



Volume 3, Issue 2
Spring 2016

Wisconsin Central Time NEWS

A seasonal Marathon County eNewsletter

Learn what County leaders, officials, and staff are doing to make Marathon County a great place to **work, play, and live.**

www.co.marathon.wi.us

Sunshine Week Panel Discussion: Open Government & Open Records

Tuesday, March 15 • 6:00–8:00 PM
Marathon County Courthouse

Join us for an insightful panel discussion on government transparency and applications of open records laws.

The Marathon County Public Library is hosting a discussion at the Marathon County Courthouse in recognition of [Sunshine Week](#)—a national initiative to promote a dialogue about the importance of open government and freedom of information. (Panelists will also field audience questions.)



Panelists include:

- **Brad Karger**, Marathon County Administrator
- **Shereen Siewert**, news editor / reporter with *City Pages* Wausau
- **Nora G. Hertel**, reporter / public issues investigator with USA TODAY NETWORK–Wisconsin
- **Dean Dietrich**, attorney with Ruder Ware, Wausau

Please note this discussion will be held in the Assembly Room of the Marathon County Courthouse, 500 Forest Street in Wausau, and also will be broadcast live on the County's public access television channel. The event is free and no registration required. Call 715.261.7230 for more information.

I n this issue...

Open Government & Open Records Panel Discussion	1
The Future of North Central Health Care	2
Getting to Know Brian Greffe: New CWA Airport Director	3
Election Date Reminders	3
What's Next with County Addressing?	3
The Children's Museum of Marathon County: Now Is Our Time	4
40 Years of Hmong Americans in Marathon Cty: DREAM BIG: 2056	5
Village of Weston Celebrates Its 20th Anniversary	6
11 Major Trends Affecting Marathon County	7
How to Access E-books, Digital Audiobooks, & More @ MCPL	8
Baby Business: Investing in Early Childhood Education	9
The "Trojan Horsemen" Are Coming May 21	10
County Board Meeting Info / Newsletter Subscription Info	10

Editorial Board

Brad Karger
Andrew Johnson
Ken Day
Chad Dally

We'd like to hear from you...

Please send your comments, questions, or article ideas to administrator@co.marathon.wi.us



The Future of North Central Health Care

By **Brad Karger**
County Administrator



At their January meeting, the Marathon County Board put a process in place directed toward withdrawing from the 40+ year partnership with Lincoln and Langlade Counties that created North Central Health Care (NCHC). In place of the three-county partnership will be the "Marathon County Department of Human Services," a Marathon County Department, which seeks contracts with Lincoln and Langlade Counties to provide community programs.

Q How will Marathon County Human Services (MCHS) be different than what we have now with NCHC?

I'm not sure I know all the ways it will be different—but here are a few ways that immediately come to mind...

- The independent board that currently governs NCHC will no longer exist, and NCHC will no longer exist as an independent unit of government in Marathon County. There will continue to be a Human Services Board (46.23 WI Stats.), but its role will be more in line with making recommendations to the County Board and less in line with being the final decision-maker.
- The employees of Marathon County Human Services will be employees of Marathon County and will ultimately report to the Marathon County Administrator. To make this new structure work, many, if not most, of the current NCHC staff will need to be hired. While there can be no guarantees of continued employment, I have told NCHC employees who have contacted me, if:
 - A. You're good at your job; and
 - B. You treat people with respect; and
 - C. Once the Marathon County Board makes a final decision, you're supportive of the change and will work to make it successful...

You will have nothing to worry about.

As of now, this is as far as we have gotten in planning the employment process of onboarding some 800 new County employees.

- The programs and services currently offered by NCHC will mostly continue on as they are needed, valued, and required by State mandate. There may, however, be some rebalancing of the County's investment in the various human service programs to reflect new priorities. To this end, the County has engaged a consulting firm—Morningside, from Austin, Texas—to help the County Board determine its priorities. Once these are established, the goal is to realign resources to best achieve the outcomes our community leaders value most.

