THE COMMUNICATOR

Editors: Joyce Roling, Personnel Director
Dawn Mergen, Personnel Specialist

Volume 17, Issue 3
July, 2019

Grant County Employee Newsletter

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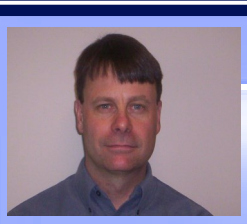

~In the Spotlight~

Grant County Highway Department

What We Do...

Dave Lambert, Commissioner

What do we do in the Highway Department? In a nutshell, we maintain the roads and bridges in Grant County. There are 257 miles of State Highways, 309 miles of County Highways and 1,531 miles of local roads on the Town, Village and City Street Systems. There are 240 bridges on the Town, City and Village Systems; 70 bridges on the County System and 40 bridges on the State System. The State of Wisconsin is unique in that Wisconsin is the only State in the nation where the County Highway Departments directly maintain the State Highway System. We do the work for the State under their direction using our men and equipment. We also maintain the County Highway System and provide help to the locals on their systems.

There are currently 52 employees at the Highway Department. This includes patrolmen, operators and mechanics along with an office manager and bookkeeper, a welder, sign crew, shop foreman, engineer and supervisors. Working together, we do our best to provide a safe system for the traveling public, sometimes working with other county departments. A couple of the more visible duties we are responsible for are summer road construction and winter snow removal.

Andy Fritz in the Loader

Winter snow removal includes removing the snow during the storm using plows, salt and brine and also clean-up after the storm to get the snow back to provide room for the next storm. The crew is on call 24/7 in the winter and can put in long hours to keep the roads clear. With 24 winter sections, there will be equipment breakdowns requiring the mechanics to work extra hours also. It takes a dedicated crew to remain available for winter call-out.

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During the summer construction season the Highway Department maintains shoulders, fills cracks and potholes, apply seal coats and lay new asphalt. We also mow the roadsides, maintain the bridges and preform various repairs that result from vehicle accidents.

Joe Majerus, in the Shop during a storm

Tyler Reuter & Rod Reuter at a STH 61 Guardrail Accident Scene

Filling the cracks on CTH B, Tom Vesperman directing traffic

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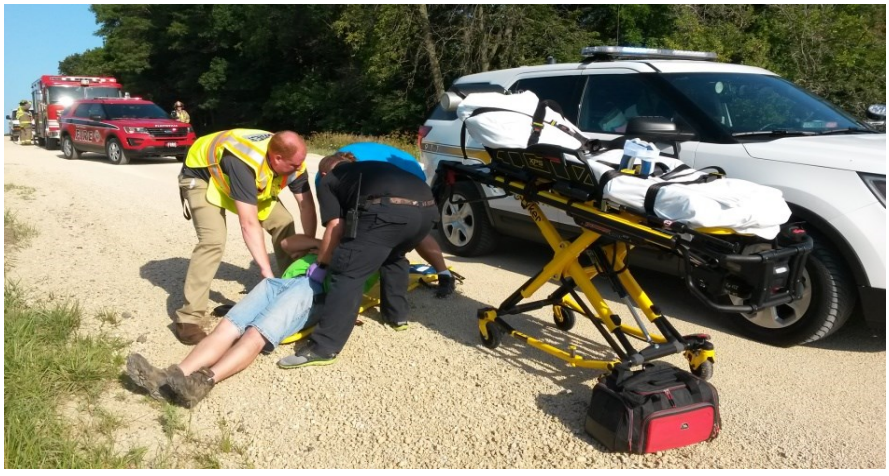
We also do road construction each season. Last year we worked on a portion of CTH A between Lancaster and Bloomington. We pulverized the existing asphalt surface and replaced it with a new hot-mix asphalt surface. We made improvements to the road alignment along with the highway side slopes using our construction equipment.

Bill Wiederholt in the excavator, installing a new culvert.

Everything is not fun and games. People working on the highways are working in a hostile environment. We are out there during storms when nobody should be on the road. The crew put up with hot and cold temperatures, rain, snow, bugs, weeds and sunlight, all of which can cause discomfort. The worse hazard is the traffic. One employee, now retired, was hit so hard, while he was at a worksite towing a lighted arrowboard, that the truck he was driving was pushed through a concrete barrier at the rock cut near Dickeyville. He recovered but was very sore for a while. Another time an inattentive driver hit the rear of our broom truck and caused the driver to miss work due to injuries to his neck and back. The broom truck was hit so hard it tore the axle from the frame. In both of these cases, there were no skid marks; the vehicles hit the back of our trucks at full speed. You need to be careful, always being aware of traffic while working on a highway.



