



# THE COMMUNICATOR

## Grant County Employee Newsletter

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July, 2022



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Personnel  
Specialist

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## Grant County Fair

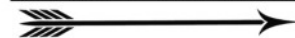
This year's Grant County Fair is  
August 17th thru the 21st.

Check out the two new things:  
**Music and Virtual Reality!**

Fair Website: [funonforty.co.grant.wi.gov](http://funonforty.co.grant.wi.gov)



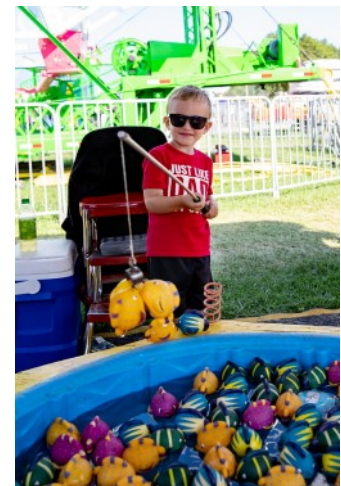
### ASHLEY BARRON



The Grant County Fair announces  
Country Music Artists  
Ashley Barron and Jarrod Turner  
in the  
Alternative Recycling Entertainment Tent  
Friday, August 19 at 8pm



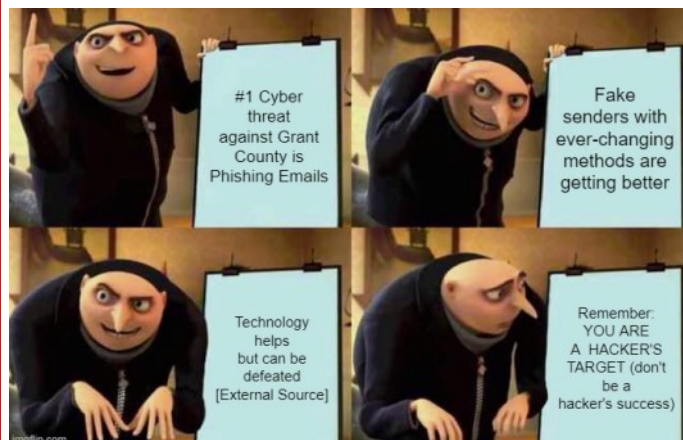
**FREE SHOW**  
with admission on grounds



*Photos submitted by Amy Olson,  
Grant County Fairgrounds & Operations Director*

## Dana's Desktop

Dana C. Andrews, Grant County IT Technician



### Lunar Farming

In a few years' time the U.S. will be returning humans to the moon (the Artemis program). This has renewed the idea of growing fresh vegetables to supplement the freeze-dried fare astronauts currently consume (anyone like the taste of TANG besides me?). To test the feasibility of doing this on the moon, The University of Florida horticulture division was given a small amount of actual moon dirt, stored from previous Apollo missions. In it, they tried to grow Thale Cress (*Arabidopsis thaliana*). The lunar regolith (technical name for dirt) came from three different locations and, more importantly, from different depths. What they found was pretty much what you would expect. Moon dirt is not good for growing stuff (must be all the cheese in it). The sample dirt from the surface actually



failed to produce a plant. This would be the level most exposed to cosmic radiation and solar winds. However, the deeper the soil sample, the better the Thale Cress grew. Still, none of the plants grew particularly well. They were smaller, slower-growing, and very inconsistent in size. Studying the genes of the plants showed that they were perceiving the lunar dust as stressful (too much or too little salts and metals, and oxidative stress as well). These are correctable conditions (no need to talk to Midwesterners about fertilizer) and in time we should be able to create greenhouses that function on the moon. An interesting side note was the plants grown in the 'real moon soil' grew differently from the simulated moon soil that had been used in the past.

### Leave the Driving to Us



Some of you may remember the above Greyhound Bus advertising campaign slogan. In Scotland, they are trying a new version of that. Mass transit is more prevalent in the U.K. Punctuality and consistency are an important component in making that work. However, human life can be complicated, even for bus drivers. So, in Edinburgh, Fife, & East, they are now testing a driverless version of full-size buses (but just the single decker versions). Earlier tests were done in London, Cambridge, and Birmingham but with smaller 'shuttle' buses. By current law, the buses are required to have



drivers in them but they function as ‘backups’ to monitor performance and ensure safety. If fully implemented, there will be an initial capacity to carry over 10,000 passengers a week autonomously. Note that unlike Tesla’s auto-drive program, these buses run over predetermined routes that will leave the driving public aware of their intentions at stops and intersections. In spite of this cutting-edge technology, I’m guessing the back of the bus still reeks of exhaust fumes (see the final paragraph of this column for an answer to that).

### Beam Me Up Scotty

As most of us know, ‘Bones’ on the original Star Trek did not like to “beam up”.