Q Why is such a radical change necessary?

The simple answer is that the Marathon County Board is not satisfied with the quality of services its residents have received from the Crisis Unit and the mental health and alcohol and drug treatment services provided to criminal offenders. Additionally, the Board believes that the independent NCHC Board has not been effective in its governance role. Maybe this will change—but as things stand right now, County Board members believe the best path to improving quality and accountability is by massively upsetting the status quo and creating new organizational structures.

Q What's the timeline for the proposed restructuring?

None of this is going to happen soon. The next check-in will be the September County Board meeting, where the Board will give the transition a final go-ahead, postpone a final decision to get more information, or backtrack on the decision. By contract, the earliest the community programs administered by NCHC could transfer to Marathon County Human Services is January 1, 2018. During the interim, I'm leading a study group that will continue to accumulate information to inform the Board's decision.

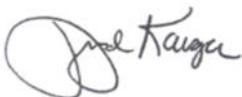
Q Who can I contact to learn more?

If you have an opinion on the future of NCHC, I'm confident that your County Board representative would be interested in discussing it with you. You can use email as the vehicle of communication, but I don't recommend it. For a real give-and-take conversation to take place, I recommend that you pick up the telephone and give the member who represents your district a call. If you don't know who represents your district or need contact information, see the County's website (www.co.marathon.wi.us) or call the County Clerk's office: 715.261.1500.

I'll provide an update after the September County Board meeting. I expect to see many turns in the road before this journey is over. ■

Got a question or comment about your County Government?

I'd be happy discuss it with you.



Brad Karger, County Administrator

CONTACT INFO

Phone: 715.261.1400

Email: administrator@co.marathon.wi.us

Mail: Brad Karger

Marathon County Courthouse
500 Forest St., Wausau, WI 54403

Getting to Know Brian Grefe

A few words from the County's newest Director at Central Wisconsin Airport



“I'm excited to be working and living in Central Wisconsin. My family and I are beginning to settle in here. My wife is a

(American, Delta, and United) serve the major hubs of Chicago, Detroit, and Minneapolis.

After an increase in airfare between 2010 and 2013, prices have slowly been coming down to a level more consistent with other airports in the area. Given the amount of airport users, both current and potential, I believe there is opportunity for even more air service into CWA.

On a related note, the Joint Airport Board will be starting an airport master plan update in the spring. The master plan will be a 20-year forecast and planning document on what the airport's needs may be. Through this process, **there will be opportunities for the community to directly influence what the future of the airport could be.**

Registered Nurse with Aspirus, and we have two boys (6 years and 6 months). We're living in Rib Mountain. We have already skied Granite Peak and are addicted the local Friday night fish fries.

As I begin my second month at the Central Wisconsin Airport, I'm excited about the opportunities that exist for the airport and the region. **The airport is putting the finishing touches on a multi-year terminal remodel project.** The terminal is now a beautiful gateway, welcoming residents and visitors to the region.



Central Wisconsin Airport's new entrance

I will be working hard in the coming months to re-engage the airport in the community. The [Central Wisconsin Airport](#) (CWA) has terrific access to the National Airspace system. The top three major airlines in the country

I look forward to participation from all of the surrounding communities and business leaders.

—**Brian J. Grefe, Airport Director**
Central Wisconsin Airport



April 5—Spring Election: Vote for a new Supreme Court justice and many local officials, including all County Board members and Wisconsin's Presidential Preference vote.

August 9—Partisan Primary (not including president)

November 8—General Election: Elect the next President of the United States, all members of the State Assembly, half the State Senate, and other local partisan positions.

PLEASE NOTE: You will need a photo ID to vote.