Brian Reuter being loaded onto a gurney after the broom truck he was driving was hit from behind by a fast moving vehicle

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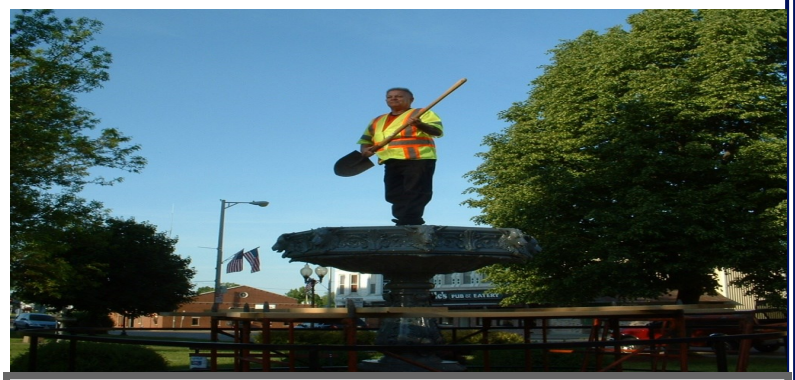
Patrol truck that flipped during a storm

Once in a while we have a bit of fun at the Highway Department. A few years ago we worked with the Courthouse maintenance crew to transport the "Blue Boy" statue to Chicago and back to restore the statue. While the statue was loaded on a truck, we took advantage of the opportunity for a quick photo.



John Burton, working to complete repairs to "Blue Boy" on the Square.

When we purchase a new truck, we sometimes document the occasion with a photo of the truck with the operator. On this occasion, Phil Mueller asked the photographer to take a second picture while he stood with the new truck. We posted this photo in the shop until Bubba realized that it was Phil, not himself, in the picture.

Phil Mueller with Bubba's (Bill Knotwell) new truck.

I could go on about the Highway Department. Getting me to stop talking has always been the challenge. Working at the Highway Department allows an employee to look back and see what he has accomplished. It is not like planning or designing. You can physically see what you have done at the end of the day. It may be clearing a highway during the winter or paving a stretch of highway in the summer but there is always work to be done.

Dana's Desktop

Dana C. Andrews, Grant County IT Technician

Vol. 6 Issue 3

Hi Everyone,

This quarter's corner will be short because of the move to Community Services Building (CSB). Still we will talk about Cloud computing, Boolean Algebra, Something worse than a computer virus, and Unicorns.

Cloud Computing

In preparing for this quarter's newsletter, I googled "Computing Trends". What came back was millions of articles on Cloud computing. It seems this past topic has made a return to popularity. Our IT Director, while configuring a new device, noted that the last time he had done this, his options were a few server systems while the new version included connections to the major cloud providers (Amazon AWS and Microsoft Azure).

If the Amazon AWS and Microsoft Azure terms confused you, you are not alone. These are two cloud platforms where anyone can rent computer services for a fee. Most, if not all, phone apps use services from these providers or others like them. Same with many tablets and games on the web.

'In the cloud' is great at any location where there is internet access. They work with all devices so you can have photos on your iPhone but save them in a Microsoft program. Downside, obviously, is this does not work if there is no internet. While companies try to mitigate this with some kind of local storage option, it usually does not work out for loss of internet beyond a few hours.

So why is this a trend with almost all major companies? Well, as mentioned above, having access to your data without being dependent on a specific piece of equipment is one reason. Another is they can do the updating and patching 'in the cloud' and not worry about bricking your device with a corrupt download. Financially, online services are almost always fee based, and while usually a small amount, those amounts add up. Especially when it is every month. One exception is that most banks and Credit Unions now have online services for free.

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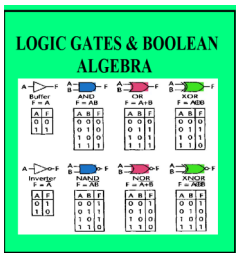
So what are cloud services? Dropbox & One Drive are an example. Online bill paying is another. Facebook & Twitter (and or so many others). What is not the cloud? Things like our email (OWA). It uses the internet but only to access locally stored data. To be sure, Virtual Reality is getting more attention these days than ever before as is the growing list of 'things on the internet' (IoT), but for now, the big developments are still all about the Cloud.

Boolean Algebra

Boolean Algebra is how computers compute. But that may not, at first, be obvious when you consider this 'math' system was invented as a way to determine the truth of any set of statements. 'If the puddle feels wet and water feels wet, then the puddle is water', type logic.