However, in ‘Star Trek: Voyager’, this was not a problem because



the physician was a holographic projection of the shipboard’s computer. Fun fantasy stuff at the time, but now NASA is trying to make this a reality. NASA, using a hybrid of these two ideas, termed “Holoportation”, recently tested an initial version that created a hologram on the ISS space-station of a doctor in real-time. Using technology created by AEXA Aerospace, a ‘live’ hologram of NASA flight surgeon Dr. Josef Schmid was projected. He greeted the onboard personnel with the traditional Vulcan hand gesture (“live long and prosper”) and even tried doing holo-handshakes. In this test, a specially designed projector was fixed to one of the modules, however they are actively working on an augmented reality version that will allow the hologram to move throughout the full space-station complex. Other possible future uses of this technology include the ability for scientists to work in extreme environments, trainers who can work side-by-side in teaching on the job skills, or even certain special military operations. (I vote for the version that

empties your kid’s backpacks after a week of summer camp).

### Have You (Not) Seen This?

There is a Kickstarter campaign going on right now for a working invisibility shield. Built by the Invisibility Shield Co, they claim to use a matrix of redirecting prism micro-lenses to highly diffuse anything close to the back of this shield while maximizing the more distant background’s light and color. This will make the holder a pale subtle blur against the enhanced background being reflected forward. Due to start shipping in December, they sell in two sizes. A 12” x 8” model for £49 (\$61.49) and a larger 37” x 25” for £299 (\$375.20). They are both 2.3 inches thick but do not require any sort of power supply. [Warning, nerd reference] One of the big investors is reported to be a certain Diana Prince.



### Alexa, Add a Tree to my Basket



As of April 11, you can tell your Alexa-enabled device “Alexa, grow a tree” and for a \$1 charge to your associated

account, a donation will be made to an environmental charity. The money will initially go towards four different projects in the US and India. In Centre County, Pennsylvania, the funds will help to reforest land that was razed for mining, logging and agriculture. In California, “hard-working foresters will dedicate time to promote improved vegetation planning and resource management” to help prevent wildfires. In the Pacific Northwest, newly planted trees near rivers and streams “will help keep water clean for salmon spawning grounds that orca whales

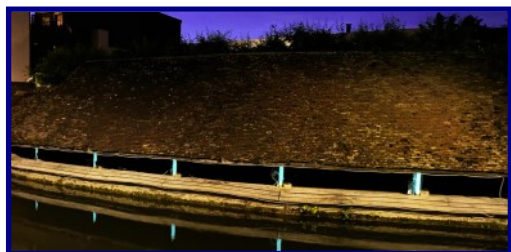
rely on as a food source,” while in India, fruit trees will be planted to “fight hunger, improve local economies, and combat climate change.”

## Twitter Drops

Twitter is testing a new shopping feature for previewing upcoming product releases. The feature, called “Product Drops”, will allow brands to tease you with their latest items before they go on sale. Customers will also be able to sign up for release date reminders. Currently this is a very limited rollout to Apple users (iOS) whose Twitter is set to English language. Companies signed up for this service include Dior, The Home Depot, and clothing company ‘Union Los Angeles’.



## Truly Natural Lighting



France is experimenting with public lighting that uses bioluminescence (think fireflies). In the small town of Rambouillet, 50 miles southwest of Paris, they lit a post-Covid waiting area with tubes that glowed a soft blue but used no electricity. Instead these lights were tubes of salt water containing a marine bacterium called *Aliivibrio fischeri*. Based on the success of that, they are now testing replacing the lights along one of their major streets with this same organic technology. Meanwhile, at the Charles-de-Gaulle airport, select lighting has been replaced with biologic illumination. Leading this creative adventure is a company called Glowee. Besides making lighting tubes, they are working on street furniture that incorporates this gentle light, including park benches and fountains.

They are currently in negotiations with 40 cities across France, Belgium, Switzerland, and Portugal

to expand this concept. The color of the Rambouillet tubes, blue-green, is typical of sea-based creatures because that wavelength is best adapted for transmission through water. However, bioluminescence can come in different colors. Fireflies, as you probably know, and certain types of snails glow yellow. There is a type of beetle-worm, called the “railroad worm” that has a red glowing head component but greenish dots along its body (said to resemble a train traveling at night). There is even a South African rodent whose hair glows a vivid pink. One of the issues in using living organics is that of cold weather (really tricky to try and knit all of them little scarves). To this end, Glowee is working on a chemiluminescence variation, where just the ‘glow’ enzyme that produces the light will be used. A Vancouver (Canada) based company is also trying to use enzymes to produce recyclable glow sticks. Maybe the most interesting experiment however, is that being conducted by a Russian company to produce plants with a bioluminescent component. Imagine a walk-way outlined by plants that glow in the dark! So much cooler than my Buzz Lightyear sticker.



