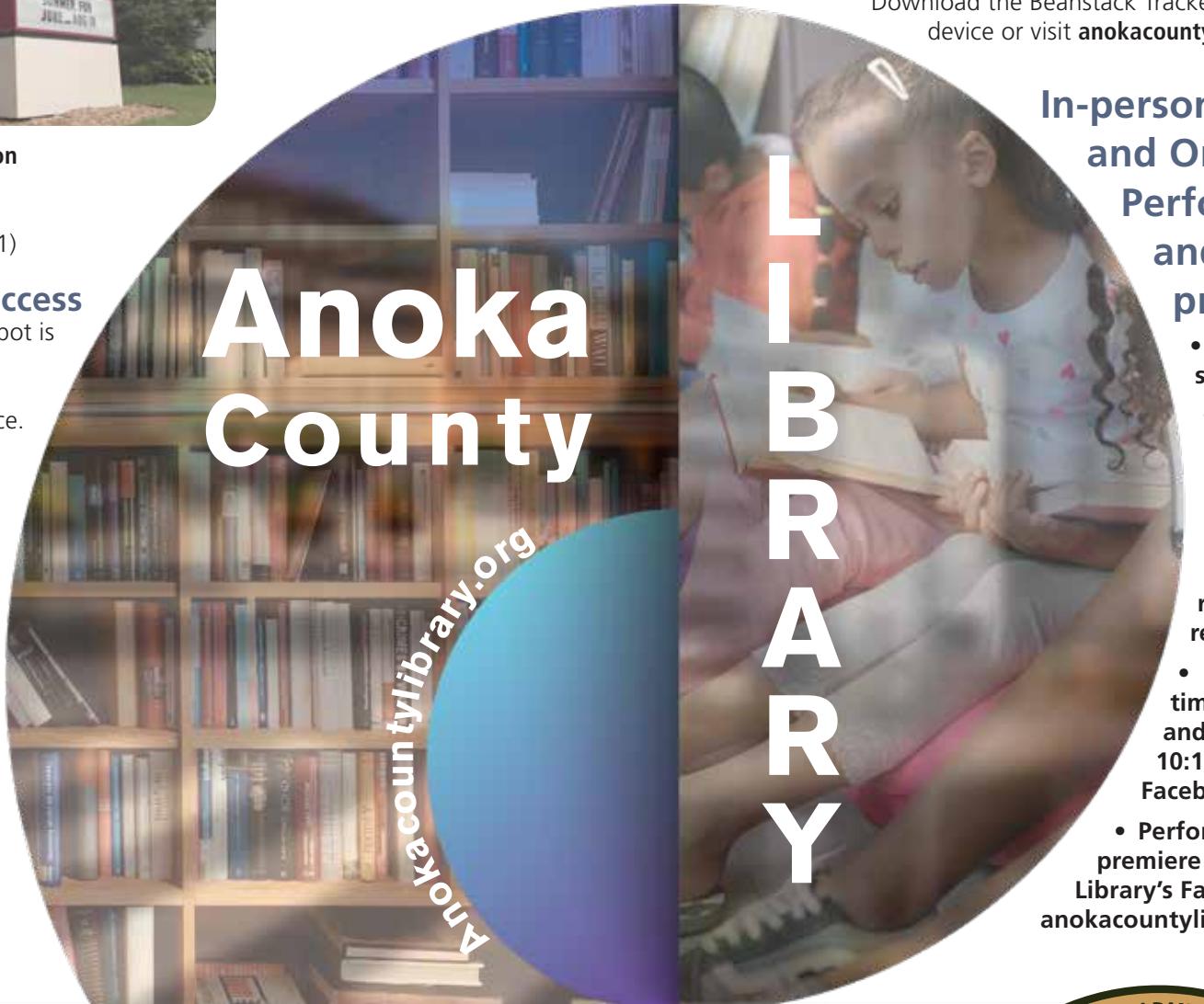
New Culinary Database

A to Z Foods America — the world's largest database of American food and culture features:

- 6,500 recipes from 50 states, six regions, 33 ethnic groups.
- Articles and videos on national cuisine, food preparation, food hacks, cooking conversions, much more.