George Boole (1815 – 1864) was an English mathematician that worked with symbols. His 'formulas' contained no numbers but instead were symbolic logic that, when filled out, would give correct answers. Specifically, he was able to mathematically determine the truth of any set of conditions.



You most likely have heard that everything is 1 or 0 with computers. This is basically correct. At the very core of the hardware are things called logic gates that take inputs of either 1 (there is an electrical charge) or 0 (no electrical charge). When computers read memory or a command is inputted, it turns little storage points either on or off. Boolean is a concept of Truth (1) or False (0). This makes it a great way to determine how those electrical charges get interpreted. A string of detectors (transistors actually) are programed with instructions for matches and this becomes a logic gate.

An example (from encyclopedia.com) is the statement, "I will get green mittens." Seems simple enough, right? However, when you logically examine that statement you get: Hand coverings will be mittens and they will be green in color. How you get them does not matter so long as you do not make them. Any covering that is a glove or a color other than green or you made, is false. If you are then presented with a box that contains "something", you will validate the contents by determining if the various conditions above were met. Seems simple enough, right?

In Boolean math Add (+), Subtract (-), Multiply (x), and Divide (÷) are replaced with AND, OR, NOT, and XOR (exclusive or). In the above example we let the letter A = mittens and B = Green, C = bought, and D = gift. Every hand-wear item can now be tested for its Truth with the Boolean formula: A AND B AND (C XOR D). If we find in the box Mittens that are Green in color and either bought or a gift, then the contents of the box are valid (true).

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The four principle operators in Boolean are:
AND = If each condition matches then it is TRUE
OR = Either one or the other conditions must match. Both can also match the specification and still be TRUE
XOR = Only one condition must be true. If both match the condition, then the result is FALSE
NOR (or NOT) = Neither condition matches the specification.

Symbols often used in programming for this are: && (AND), || (OR),! (NOR/NOT), ^ (XOR), which results in programming that looks like this:
If ((wet && cold) || (poor && hungry)) {System.out.println("you are miserable")};

When asked by the program your answers are "dry and warm but poor and hungry"' the computer will display the message "you are miserable." However, if you answer you are "wet but warm, rich but hungry", the message will not be displayed.

Sim Swapping (Port Out scam)

"On a Tuesday night in May, Sean Coonce was reading the news in bed when his phone dropped service. He chalked it up to tech being tech and went to sleep. When he woke up, his Gmail account had been stolen and by Wednesday evening he was out $100,000" (https://www.engadget.com/2019/06/28/cell-phone-hack-is-ruining-lives-identity-theft/).

Mr. Coonce in the above story was Sim Swapped. This is the technique where someone uses personal information gathered from other hacks to convince a cell phone service provider to transfer your phone number (called porting) to the hacker's phone (sometimes this is called cell phone activation). With control of your phone account, they can now gain access to anything you have ever used your phone for.

Usually the first thing they do is change all the account information and passwords so you no longer have access (such as online banking and email accounts). They also change the recovery email account so if you do get a reset, they will be notified through the secondary email and can then start recovery of your recovery (convincing your provider, bank, etc that you are hacking them).

If you read the article noted above, you will see that this breech is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to deal with because there is such little recognition of the problem. These attacks are enabled by the information from other hacks. Especially hacks against big companies. T-Mobile recently suffered a large breach (billing info of over 2 million customers) but since passwords were encrypted, this was not considered a serious event (without regard to their having your full name, address, billing account number, etc). Also, about the same time, it was discovered that all the pin numbers for AT&T and T-Mobile were completely available to the public due to website flaws. More importantly, these hacks had nothing to do with your actions. You did not click a malicious link or go to a 'bad' website.away.

How to protect from this happening to you? As David Bowie sang, “It Ain’t Easy”. One way is to set up a passcode for account changes to your phone. Additionally, there are physical USB security keys (YibiKey or Google’s Titan). These are USB sticks you plug into your device to authorize changes. A backstop method is to set up email notification of account changes to multiple (family members) email accounts. This won’t stop the hack but you’ll know it is happening right away.

Many phone service providers now offer the option to not SIM Swap online (you must go to a physical store). Don’t trust two-factor authentication. Since the hacker has your phone account, the confirmation text will actually go to them. Oh, and don’t store your spreadsheet of passwords online. Services like LastPass and Dashlane are safe and Amazon has a calculator type device that stores password off the ‘net (search: passwordsFast). However, remember this hack is more about social engineering (fooling an account rep) than using a compromised password.