## This Will Get Under Your Skin

A British-Polish firm, Walletmor, has started providing injected, under-the-skin, NFC (Near-field Communications) chips commercially. This allows the user to pay at stores and restaurants simply by waving their hand at a contactless pay-point. Consisting of a microchip



and antenna encased in a biopolymer film, these chips are about the size of a grain of rice. User report there is no discomfort after the injection (the insertion has been described as akin to a pinch). The device is powered by electricity from the human body and does not require a battery or re-charging. Several European countries and the UK have already passed legislation to allow and regulate its use. Besides the payment function, these chips can also be used to lock/unlock doors, act as public transit pre-paid cards, works at many ATMs, and even carry medical history and alert information about the wearer (ambulances and police would carry portable readers). It has a very short transmitting distance, making it virtually impossible to clone or use for tracking. Another company, the UK firm BioTeq, has also been implanting similar chips since 2017 for use by individuals with disabilities for things such as automatically opening doors. Implanting chips into humans is not new, with the first known use being in 1998.

### If Only There was a Better Way to Weed



To look at it, the ecoRobotix looks like an end table with wheels. Only in this case the table is a seven-foot-wide solar panel with cameras and GPS sensors around the edge.

Hanging down from this 'table' is a pair of arms that end, not in fingers, but a cup that goes over any weed it finds and injects a small amount of

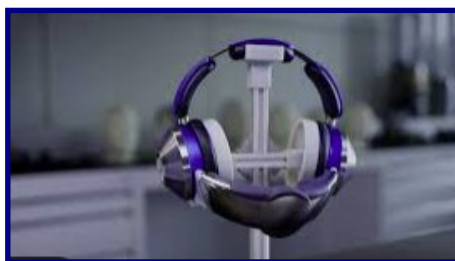
herbicide or covers a plant and infuses a pesticide. Currently, it is only set up for beets and canola but a recent investment from BASF (World's largest chemical company) should help develop this for other crops. It is fully automatic and does not require programming (outside of a general geofence). While this is currently being developed in Europe, an American company named Blue River is also working on a version for the US market.

### And Finally...

Dyson, the maker of all those vacuum cleaners, has now come out with a, well, I'm not sure what to call it. The device features a faceguard that is attached to head phones. The forward visor (what they call it) shoots purified air at your face



(contactless infusion). While it does have an option to add a Covid mask this is more about particulates, allergens, and pollutants. The headphones are noise cancelling so this is probably



more about big city living (or traveling in driverless buses).

***Remember, if you have a general comment, suggestion, or question about digital technology, you can email [techhelp@co.grant.wi.gov](mailto:techhelp@co.grant.wi.gov).***





## Please Welcome Seven New County Board Members!

Seven new county board members were elected to the Grant County Board of Supervisor's this past April. The county board is made up of seventeen members. Redistricting and retirement of members led to the large number of new members.

The county board is made up of the following people: Carol Beals, John Beinborn, Elias Cox, Adam Day, Roger Guthrie, Robert Keeney, Kathy Kopp, Brian Lucey, Joseph Mumm, Diane Nelson, Gary Northouse, Gary Ranum, Robert Scallon, Patrick Schroeder, Brandon Snyder, Donald Splinter and Steve "Porter" Wagner. Please refer to the County's website [www.co.grant.wi.gov](http://www.co.grant.wi.gov) and click on County Board Supervisors to see which district each represent and the committees they serve on.

These are pictures of the new board members. Please welcome them to the County Board!



Kathy Kopp



Brian Lucey



Joseph Mumm



Brandon Snyder



Elias Cox



Adam Day



Diane Nelson



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](mailto:jroling@co.grant.wi.gov).

## Newly Formed Safety Committee

In an effort to maintain a safe environment for workers, the Highway Department created a Safety Committee. Argent (workers' compensation insurance carrier) and the Personnel Department provided guidance and resources. The committee meets monthly to address potential safety issues with equipment and safety gear. In addition, they update or create safety policies, checklists, etc. during the meetings.



### Committee Members

Chad Kieler  
Jason Kieler  
Tom Vesperman  
Cory Burgess  
Sue Mumm



*(Pictures from the April committee meeting)*





# Highway Department Training

Training was presented in March to a large group of employees made up mostly of Highway Department staff. Training included CDL (Commercial Driver License) / Drug and Alcohol laws and policies as well as Blood Borne Pathogen cautions and proper clean-up.

Thank you to our trainers, Holly Muench, RN (the Health Department's Nursing Compliance & Quality Coordinator) and Donna Bohnenkamp (Highway Department Office Manager). General policy training was provided by Dawn Mergen (Personnel Specialist) and Joyce Roling (Personnel Director).

Below are some pictures from the training event.