It may take some time to get your voter ID. You will need to bring proof of your name, date of birth, Wisconsin residency, and your social security card (if you have one) to [your local Department of Motor Vehicles \(DMV\) office](#). IDs are free. More information can be found at www.BringIt.wi.gov. Or [click here](#) for information on voter registration, polling sites, or absentee ballots in Marathon County.

What's Next with County Addressing?



By **Deb Hager**
Deputy County Administrator

The County Board has made a final decision on County addressing and identified \$1.2 million to help offset some of the cost associated with implementation of a uniform addressing system.

NOTE: No one's address will actually change until at least the summer of 2017.

Municipalities and EMS/Fire Departments will be invited to planning sessions to assist with implementation planning. The County Board will review the plan, and it will be shared with municipalities and the public. The Public Safety Committee of the County Board will take the lead in directing the implementation plan and timetable.

If you have ideas you would like to share, come to a Public Safety Committee meeting. Not sure when the Committee meets? Click the link here for the [County Calendar](#) or call 715.261.1400.

The Children's Museum of Marathon County: "Now Is Our Time"

By **Maggie Gordon**

Children's Museum of Marathon County (CMMC) Co-founder



Search "children's museum" on any major search engine for any major city in the U.S. and you're likely to find a listing for some type of exploration center geared toward educating the mind and feeding the creativity of young children from toddler to preteen. While we don't have a large, metro city here, Marathon County will soon pop up in search engines of residents and visitors who search for children's museums in mid-Wisconsin.

A children's museum near Wausau—finally. It's an idea that has taken nearly two decades to gain enough support to become reality, although cited numerous times on the wish list of United Way's LIFE Report, Central Wausau Progress, and Leadership Wausau, to name a few sources. It's an idea that many supporters have proclaimed "it's not a matter of if, it's when."

Now is our time...



CMMC founders (left to right):
Maggie Gordon, Tammy Szekeress, Kris Kerns

Today, the three founders—Tammy Szekeress, Kris Kerns, and I, all of us professional women and mothers—are well on our way to raising the \$3.7 million in funds necessary to construct and open the Children's Museum of Marathon County (CMMC) inside the Marathon County Public Library (MCPL), at a date to be determined in 2017.

Making the difference this time around is a number of factors, including:

- A passionate advisory committee
- A well-constructed business plan
- A groundswell of support from local donors

With these all in place, we believe the museum could be successful and sustainable in most any location; however, the synergy created through the partnership with the library cannot be matched at any other location. The library–museum collaboration will be a huge benefit County-wide, for those visiting the main library location and the branches.

For Marathon County residents, the CMMC will:

- Provide new and unique opportunities for parents to be their children's first teachers
- Enhance early childhood development
- Promote healthy living
- Provide additional out-of-classroom education
- Serve as a central gathering place

For the library, the CMMC can bring additional traffic, membership, and utilization of our state-of-the-art facility and materials—at all age levels.

Although another children's center recently opened in the Wausau Center Mall, the CMMC Board of Directors and advisors can validate a strong differentiation. Utilizing STEM-based curricula (i.e., learning materials focusing on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), along with a focus on health, the CMMC's mission is to inspire discovery and imagination through hands-on exploration, while providing educational and creative experiences through play. *What does that look like to County residents?* We have a few creative and educational ideas already in the rendering phase—a hot-air balloon room, a full-size T-Rex skeleton and dinosaur-fossil dig, and a hands-on science lab with experimentation and exploration—to begin to help illustrate our vision, with many more ideas in the concept stage.

Now we need input from residents—parents, children, educators, grandparents, care providers, and others. **We are inviting the public to share their ideas at a number of focus groups that will be hosted throughout the County over the next few months.** We will be announcing those locations shortly through the CMMC and MCPL websites and social media, as well as the news media. Look for more information to come, and plan to attend with your ideas and input.