Unicorn companies

Last year, the online magazine CB Insights reported that the odds of becoming a unicorn — a privately held company valued at $1 billion or more—was less that 1% for companies that had raised venture capital. Still, in 2018, there were 47 tech companies in the US to reach unicorn status (according to data provided by PitchBook).

Some examples of unicorns are: Airbnb, SpaceX, WeWork, Epic Games, Peloton, DoorDash, Credit Karma, CrowdStrike, LegalZoom, Quora, reddit, Squarespace, Buzzfeed, 23andMe and SoFi.

To clarify some of the economic terms, venture capital is money committed to a project without stocks or sharing plan repayments. Often the venture capital comes from a group of people who have pooled their financial resources to find the next ‘unicorn’. There is a further nuance in the use of this term. The ‘capitalist’ are usually individuals and not investments from big corporations. IPO (Initial Public Offering) is the process of turning venture capital projects into stock financed companies or bond supported entities (things any stranger can buy).

As of this writing, there are 331 unicorns worth just over a combined 1 Trillion dollars. Uber and Pinterest lost unicorn status when they filed IPOs in 2019 on the Stock Exchange. https://www.cbinsights.com/research-unicorn-companies

HOSPICE HONORS

2019 Award Recipient

Grant County Hospice has been named a 2019 Hospice Honors recipient by HEALTHCAREfirst, a leading provider of surveys and advanced analytics. Hospice Honors is a prestigious program that recognizes hospices providing the highest level of quality as measured from the caregiver's point of view. Performance scores were aggregated from all completed surveys and were compared on a question-by-question basis to a National Performance Score calculated from all hospices contained in the HEALTHCAREfirst's Hospice CAHPS database. Hospice Honors recipients include those hospices scoring above the HEALTHCAREfirst National Performance Score on 20 of the evaluated questions. The award is the result of the hard work, dedication, and compassion of the entire Grant County Health Department staff (many of whom are pictured above), our Board, and our many partners.

Joyce Roling
Personnel Director

Continuous Improvement..... Over Coffee

A number of us met a couple of times discussing continuous improvement concepts and ways to encourage and remind employees always look for ways to improve processes. A few of the things you will notice soon will be motivational posters around your departments, continuous improvement example video's on the website, and about a 10 minute introductory spotlight on continuous improvement at quarterly trainings.

Our next meeting will be scheduled in September. Remember, everyone is invited to attend. The meetings do not last over one hour. *Join us Over Coffee and a light breakfast*.

(source, www.enna.com)

Anyone wishing to have a specific subject discussed in a future newsletter may contact Joyce Roling at 723-2045 or jroling@co.grant.wi.gov.

Team Grant County

Welcome to our Team!

New Employees - April 1, 2019 through July 6, 2019

Sheila Vella ~ April 3 ~ ADRC
Angele Jones ~ April 8 ~ Orchard Manor
Patricia Wells ~ April 9 ~ ADRC
Karen Kramer ~ April 12 ~ Orchard Manor
John Seippel, Jr. ~ April 22 ~ Orchard Manor
Betty Steiger ~ April 26 ~ Orchard Manor
Randy Tranel ~ April 29 ~ Highway
Todd Stenner ~ May 1 ~ Sheriff's Office
Erin Gleason ~ May 10 ~ Orchard Manor
Desiree Grattan ~ May 10 ~ Orchard Manor
Whitni Marfilius ~ May 10 ~ Orchard Manor
Alexxis Riley ~ May 10 ~ Orchard Manor
Roger Schauff ~ May 15 ~ Highway
Mia Schultz ~ May 15 ~ Fair
Jolene Ziebart ~ May 20 ~ Health
Heather Novinskie ~ May 21 ~ Orchard Manor
Jaclyn Witzig ~ May 29 ~ Social Services
Kate Nusbaum ~ June 3 ~ Sheriff's Office
Zachary Olson ~ June 3 ~ Sheriff's Office
Madeline Busch ~ June 4 ~ Orchard Manor
Brooke Eggers ~ June 4 ~ Orchard Manor
Emily Ruchti ~ June 4 ~ Orchard Manor
Kelly Altfillisch ~ June 5 ~ Social Services
Ashlyn Moon ~ June 17 ~ Orchard Manor
Emily Verstegen ~ June 24 ~ Clerk of Court
Cassara Bray ~ July 1 ~ Sheriff's Office
Terry Behling ~ July 2 ~ Orchard Manor
Ruth Goldwasser ~ July 2 ~ Orchard Manor
Gracie Hamann ~ July 2 ~ Orchard Manor
Diana Leeser ~ July 2 ~ Orchard Manor
Steven Mckillip ~ July 2 ~ Sheriff's Office
Sara Mergen ~ July 2 ~ Orchard Manor
Kaitlyn Waller ~ July 2 ~ Orchard Manor

Retirement Recognition

April 1, 2019 through July 8, 2019

Marsha Gore (ADRC), **32 years** (retired July 8)

April Miller (Orchard Manor), **22 years** (retired June 15)

Grant County wishes you a happy and healthy retirement!