The eLibrary is open 24/7

The Library's ebooks, audiobooks, and magazines have moved to the **Libby App**. As part of the MELSA: Twin Cities Metro eLibrary, patrons have access to more titles systemwide across the metro area. (Kindle users download the OverDrive app).



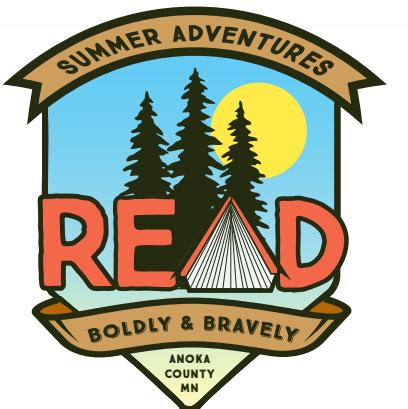
Summer Adventures Runs Through Aug. 15

All ages can make the most of summer through reading and doing activities. Complete challenges, track reading minutes, and write reviews to earn digital badges.

Download the Beanstack Tracker app on your device or visit anokacounty.beanstack.org.

In-person and Online Performers and programs

- Attend outdoor story walks.
- Pickup activities to go.
- Watch virtual programs and performers (some programs require registration).
- Family story times Mondays and Wednesdays 10:15 a.m. on Facebook.
- Performers will premiere on the Library's Facebook page @ [anokacountylibrary](https://www.facebook.com/anokacountylibrary).



THE POWER OF YOUR LIBRARY CARD
HERE TO SERVE YOU

Programs and Classes
for all ages

400,000 items

available for checkout

- Books, eBooks, audiobooks, magazines, and newspapers
- DVDs, Binge Box sets, and streaming movies
- Music
- Park Packs - outdoor exploration kits
- Mobile hotspots
- Video games
- Board games
- Specialty bakeware
- Discover Kits - hobby in a box
- Book club in a bag
- Memory Maker kits
- Electricity power meters
- Car repair manuals and schematics



Services

- Study and community meeting rooms
- One-on-one technology help
- Legal aid kiosks
- Local artist exhibits
- Homework help and tutoring online
- College application and FAFSA help
- Career exploration and job skills
- Books by mail for homebound patrons
- Language learning
- Genealogy research

Stay Safe this Summer with the Anoka County Sheriff's Office

Summer is finally here and with life heading back towards normal, the urge to explore the area, as well as travel to other parts of the country, is stronger than ever.

These adventures are exciting, and the Anoka County Sheriff's Office wants to help keep your family, self, and property safe this summer.

Get ready for a summer road trip by making sure your child's car seat is properly installed in your vehicle. The Anoka County Sheriff's Office offers this complimentary service to residents who live in the areas deputies patrol. Give the Sheriff's Office a call at 763-324-5179 to set up an appointment.

Residents who live in the areas patrolled by the Anoka County Sheriff's Office can request a free "vacation check" service where a deputy will periodically stop by and observe the property for any suspicious activity. To sign up for this service, visit anokacounty.us/2399/Vacation-Check to submit a request online.

Finally, make sure to mark Tuesday, Aug. 3 on the calendar for Night to Unite! This event is a fun way to meet neighbors, share crime prevention and safety information, and interact with local law enforcement agencies. Residents in the cities/townships patrolled by the Anoka County Sheriff's Office (Andover, Bethel, Columbus, East Bethel, Ham Lake, Linwood, Nowthen, and Oak Grove) can register their party with the Anoka County Sheriff's Office by going to anokacounty.us/crimewatch or calling 763-324-5179. Residents in other cities should contact their police departments for more information.

While enjoying time with family and friends this summer, remember if you notice anything suspicious or concerning, please do not hesitate to call 911. Have a wonderful summer — the Sheriff's Office can't wait to see community members at local events and parades!

Job Training Center Offers Free Resources, Referrals

Finding a new career path or getting started in the workforce for the first time can be challenging prospects, but by utilizing Anoka County Job Training Center (JTC) resources, career seekers can find employment that's right for them.