Marathon County leaders have a unique opportunity to support families—the next generation of County residents—by supporting the CMMC capital campaign, lending their endorsement to the plan, and voicing their ideas at an upcoming focus group. Together, we will be helping to put an end to the decades-long delay in having a children's museum in Marathon County. ■

Commemorating 40 Years of Hmong Americans Living in Marathon County through the "DREAM BIG: 2056" Scholarship Fundraiser



By **Maysee Yang Herr, PhD**
"Dream Big: 2056" Chair
Hmong American Center

Many of us have heard (and seen!) that Brad Karger, Marathon County Administrator, [can dance](#), but how many of us knew that he could perform traditional Hmong dancing?

Did you know that Mort McBain, former Marathon County Administrator (1986–2008), could perform traditional Hmong dancing as well?

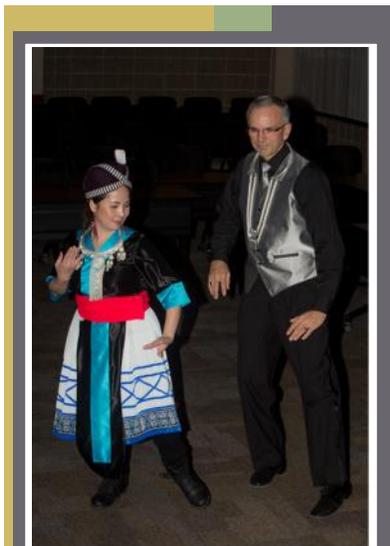
It would sure be interesting to see two County Administrators challenge each other to a "Dance-Off" in traditional Hmong dancing, wouldn't it?

If you answered Yes to this last question, you might just get your wish!

Both Brad and Mort will be participating in a Dance-Off with one another at the first "Dream Big: 2056" Scholarship Fundraiser, hosted by the Hmong American Center on Saturday, April 9th, of this year. The event will take place at the Jefferson Street Inn of Wausau, starting at 5:00 pm.

Why April 9th? **April 9th marks the 40th anniversary of when the first Hmong American family arrived in Marathon County.** This first family was that of Tong Xeng Thao, who passed away just last year at the age of 66 and still has family who live in the Wausau area. It's only fitting that the Hmong American Center will be hosting its first scholarship fundraiser on April 9th as a way to

commemorate the past 40 years that the Hmong have been a part of Marathon County and to celebrate the educational successes of Hmong Americans in the community.



County Administrator Brad Karger and Sasor Lee practice their Hmong Cultural Dance Solo for the April 9th Dream Big "Dance-Off."

The fundraiser theme—"Dream Big: 2056"—sends the message that while Hmong Americans have made significant strides in education and other ways, there is still much to be achieved into the next 40 years.

The scholarships that are made possible through the Dream Big: 2056 fundraiser will be given to a total of four Hmong high school seniors and current college students each year who not only plan to complete college but also plan to return

to Marathon County to live and to serve within the community.

Among community leaders who have helped to make a positive impact on the Hmong of Marathon County is Stanley F. Staples, Jr., who passed away in November 2006. Stan moved to Wausau to join Ruder Ware law firm in 1954 and was later the president of the Judd S. Alexander Foundation. Stan was instrumental in making it possible for the Hmong to receive English education in the earlier years and for helping to create the Wausau Area Hmong Mutual Association (now the Hmong American Center). A distinguished award will be given at the event in Stan's name to recognize a person or an organization that has contributed greatly to the Hmong of Marathon County, especially in the realm of education. **Award nominations can be made until Monday, March 28th,** by emailing the person/organization's name along with a 1- to 2-paragraph narrative on the nominee to [Dr. Maysee Yang Herr](#).

In addition to a can't-miss "Dance-Off" between Brad and Mort and the announcement of the first Stanley F. Staples, Jr., Award, there will be a silent auction and a dinner. **Entertainment will be provided by the internationally recognized Hmong singer Pagnia Xiong, as well as by the H.M.O.N.G. Youth Program.**

The cost per person to attend the Dream Big: 2056 fundraiser event is \$40. For questions about tickets or sponsorship, please contact Dr. Maysee Yang Herr at mayseeherr@gmail.com. Event information is also available on Facebook at "[Dream Big: 2056 Scholarship Fundraiser](#)." ■

Congratulations to Marathon County employees on being a Circle of Excellence "BRONZE" Honoree for its outstanding 2015 campaign to benefit United Way of Marathon County.



