
Our Mission: Providing quality services through responsible leadership, innovation and the cooperation of dedicated people

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the July 18, 2017, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

County receives grant to assist people with disabilities to live in their own homes

Washington County will use a state grant to develop alternatives to corporate foster care living for people with disabilities.

The County Board approved a grant agreement with the state Department of Human Services July 18, which will provide \$73,165 for the program through July 30, 2019.

This is the third round of funding that the county has received. The previous two grants have focused on working directly with individuals receiving services, providers, and case managers to work through the process of moving people out of provider housing and into a home of their own. This process is working well and the county has helped to move 54 people since the start of the first grant in May 2014.

The county will take a different approach with this grant. A large part of assisting someone with deciding to move into their own home is person-centered planning. The program will focus on training county staff and ensuring that county policies and procedures regarding the services are person-centered. The goals of this grant cycle are:

- to review the program policies and procedures;
- to provide person-centered training to case managers and assessors;
- to provide person-centered training for corporate foster care providers and providers working with people in individualized housing options; and

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- to share person-centered training through videos and a how-to guide.

Contact: Sarah Tripple, Community Services Program and Planning Manager, 651-430-6480

Washington County will assist with law enforcement during Super Bowl

The Washington County Sheriff's Office will assist with law enforcement during the 2018 Super Bowl, which will be in Minneapolis.

The County Board approved a cooperative agreement with the City of Minneapolis July 18 to assist with additional law enforcement personnel for public safety and security during the event. The county will be reimbursed for hours worked.

Contact: Sheriff Dan Starry, 651-430-7601

County honors child care providers of the year, Tamara and Thomas Leonzal

The Washington County Board of Commissioners honored Tamara and Thomas Leonzal of Woodbury as the Family Child Care Providers of the Year for 2017 July 18.

Historically, Washington County has recognized family child care providers for excellent care in providing at-home child care. Individuals in the community nominate providers and these applications are reviewed by an ad hoc committee of members of the Washington County Child Care Council. The committee reviews the nominations and submits the chosen recipients to the Washington County Community Services Child Care Licensing Program.

Selection criteria includes:

- they have been in the field for at least three years;
- they promote quality child care as a profession and in the community;
- they meet annual state training requirements and have future goals to further enhance their competency as a child care provider;
- they have a positive impact on the lives of the young children; and
- they demonstrate professional skills in child care.

Tamara and Thomas Leonzal, also known as Little Stars Early Childhood Education and Child Care program, are caring for 10 children in Woodbury. They are members of Parent Aware and the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary.

The Little Stars child care program is rated with two stars through Parent Aware. Their program also has a Minnesota Infant Toddler Credential, and the couple said they are seeking their Child Development Associate Credential.

Tamara graduated from the College of Saint Catherine with a bachelor of arts in elementary education, and Thomas graduated from the University of Minnesota at Duluth with a bachelor of arts in business and communications.

When asked what attracted the Leonzals to providing child care, they responded that it is the life-long friendships and memories of the children and their families.

The Little Stars Early Childhood Education and Child Care program is filled with opportunities for the young people to learn. Tamara and Thomas start teaching at a young age through sign language for infants. A monthly newsletter provided to parents includes examples of the sign language used so parents may also practice. The program includes daily lesson plans filled with ABCs, counting, and nursery rhymes, and follows kindergarten guidelines so that the children are prepared for school.

The children are often outdoors and learn to have a love and appreciation for the outdoors, no matter the season. The children do activities such as gardening, swimming, sledding, boot hockey, and puddle jumping. The children learn languages and celebrate holidays of different nationalities.

The County Board recognizes providers who stood out in their career as early childhood educators and caregivers over the last year.

Contact: Rebecca Motzko, Social Services Supervisor, 651-430-6476



Photo: Child Care Providers of the Year Tamara and Thomas Leonzal of Woodbury with the Washington County Board of Commissioners, and children and parents from the child care.

County will receive grant to prevent, mitigate homelessness in county

Washington County will receive \$299,848 from the state Housing Finance Agency to provide services to prevent or mitigate homelessness in the county, after the County Board approved the grant July 18.

The money will be used for the Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program, designed to prevent homelessness, minimize the number of days a person is homeless, and eliminate repeated episodes of homelessness. The money will be given to organizations that provide services, namely:

- Solid Ground, \$129,140, for rapid re-housing for families (adult and youth);
- Salvation Army, \$85,364, for prevention support services and financial assistance for

singles, families and youth; and

- YMCA, \$61,170, for rapid re-housing for single youth. That program will start July 1, 2018.

Washington County will receive a \$24,174 administrative fee from the grant.

Those who use the programs must meet eligibility requirements of:

- be a household below 200 percent of federal poverty guidelines;
- have already accessed or not be eligible for county emergency assistance; and
- likely able to resolve the housing emergency with one-time or short-term assistance.

According to the grant, the money may be used for direct assistance or supportive services, but it may not be used for payments to emergency shelters or permanent supportive housing. Also, it may not exceed 24 months of rental assistance.

A recent analysis of housing support programs in the county found a need for more supportive services, and the need to serve youth and single people.

Contact: Sarah Tripple, Community Services Program and Planning Manager, 651-430-6480

Audit Advisory Committee reports to County Board

Melanie Greufe, the Washington County internal auditor, gave an annual audit report to the County Board July 18.

Washington County established an Audit Advisory Committee in 1984. The Audit Advisory Committee is comprised of the County Board Chair, or a designee, the County Administrator, and two citizen members. The role of the Audit Advisory Committee is to provide assurance to the County Board concerning the internal and financial controls of the county and to provide greater independence and objectivity to the audit functions.

Greufe, a certified public accountant and a certified fraud examiner, provides the internal control and compliance function, and uses the risk-based audit approach. In Fiscal Year 2015, the internal auditor tested 2.3 percent of all disbursement transactions in the county, which accounted for almost 90 percent of the total dollars spent, and 30.6 percent of all purchasing card transactions, or almost 80 percent of dollars spent using these county-issued credit cards. In 2015, the Audit Advisory Committee met with the external auditor, and did a number of tasks on behalf of the external auditor, including bank confirmations and conflict of interest testing.

In Fiscal Year 2016, 1.71 percent of disbursements were tested, accounting for 72 percent of dollars spent, as were 2.1 percent purchasing card transactions, or 5 percent of the dollars spent. With a change of internal auditors, a different procedure was used to test the transactions, resulting in more targeted testing.

In that fiscal year, the committee performed the same work on behalf of the external auditor, and reviewed legislation giving counties greater authority to use a private audit firm.

During Fiscal Year 2016, one internal audit issue arose over the county's purchasing card and travel policies. It was recommended that the county review current policies to address the issues identified, including strengthening internal controls, updating the policies, and increasing staff training.

Contact: Kevin Corbid, Deputy Administrator, 651-430-6003