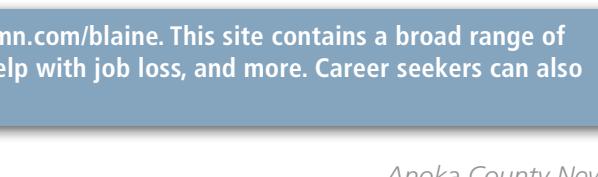
A great resource for career seekers is the one-page interest form available on the JTC's website, anokacounty.us/jtcapply. Those who fill out this form will be contacted by a JTC staff member within one business day and be provided with resources and referrals at no cost. If a career seeker is interested in applying for a program to get help from a vocational counselor, the staff member will connect them to the JTC intake team.

The Anoka County JTC has programs available that can help youth as young as 14 find their first job, help laid off workers get back to work, help seniors find part-time employment — and everything in between. Services available vary depending on program eligibility, but may include:

- Individualized job search assistance from a career counselor.
- Assessments to help decide on a career path.
- Assistance with the cost of training, including on-the-job training.
- Employment for youth, adults and seniors to gain work experience and build their resumes.

Additional career resources can be accessed by visiting careerforcemn.com/blaine. This site contains a broad range of information and services, including career guidance, job postings, help with job loss, and more. Career seekers can also be connected to CareerForce resources by calling 763-324-2300.

Proud partner of **CareerForce**
careerforcemn.com



Anoka County Participates in First Time Homebuyers Program

Buying a home for the first time can be an expensive endeavor, especially when a down payment and closing costs are figured into the equation.

In Anoka County, up to \$17,000 per qualified applicant can be accessed through the state's MN Housing Start Up Program to help defray some of those costs.

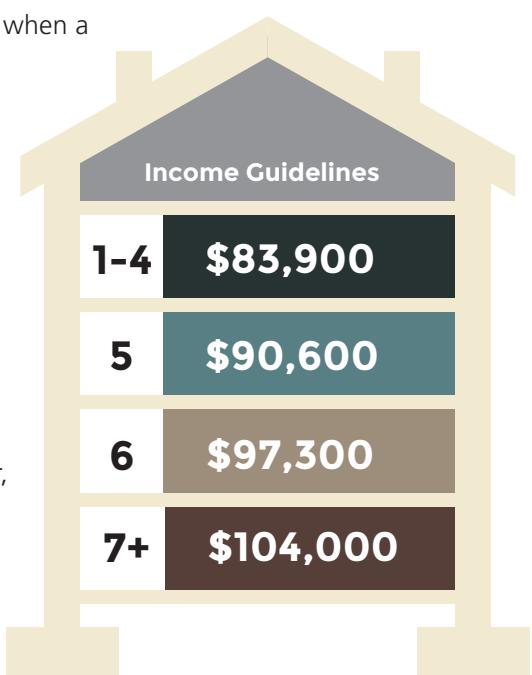
Income guidelines apply and the current maximum home price is \$352,200. Interest rates, income limits and home purchase prices are subject to change during the program year.

Per MN Housing, a first-time homebuyer is someone who has never purchased a home or hasn't purchased one within the last three years. Potential buyers need to use a lender who is approved by Minnesota Housing. Their lender list, available at mnhousing.gov/sites/np/finlender, includes many well-known banks and mortgage companies.

Results of the 2020 Start Up Program Year

- A total of \$77,660,950 in mortgage funding was spent to purchase property in Anoka County.
- A total of 349 loans were issued in 18 of the county's 21 municipalities. This is the highest number of loans committed in the last 20 years of Anoka County's participation in this program.

For more "Start Up" information and guidelines visit: anokacounty.us/161/Home-Buyers.



WHEN BUSINESSES RECYCLE, WE ALL WIN!

Anoka County offers resources to encourage business recycling.

Grants
The county provides up to \$10,000 for equipment and supplies to help a business recycle more.

FREE Technical Assistance
An expert will visit a site to help find ways to reduce waste, design a new or improved recycling program, or get started with organics recycling.

FREE Labels
Labels are an essential part of an effective recycling program. The county offers a variety of label types to fit a business's need.

Call 763-324-3481 or visit AnokaBizRecycle.com for more details

AnokaBizRecycle

Appointments, Drop Boxes to Continue at License Centers

The COVID-19 pandemic required all Anoka County Departments to change how they did business, and much of that change was temporary until the effects of the virus waned and statewide restrictions were lifted.

Some changes, however, resulted in business being conducted in a more efficient manner and will be in practice at the county into the future. At the Anoka County License and Passport Centers, one of those changes is the continued ability for customers to make appointments for transactions that require face-to-face interaction.