Village of Weston Celebrates its 20th Anniversary



By **Daniel Guild**
Weston Village Administrator

On March 11th, the Weston community began celebrating the 20th anniversary of its incorporation as the Village of Weston.

Working together, Village officials, municipal employees, local businesses, community groups, and 11 neighborhoods have collaborated to make Weston a place its citizens and taxpayers are proud to call home.

Over the course of the next several months, the Village of Weston will be organizing activities and promotions throughout the community to celebrate what has been accomplished over the past 20 years.



A special anniversary brand logo has been adopted to help enhance the promotion of stories, articles, announcements, events, and activities, and to further tell the story of why we think "Its Right, Here."

Weston is a community built on solid planning, with an eye to the future. Twenty years of forward thinking has laid a strong foundation. We are excited to celebrate with you what has been accomplished these past two decades and to begin the conversation of where we are going in the future. In addition to talking about past accomplishments, we will be using the 20th Anniversary brand to help us communicate the plans, projects, and proposals in our *almost* complete 2016–2026 Comprehensive Plan. What's Next? It is going to be good, so you won't want to miss it.

Questions about the Village's 20th Anniversary can be directed to Village Administrator, Daniel Guild, at dguild@westonwi.gov or 715.571.9693. ■

"A Call for Civic Responsibility" with Sister Simone Campbell



March 15 @ 7 pm
UW Center for Civic Engagement
James F. Veninga Theater

Sister Simone Campbell (of "Nuns on the Bus" fame) will present on "A Call for Civic Responsibility" as part of the

WIPPS James F. Veninga Lecture Series on Religion & Politics: March 15th in Wausau (and March 16th in Appleton at UW–Fox Valley).

Sister Simone, a nationally recognized social justice advocate, public policy speaker, and attorney will present her understanding of the Pope's recent Encyclical and the importance of its message in today's complex world. The Pope's Encyclical, "On Care for Our Common Home," (Laudato Si'), has won international praise from both religious and nonreligious leaders and observers. Environmentalists view the pope's emphasis on stewardship for the planet as a call to action. Others have also lauded the letter's stand against rampant poverty and consumerism.

Critics say the anti-market sentiments are overstated and capitalist principles unfairly blamed for society's problems. No document in recent memory has captured such strong attention from both religious and political leaders.

Sister Simone has often been featured in the media, including "60 Minutes," "The Colbert Report," and "The Daily Show."

Jean Feraca, former host of "Here and Now" on Wisconsin Public Radio, will moderate the discussion. Both events are free to the public. [Click here for flyer.](#)

For more information, call 715.261.6368 or email info@wipps.org.



Ever Want to tell a Government Leader to "Go Jump in a Lake"?

For the second year in row, Marathon County Administrator Brad Karger bravely took the "Udder Plunge" in the f-f-f-reezing Black Creek at Erbach Park in support of the Athens Fair.

He attended the January event dressed as Rainbow Bright's fraternal twin: "Not So Bright"!



11 Major Trends Affecting Marathon County

By **Kenneth L. Day**
County Board Member, District #7



I have had the privilege of serving on the Marathon County Board for the past 16 years. Having decided not to seek re-election, I have been asked to offer my thoughts about the future opportunities and challenges that Marathon County government and the citizens of Marathon County will encounter in the next 10–20 years. As I once heard Yogi Berra say in an interview, “making predictions is very hard, especially when they are about the future.” So rather than identifying specific issues, I’ll offer the following thoughts about trends and their implications for the future of Marathon County.

