

County Administrator's Digest

August 17, 2012

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OTTAWA DISTRICT COURT JUDGES HONORED



Judge Susan Jonas and Judge Bradley Knoll of the 58th District Court in Holland were recently awarded the 2012 Judicial Excellence Award at the annual meeting of the Michigan District Judges Association. The award is given to judges who demonstrate excellence in trial practice, scholarship and service to the community and to their profession.

Citing their overall contributions to the judicial system, Knoll and Jonas were recognized for establishing the first Sobriety Court in Ottawa County in 2004. Sobriety Courts are intended to protect the public by enforcing accountability and long term treatment. Both judges share the same vision: to save lives, to restore families, and to keep communities safe. Over 300 successful participants have benefited from this program.

In 2011 the National Center for DWI Courts, in conjunction with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, selected the 58th District Court Sobriety Treatment Program as one of four DWI Academy courts in the nation. The program is nationally recognized as demonstrating exemplary practices and assists other courts in establishing sobriety treatment programs.

Knoll and Jonas are members of the National Task Force of DWI Courts and have spoken at the National Conference of Drug Court Professionals. Judge Knoll serves on the Legislative Advisory Committee of the Michigan District Judges Association while Judge Jonas serves on the Board of Directors of the Michigan Association of Drug Court Professionals.



STATE COMMUNITY HEALTH DIRECTOR DAZZO RESIGNS

By Staff reports

The Associated Press

Posted Aug 15, 2012 @ 12:10 PM

The director of Michigan's Department of Community Health has stepped down. Gov. Rick Snyder on Wednesday accepted Olga Dazzo's resignation and appointed former department director James Haveman Jr. as her replacement.

Snyder's office says in a release that Dazzo has decided to return to the private sector. Snyder appointed her to the post in December 2010.

Snyder says Dazzo "wants to more directly work with the health care system to bring about positive change."

In taking the job, Haveman resigned from the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Board of Directors. His appointment is subject to Senate approval. He is scheduled to start Sept. 1. Haveman served from 1996 to 2003 as Community Health director and from 1991 to 1996 as head of the state Department of Mental Health.

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Note: Jim Haveman is a County resident and we have certainly appreciated his willingness to allow us to use him as a sounding board occasionally and tap into his human services expertise.

NATIONWIDE OUTBREAK OF WEST NILE VIRUS (Dr. Paul Heidel)

Within the past few weeks there has been a dramatic increase in the number of infections caused by West Nile virus across the US, prompting health officials to predict that 2012 could be the worst year for this disease since it was first noted here in August of 1999. There have already been 693 cases of West Nile nationwide, including 26 cases in Michigan. This is the highest number of cases reported to the CDC through the second week of August since 1999. So far there have been 26 deaths, one of which occurred in Michigan. The high number of cases is especially concerning because Michigan is just now entering the worst part of West Nile season, with the highest number of cases generally occurring from late July through late September. No cases have been reported to date in Ottawa County, although an Allegan County resident with a Holland address has been diagnosed with a "probable" case and Kent County currently has one "confirmed" case and two "probable" cases. Last year Michigan recorded 34 cases of West Nile virus and two fatalities.

Despite a particularly dry summer in most parts of the country, the mosquito responsible for transmitting the West Nile virus has flourished extremely well. These mosquitos require only a small amount of water to breed and multiply and are often found in residential areas. They are most active between dusk and dawn.

Approximately 80% of individuals infected with West Nile virus will never experience symptoms while 20% will go on to develop "West Nile fever" characterized by fever, headache, body aches, fatigue and swollen glands. It is estimated that 1 in 150 people with "West Nile fever" will develop a more serious form of the disease which may include headache, high fever, stiff neck, tremors, convulsions and coma. There is no vaccine for West Nile virus and no specific treatment.

To help protect against West Nile virus infection residents are encouraged to take the following precautions:

- (1) Apply insect repellent containing DEET to exposed skin when outside
- (2) Spray clothing with permethrin or other EPA-approved insect repellent
- (3) Eliminate sources of a standing water such as old tires, flower pots, bird baths, cans, buckets
- (4) When possible avoid being outside from dusk to dawn
- (5) Weather permitting wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants outdoors
- (6) Be sure that all window and door screens are in good repair
- (7) Place mosquito netting over infant carriers when outdoors

Further information on West Nile virus can be obtained at miottwa.org/health and CDC.gov

BUSINESS INCUBATOR SURVEY (Paul Sachs)

Last week a business incubator survey was distributed to nearly 3,000 farmers, entrepreneurs, small business owners, university/college faculty, and business service providers in the area. The survey was distributed as part of the County's effort to determine whether an *Agriculture-based Technology Business Incubator* would be sustainable in our region. Several local, state, and regional organizations are also disseminating the survey to individuals who may be interested in either utilizing the incubator or in partnering with the County to provide incubator services to new start-up businesses.

A business incubator provides mentoring, training, facilities, and other forms of assistance to entrepreneurs who have new business ideas. Ottawa County's incubator would specifically target entrepreneurs who have technology-related business ideas that are focused on one of our County's greatest strengths – Agriculture. Entrepreneurs with other technology-based business ideas that are not necessarily associated with agriculture may also be able to receive assistance from the incubator.

The survey results will be used to gauge the level of interest that exists in the region for such a project. To that point, all individuals who have a new technology-related business idea or who would like to partner with the County to provide incubator services are encouraged to complete the short, 10-minute survey.

The survey can be accessed online at <http://bit.ly/OttawaCountyIncubator>. Or if preferred, a hard-copy version of the survey can be obtained by contacting the Planning and Performance Improvement Department at 616-738-4852 or by email at plan@miottawa.org. Survey responses are due August 24, 2012.