To ensure their business is conducted in a prompt manner, customers can sign up for appointments by visiting anokacounty.us/3900/Schedule-Appointment. Walk-in customers will be served by available staff who are not working on appointments.

Another efficiency-enhancing change that will be kept are the secure License Center drop boxes, located at five locations around Anoka County. For more information about the drop boxes, including locations, visit anokacounty.us/3897/Drop-Box-Services. Drop boxes are primarily designed for customers to submit their license tab renewals but can be used for other business, such as DNR registration renewals, duplicate stickers and plates, adding or removing vehicle liens, or duplicate plates. For tab renewals, License Center Staff process the drop box documentation the same day and mail the tabs directly to the address on record, or customers can select hold for pickup. If all information required to process the transaction and proper payment is provided, pickup will be available for tabs within one to two business days. If the tabs are not picked up within four business days, they will be mailed to the address on file.

Tabs
Plates
DNR

A circular graphic showing a dark blue drop box with the text "Anoka County DROP BOX" and a small graphic of a car. To the left of the drop box, the words "Tabs", "Plates", and "DNR" are stacked vertically.

The COVID-19 pandemic required all Anoka County Departments to change how they did business, and much of that change was temporary until the effects of the virus waned and statewide restrictions were lifted.

Foster Families Provide Needed Care for Children

Anoka County plays an integral role in licensing and connecting residents interested in becoming foster parents with children who need stable homes.

Foster parents are asked to take someone else's child into their home, care for them and treat them as a family member. Foster care is more than having a child stay in your home temporarily — it is an opportunity to possibly work with a child's biological parents to help build a better future for them. Children often continue to visit their family while living in foster care until they can be reunited with their family or other relatives. Anoka County often licenses family members or people who have a significant relationship with a child to become their foster parent.

In addition to providing food, housing and clothing, foster parents also provide emotional support, guidance, and above all, hope.

Foster parents receive reimbursement to support the child in their home. The placing social worker and foster parent work together to complete an assessment of the child's needs.

One of the most common questions potential foster

parents have is "How do we learn to be foster parents?" Anoka County provides all the needed training to help with this endeavor. Several trainings are even available on Anoka County's website, including initial training on prudent parenting standards, children's mental health and car seat training resources.

To take the next step, complete Anoka County's online orientation. Those who have finished this preparation will have the option to request an in-home orientation with an Anoka County Social Worker. Anoka County is in particular need of families who have room for sibling groups and families who are able to help teenagers transition to adulthood.

For more information, visit anokacounty.us/3212/Become-a-Foster-Parent or call 763-324-1230.



Victim/Witness Services Met Challenges of Pandemic

The Victim/Witness Services unit of the Anoka County Attorney's Office met the challenges of 2020 with agility and resourcefulness, ensuring clients received the same level of attention and guidance as ever.

The Victim/Witness staff remained mindful of the stress and mental health issues of victims and their own colleagues. They focused on connection work and

Advantages of Remote Technology

Per Minnesota law, crime victims have the right to be notified of court events, to participate in the prosecution process, and to protection from harm. The Victim/Witness specialists in the Attorney's Office make certain those rights are upheld while guiding victims through the criminal justice system.

This is no easy task under the best of circumstances, as the criminal justice process is inherently fraught with trauma and stress. But the Victim/Witness Services staff rose to the occasion and didn't let the pandemic or lockdowns get the upper hand.

Under the direction of Division Manager Emily Douglas, the Victim/Witness team was an early adopter of new technologies. While working remotely, staff not only worked with prosecutors and courts to coordinate virtual witness testimony, they also helped victims navigate the remote hearing software.

As a result, the Attorney's Office has seen a significant increase in victim participation. For many, attending a hearing remotely is more comfortable because they don't have to be in the same room as the offender. For others, like those who live out of state or who have accessibility challenges, they've been able to attend remote hearings when, under pre-pandemic circumstances, they may not have otherwise been able to participate. Likewise for people who have kids at home because of school closures.

Anoka County Hires New Economic Development Director

The Anoka County Board of Commissioners at its March 23 meeting approved the hiring of Samantha Markman as the county's new economic development director.