Eleven significant trends, issues, and opportunities for Marathon County (in no particular order and certainly not an exhaustive list) include the following:

1. **Increased absentee ownership of major Marathon County companies**—This will continue as merging of companies continues to be rewarded by Federal and State tax and other regulations. The local impact will be greater insecurity for employees and retention of jobs in the County. The opportunity is for greater investment and growth in local businesses by absentee owners, as well as the potential for local entrepreneurial start-ups to support major employers.
2. **Increased tensions regarding land-use issues**—This includes residential and business development of rural areas of the County, resulting in greater controversy regarding land-use policies, zoning, and authority to determine land use as Marathon County strives to maintain its rural character and maintain the individual's right to develop their property for their own best interest.
3. **Aging of the County’s residents will demand a change in service priorities, as well as increased requirement for services** (e.g., transportation, elderly housing, affordable medical services, dementia care). The health-care sector of the Marathon County community will continue to grow, serving the North Central Wisconsin region. This will result in a shortage of qualified health-care workers. Community-owned health-care facilities will be pressured to participate in the merger trend and will be encouraged to join larger health-care organizations. Demand for services for the elderly will place funding pressure on other community services.
4. **Increased emphasis on water quality (both drinking and recreational)**—Water is currently a relatively available quality resource in Marathon County, making it a resource valued by others. As the importance of Marathon County's recreation and agriculture sectors grows, greater emphasis will be required to protect this resource, especially from enterprises that originate outside the County.
5. **Increased regionalization and privatization of government services**—As a result of improved communication and technological devices, and in an effort to generate greater efficiency, Federal and State government will reward Regional initiatives to regionalize and privatize government services. Marathon County is positioned well to take advantage of these initiatives.
6. **Transition of local economy to increasing service and reduced manufacturing**—Recreation industries and health-care services will grow, as will the agriculture sector continue to be an important part of the County’s economy. Growth in the number and size of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) will generate challenges. Agriculture diversity will grow, including farm-to-table crops and other specialty crops (perhaps hemp). As global population growth demands increased production, controversies over the use of artificial means to stimulate production (i.e., crop chemicals, use of growth hormones, genetic restructuring, etc.) will generate greater controversy. This trend will also generate increased land-use challenges.
7. **Infrastructure growth and maintenance demands (e.g., roads, bridges, utilities, airports) will continue to be challenging as resources will remain limited**—In addition, the community will demand new technology infrastructure, which will place increased pressure on available resources. Local governments will be asked to provide the infrastructure that the private sector determines not to be profitable.
8. **Shortage of skilled workforce**—Both service and manufacturing employment will demand increasing sophistication of employees. Education for employment at the secondary and post-secondary levels will need to be expanded in order for the community to provide a quality workforce. Individuals who are undereducated will find it increasingly difficult to find employment and a quality of life. Marathon County education will become increasingly important to the economic success of the region. Development and attraction of companies will depend upon a quality workforce. Demand for and expenditures for services by the aging population will make funding of education more challenging and controversial.
9. **Increased cultural diversity in the Marathon County population**—The agricultural and service fields (and related employment) will draw an increasing number of Latino and other minority populations to the area. Combined with the retention and development of the Asian population, this will result in a rich mixture of cultures in the County.

(continues on p. 8)

How to Access E-books, Digital Audiobooks, & Streaming Videos at the Marathon County Public Library



By **Chad Dally**
Library Services
Marathon County
Public Library



Are you curious about the expanding world of electronic books (e-books) and audiobooks? Do you already purchase books to read or listen to on your tablet or smartphone?

You may not know that thousands of e-books, audiobooks, and streaming videos are available to download or stream—all for FREE with a library card and a few short steps on your electronic device.

Marathon County Public Library (MCPL) is part of a statewide online catalog of materials called Wisconsin's Digital Library, accessible through a program called OverDrive that can be installed on any device—be it tablet, smartphone, or computer.