Reminder: Please contact the County Personnel Office at least two months before your retirement date so we can assist you with the process.

Grant County Personnel Department

Please tell us
how we are doing.
Customer Service Survey

Dawn Mergen
Personnel Specialist

Joyce Roling
Personnel Director

Our customers are all of you!

The Personnel Office is always looking for ways to improve. Whether we are assisting you as an employee with benefit or policy questions or as a department with training, hiring, or other management questions, we want to know how we are doing.

You will see this link at the bottom of every email we send out. Click on Customer Service Survey and let us know how we did in assisting you. As always, call us with any questions you have. We are here to help you!

Please tell us how we are doing. Customer Service Survey

Thanks!

Service Anniversaries

July, 2019 through September, 2019 ***(5 year increments)***

Donald Parkins (Sheriff's Office), 30 years on August 1
Christine Johansen (Orchard Manor), 30 years on September 1
William Wiederholt (Highway), 30 years on September 18

Joyce Roling (Personnel), 25 years on August 5
Diana Arians (Social Services), 25 years on August 29

Jody Bartels (Register in Probate), 20 years on July 1
Stephan Braun (Emergency Management), 20 years on July 6
Donna Bohnenkamp (Highway), 20 years on August 16
Dharma Doll (Orchard Manor), 20 years on August 16

Steven Jeardeau (Sheriff's Office), 15 years on September 19

James Vesperman (Highway), 5 years on August 4
Erik Heagle (CSZ Department), 5 years on August 11
Pete Durni (Orchard Manor), 5 years on August 15
Corrina DeWitte (Orchard Manor), 5 years on August 29
Patrick Esser (Highway), 5 years on September 2
Kenneth Moris (Highway), 5 years on September 2
Cindy Ploessl (Social Services), 5 years on September 11

Aflac

Grant County's benefit eligible employees may participate in Aflac.
This coverage helps you pay for medical related out-of-pocket costs.

Policy changes/enrollments are effective July 1st and January 1st.

Michelle Nodorft (608-778-8057) from Aflac will be in Lancaster to meet with employees that would like to learn about the coverage types, have questions, or want to make changes.

Visit dates have been planned as follows.

November 7, 2019
Location schedule to be determined

Deferred Compensation Retirement Contributions

Grant County partners with Wisconsin Deferred Compensation program and Nationwide deferred compensation program, to provide an additional avenue of saving for your retirement other than WRS. All benefit eligible employees have the option to save through pre-tax or after-tax payroll deduction.

Representatives from both programs will be in Lancaster to meet with employees that would like to learn about deferred compensation, have questions, or want to make changes to their accounts.

Visit dates have been planned as follows.

September 19, 2019
Location schedule to be determined

Highway

O A D E G L L R O D X R W P E G D I R B E E R M R
P S X N O I T C U R T S N O C P D R O L N R E E H
I I T P G B I M O A R S C O N C R E T E D A L R C
T G G H O A P T R M K E U T A S P H A L T L O G -
I N T G - T A F T P M N P E N A L - R U O F E E M
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R A - U A A N C A Y F L S M T T W L P P S N I R Y
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N K X K A W H E N L T V R R I G H T - O F - W A Y
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O A D R I O I T P A T R O L M A N S T R A C T O R
P O T H O L E V A R G S W N O A D E S O L C T L O
R T W E E C N A R T N E D N E T N I R E P U S S E

Arrow
Asphalt
Backhoe
Blacktop
Bridge
Caution
Closed
Commissioner
Concrete
Construction
County
Dozer
Dump Truck
Entrance
Excavator
Exit
Foreman
Four-Lane
Grader
Gravel
Highway
Lights
Lines
Maintenance
Merge
Oil
Operator
Paint
Patch
Patrolman
Plow
Pothole
Ramp
Right-of-Way
Roadway
Roller
Salt
Sand
Shop
Signman
Signs
Slow
State
Stop
Superintendent
Tar
Tractor
Yield