Markman comes to Anoka County with a background in economic development and planning. She holds a bachelor's degree in urban studies from the University of Minnesota, and she was most recently the economic development coordinator for the City of Faribault.

Scott Schulte, chair, Anoka County Board of
Volume 2-2021



teambuilding exercises to bolster support and morale, despite the physical distance while working remotely.

They also took advantage of the slowdown at court to attend more trainings. The nine-person staff participated in 319 separate webinars, podcasts, and documentary viewings. Most of the trainings focused on underserved populations. Topics included racial justice, immigration, homelessness, trafficking, elder abuse, gender bias, victimization of indigenous people, impact of crime on historically marginalized communities, and LGBTQ advocacy.

As courts slowly reopen and social restrictions are lifted, it's unclear whether the remote accessibility options implemented in 2020 will remain, posing concerns for those victims who may lose their ability to participate. The insightful Victim/Witness Services team will, no doubt, keep advocating for expanded access and inclusive practices.

Anoka County Hires New Economic Development Director

Commissioners, said Markman is poised to continue the important work that has made Anoka County an economic leader in the region.

"Anoka County and our regional partners identified the need to have a dedicated employee in an economic development role just over three years ago, and since that time we've realized just how important this position is when it comes to helping businesses and the overall local economy, especially during this difficult time when so many people have been impacted by the pandemic," he said. "My fellow board members and I are confident Ms. Markman will fit seamlessly into this position, she will be an important contact for established and new businesses, and will help guide the growth of our regional economy."

Anoka County
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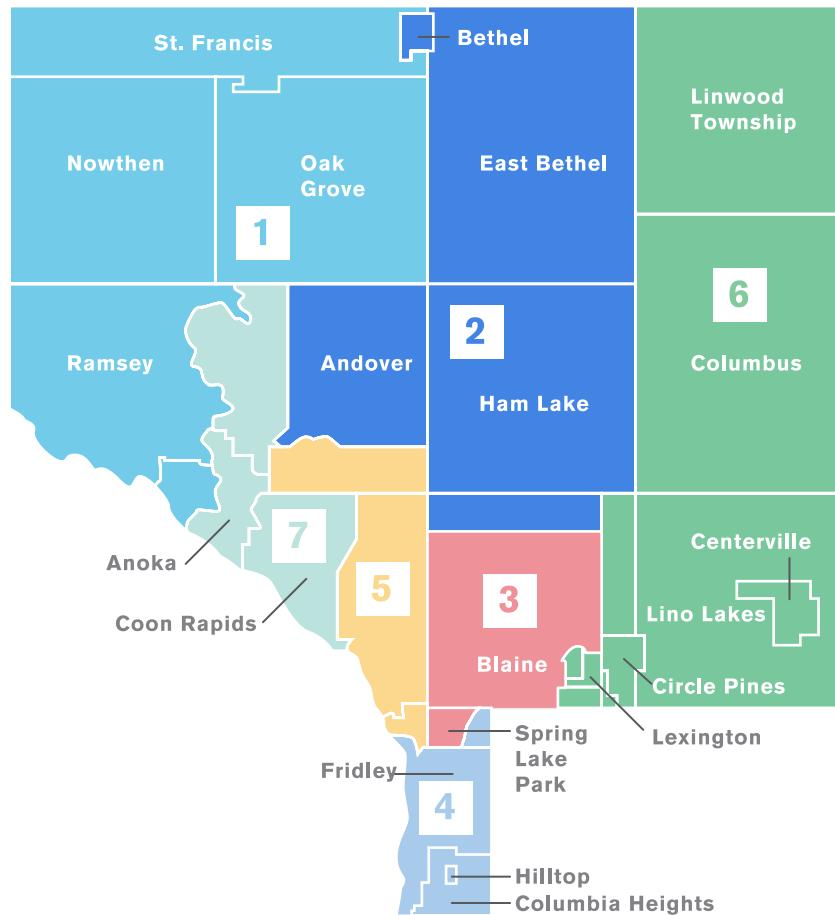


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ANOKA COUNTY LEADERSHIP

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ANOKA COUNTY NEWS

Volume 2-2021

County board meetings are generally held the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at 9:30 a.m. in Room 705 of the Anoka County Government Center in Anoka. Watch board meetings live at anokacounty.us.
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