Here's how it works. It's truly as easy as 1, 2, 3...



1. Download the OverDrive app for free on any tablet or smartphone, or install the software on a computer.
2. Create an account or sign into OverDrive with your library card. (Don't have a library card? Can I ask why not? Just kidding—That's free, too; it just takes a few minutes and can be done at any MCPL location.)

3. Sign in to the Digital Library catalog with your library card number and PIN (usually the last four digits of your phone number), and you're ready to go!



Browse a wide variety of genres, or search for specific titles and authors, with a checkout limit of 10 books, audiobooks, and/or videos at a time.

One of the best parts? You don't have to drive to the library to return it and there are no late fees!

You'll have the title for a set period of time—at least 3 days for a video, up to 14 days for an audiobook, and up to 21 days for an e-book—and at the end of your lending period, the downloaded file is "returned" automatically. (Just as with print books, renewal is possible if no one else has requested the title.)

If the title you want isn't immediately available, you can simply place a hold on it and receive an email notice when it's available. Another plus: You can access your material from anywhere in the world with a Wi-Fi connection. **Once you download a title, you can read or listen to it anywhere you'd like—a plane, a car, or even the beach!**

MCPL staff will be happy to help you set up your device with this digital library service, or head over to www.mcpl.us/catalogs/overdrive for a full list of instructions for every type of device. Enjoy! ■



11 Major Trends Affecting Marathon County—Continued

10. Increased demand for mental health, alcohol, and other drug-abuse services—This problem will continue to challenge the community as the complexity of society, the work environment, the changing family unit, and other societal pressure grow. Currently, no viable remedy for these issues is in place, which will continue to be a challenge for government agencies.

11. Increased interest in elected positions, as opportunities and challenges that develop generate controversies, and competition for resources and rights—There will be more emphasis and opportunities for elected officials to provide leadership planning and action on policies that design the future and not direct present operations. The opportunity for leadership by governmental entities will increase as community leadership from absentee owned companies wains. The opportunity will be there, the question is, Will elected officials rise to the challenge and opportunities? ■

BABY BUSINESS: Investing in Early Childhood Education & Parent-Friendly Workplaces



By **Corina Norrbom, MD**
WIPPS Health Policy Fellow &
"Baby Business" Panel Moderator

Business, education, and government leaders, along with interested community members, gathered in February at "Baby Business: The Dollars and Sense of Investing in Working Parents" to discuss how a strong start for children can lead to a healthier and more prosperous Marathon County. The [Marathon County Early Years Coalition](#) (MCEYC) partnered with the [Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service](#) (WIPPS) for this kick-off event to promote public-private partnerships to optimize childhood development.

Keynote speaker, Rob Grunewald, Economist from the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, highlighted data showing the tremendous return on investment (ROI) for early childhood development, as well as the neurobiology behind the data. Sharing video clips and citing from research conducted on the Perry Preschool program in Minnesota, Grunewald calculated that:

For every \$1 invested in early childhood education, there was a \$16 return, with 80% of the benefits going to the general public—significantly higher than the ROI of many other public "economic development" projects.

Jim McIntyre, Greenheck CEO, expressed that investing in young children is not only the right thing to do, but one of the best investments that can be made for our community and businesses. The local panel also discussed challenges faced by young parents in accessing affordable, high-quality childcare in Marathon County. In fact...

In Wisconsin, the average annual cost of care for an infant in a childcare center is \$11,342. Having both an infant and a toddler in childcare costs an average of \$20,644 per year.

Addressing the needs of parents and optimizing early childhood experiences are inextricably linked. Critical brain development occurs from ages 0–3 years, and fostering the ability of parents to give their children the interaction and care that they need during this crucial period not only maximizes the potential of our future workforce, but also keeps parent employees present in the workplace.

Employers learned that addressing early childhood development provides both short- and long-term benefits to their workplaces:

A healthy workplace culture that embraces family friendliness is important in attracting and retaining talented employees, and supported parents make more productive employees.