The survey was developed by Jim Greenwood, of Greenwood Consulting Inc., in conjunction with the Planning

and Performance Improvement Department. Jim was hired by the County Planning Commission to conduct a Market Needs Assessment & Feasibility Study for the incubator project. The study will be completed in October, 2012.

MICHIGAN TOPS IN CAR INSURANCE EXPENSE

Don Brookhouse from Fiscal Services, who does the administrative and accounting work for the Ottawa County Insurance Authority passed along an article entitled 10 States Where Car Insurance Really Bites Your Budget (by Allie Johnson), from carinsurancequotes.com that shows Michigan car insurance rate cost as the highest in the nation (all states plus District of Columbia). I've included the ten highest and ten lowest and the discussion about Michigan.

1. Michigan – 8 percent
2. Louisiana – 5 percent plus
3. Kentucky -- 4.548 percent.
4. West Virginia -- 4.239 percent.
5. Mississippi -- 4.045 percent.
6. Arkansas -- 3.660 percent.
7. Delaware -- 3.573 percent.
8. New York -- 3.542 percent.
9. Nevada -- 3.439 percent.
10. Florida -- 3.360 percent.

At No. 51 on the list is Massachusetts, where 1.434 percent of median annual household income is spent on car insurance. Preceding Massachusetts in the bottom 10 are:

50. North Carolina -- 1.625 percent.
49. Hawaii -- 1.634 percent.
48. Alaska -- 1.751 percent.
47. Oregon -- 1.955 percent.
46. Iowa -- 1.973 percent.
45. New Hampshire -- 1.988 percent.
44. California -- 1.991 percent.
43. Virginia -- 1.992 percent.
42. Maine -- 1.993 percent.

'Michigan is very unique'

Some experts say it's no surprise that Michigan tops CarInsuranceQuotes.com's list, with 8 percent of the median annual household income of \$56,101 going toward car insurance.

“Michigan is very unique in our auto insurance system,” says Lori Conarton, a spokeswoman for the nonprofit Insurance Institute of Michigan. “It’s really hard when people compare Michigan premiums to other states because (policyholders in other states) are not paying for the same benefits.”

That’s because Michigan is a no-fault state, which means each policyholder must buy personal injury protection (PIP). PIP covers the policyholder’s own medical costs in an accident, no matter which driver is at fault. Also, Michigan is the only state where that coverage includes unlimited lifetime medical and rehabilitation benefits for treatment of car accident injuries.

“If you’re severely injured and paralyzed, and for the rest of your life you need to use physical therapy or have medical equipment, that all gets paid by the auto insurance policy (in Michigan),” says RAND Corp. economist Paul Heaton, who has researched [car insurance costs](#) in that state.

Conarton says there’s a push in Michigan to let consumers choose whether to buy the current high-dollar PIP with unlimited benefits or less costly PIP with limited benefits. “A lot of people in Michigan, although they appreciate those unlimited benefits, it is getting to where it’s hard to afford them,” she says.

Such no-fault systems originally were meant to keep costs down by slicing the number of expensive lawsuits aimed at determining who was at fault in a car crash. In general, though, these systems haven’t worked out too well, according to Heaton. For example, skyrocketing medical costs, along with consumers’ high use of their insurance benefits, have driven up car insurance costs in Michigan.

“When somebody gets into an auto accident in Michigan, they go see the doctor a lot more, they’re more likely to go to an emergency room and to get X-rays and CT scans,” Heaton says. “It makes sense – if you’ve got the coverage, why not make use of it? But when everyone uses a ton of medical care following an auto accident, that’s expensive.”

Conarton, the Insurance Institute of Michigan spokeswoman, note that the state's auto insurance rates can seem higher than they really are if you look just at the "base rates" filed by each car insurer that does business in the state. Under Michigan law, car insurers can apply discounts to the base rates; in most other states, car insurers apply surcharges to the base rates.

So, for example, in Michigan, car insurer could offer a discount to a customer with a solid credit history but could not add surcharge to the premium of a customer with a poor credit history. By contrast, in many other states, a company might file a "base rate" with the state, then apply a surcharge for a consumer who has poor credit. The result is that in Michigan, consumers almost always end up paying less than the base rates -- sometimes far less. In other states, they might end up paying quite a bit more than the base rate.

N11 CODES

Most people are aware of services provided through well-known codes such as 911 and 411. In West Michigan, 211 is also commonly available. There are a number of other codes, some available and others not available in Michigan or limited to a small portion of the state.

N11 Code	Description	Available in Michigan
211	Community Info & Referral Services (Information about local health and human services agencies.)	Yes
311	Municipal Services Number (Detroit Ombudsmen)	Only in Detroit
411	General Directory Assistance (there is a per call charge)	Yes
511	Traffic and Transportation Information	No
611	Unassigned	N/A
711	Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) (Operator assistance for persons with a hearing or speech disability to use the telephone via a text telephone (TTY).)	No
811	Underground Utility Safety (Help in determining location of underground utility lines; MISS DIG in Michigan.)	Yes
911	Emergency	Yes

MAC CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Keith Van Beek and I were both asked to participate as presenters/panelists on Monday, September 24th at the Michigan Association of Counties conference at Shanty Creek. The session I'll be helping with is at 10:30 a.m. and is titled "Exploring the new reality of government finance in the new economy and current political climate". Keith will be speaking at 2:30 p.m. the same day and the session he is helping with is titled "County Veterans Services: fighting on the front lines."