Grunewald pointed out that there is benefit to individual children and their families, but the majority of economic and social benefit goes to the community at large. Over time, financial gains are achieved—for example, through:

- Decreased special education spending in schools
- Improved school achievement
- Increased high school and college graduation rates
- Less utilization of public financial assistance and the criminal justice system

The return on investing in young children is significant. The data is compelling.

Small-group roundtables with Rob Grunewald surrounded the "Baby Business" main event and included the following focuses: Community Lender, Childcare, Education, Hmong Community, CEO, Policymaker, and Local Business. Actionable ideas surfaced during these targeted discussions. One example from the CEO Roundtable included utilizing an unbiased third party to conduct surveys and focus groups with working parents to help area employers learn what would support their employees as parents, as well as possible development of meaningful *family-friendly certification* for employers, which could be used as a marketing tool to promote Marathon County as a great place to live and work.

The importance of raising healthy children is resonating across the community. There is enthusiasm in thinking about what we can do together to optimize early childhood development in Marathon County.



Information gained from participants of the "Baby Business" event is being synthesized, along with data and resources from Grunewald and the community panelists. Follow-up conversations are occurring in the community, as well as planning for next steps. The MCEYC and WIPPS are partnering to help the community bring IDEAS to ACTION.

If you would like to get involved in this important community effort, visit the [Marathon County Early Years Coalition website](#) or contact Dr. Corina Norrbom, WIPPS Health Policy Fellow, at cnorrbom@hotmail.com or 715.881.1816, to learn how you can connect to efforts that support children in their early years right here in our community. ■



SAVE THE DATE:

**The "Trojan Horsemen"
Coming May 21 to
Honor Hmong/Lao
Vietnam War Veterans**

By **Mort McBain**
County Board Member, District #19



Planning is underway for the dedication ceremony of the **Hmong/Lao Vietnam War Veteran Memorial** to be located on the grounds of the Marathon County Courthouse. The dedication is set for Saturday, May 21st, beginning at 10 AM, with a lunch to follow at 12 noon.

Part of the ceremony will include a fly-over of the Trojan Horsemen, four restored Trojan T-28 fighter bombers used by Hmong pilots during the war. There will also be a fly-over of a restored Huey helicopter, the one so well known to Vietnam War era veterans. This particular Huey helicopter saw action between 1968 and 1973 in Vietnam.

The general public is welcome to attend the Trojan Horsemen fly-over and dedication ceremony, and lunch will be served for as long as the food lasts. After lunch, members of the public are invited to check out the T-28s and the Huey "slick" at the Wausau Municipal Airport, located at 725 Woods Place.



Stay "in the know" with...

Wisconsin Central Time NEWS

As part of our goal to be transparent and accountable to you—the taxpayer—this eNewsletter, **Wisconsin Central Time NEWS**, is a means for Marathon County leadership to communicate what county officials are doing to make Marathon County a great place to **work, play, and live.**

Roughly each quarter, we bring you insightful stories and timely information about the issues being discussed and the goals being achieved by Marathon County Government.

In addition, it's our hope share with you the network of dedicated people serving our community: Thoughtful, reflective, brave, and compassionate individuals motivated to improve the human condition. Public servants facing challenges as best they can. Real people stepping in and stepping up to learn, grow, and work to make a difference right here in Marathon County.

If you or anyone you know would like to receive this seasonal eNewsletter, we invite you to [sign up here.](#)

**Interested in
County Issues
or in Seeking
Public Office?**

Attend or watch a County Board meeting. Meetings are open to the public and typically take place in the Assembly Room of the Courthouse. The Board meets twice a month, with the *informational meeting* on a Thursday evening and the *voting meeting* on a Tuesday afternoon.



County Board meetings are video-recorded. Meeting agendas, details, and video links can be found on the County's website: www.co.marathon.wi.us