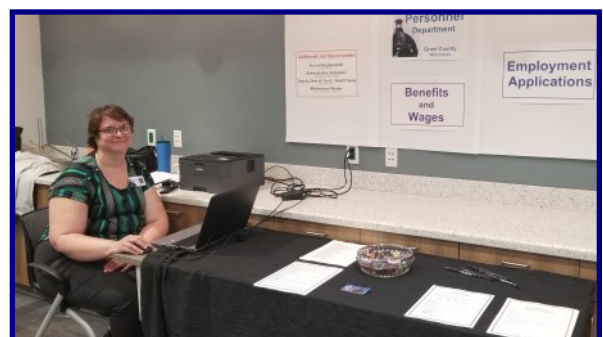
## Grant County Job Fair

Grant County's Personnel Department organized it's first ever Job Fair. The fair was held at the end of April in the County's Community Services Building Training Room. The County was very happy with the participation. As a result of formidable advertising for this event, we received an uptick in website views, social media views, and overall office contacts with general questions on positions and applications. Thank you to all the County employees, friends and citizens that spread the word about the event!

Many of our larger departments had "booths" set up and spent time giving attendees information about their department and the positions they were recruiting for. The Personnel Office was also there to speak with attendees about additional positions as well as the County's benefit package.

Departments that participated were Sheriff, Highway, Social Services, Unified, Orchard Manor and Health.

Below are pictures from the event.



## Well Attended Training by Brad Gingras, Owner of Superior Strategies

“Generations Unmasked!” and “Communication Strategies in a New Workforce” filled 93 seats with County employees throughout the day on April 21, 2022. What a great turnout!

Brad’s training was informative and entertaining. Staff mentioned they really appreciated the training.



## 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 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.



Please see the below schedule and choose the location(s) and time(s) that work best for you.

### September 15, 2022

#### **Nationwide Retirement Solutions;** Kerry Johnson (608)825-2516

9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at Orchard Manor (Conference Room 104)

11 a.m. *Group Presentation at the County Board Room; must contact Personnel Office if plan to attend*

11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Administration building (Conference Room 266)

1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the Community Services Building (Lobby Conference Room)

#### **Wisconsin Deferred Compensation;** Eric Jochimsen (608)241-6604

9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at the Community Services Building (Lobby Conference Room)

11 a.m. *Group Presentation at the County Board Room; must contact Personnel Office if plan to attend*

11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Administration building (Conference Room 201)

1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at Orchard Manor (Conference Room 104)



## 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 1<sup>st</sup> and January 1<sup>st</sup>.

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.



Please see the below schedule and choose the location(s) and time(s) that work best for you.

### November 17, 2022

Locations and times will be announced prior to the visit date.

## Team Grant County

### Welcome to our Team!

New Employees - March 13, 2022 through June 6, 2022

**Joshua Moore** ~ March 14 ~ Highway  
**Daniel Case** ~ March 15 ~ ADRC  
**Heidi Shaffer** ~ March 22 ~ Health  
**Gunner Pitzer** ~ March 25 ~ Sheriff  
**Jennifer Busch** ~ March 28 ~ Health  
**Derek Moore** ~ March 28 ~ Highway  
**Myleigh Bender** ~ April 1 ~ Orchard Manor  
**Myah Sierens** ~ April 1 ~ Orchard Manor  
**Patricia Winkers** ~ April 1 ~ Orchard Manor  
**Darrell Blessen** ~ April 4 ~ Sheriff  
**Misty Wagner** ~ April 5 ~ County Clerk  
**Kari Pierce** ~ April 11 ~ ADRC  
**Bailey Hermanson** ~ April 18 ~ CSZ  
**Cynthia Krantz** ~ April 18 ~ Orchard Manor  
**Rachel Ringberg** ~ April 18 ~ Orchard Manor  
**Bruce Clauer** ~ May 9 ~ Highway  
**Daniel Collins** ~ May 23 ~ Highway  
**Traci Kane** ~ May 23 ~ CSZ  
**Michaela Nyhus** ~ May 23 ~ Sheriff  
**Whitney Schildgen** ~ June 1 ~ Orchard Manor  
**Kristen Williamson** ~ June 6 ~ Clerk of Court

## Retirement Recognition

March 14, 2022 through June 6, 2022

**Philip Muller (Highway), 39 years (retired May 4)**

**Madelyn Foyt (Orchard Manor), 22 years (retired May 9)**

**Mary Allen (Health), 25 years (retired May 20)**

***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.*

## Service Anniversaries

July, 2022 through September, 2022 (5 year increments)

**Lisa Scholl (Orchard Manor), 40 years on July 12**

**Marla Thill (ADRC), 35 years on September 14**

**Kelly Bird (Sheriff), 25 years on September 22**

**Sarah Campbell (Orchard Manor), 20 years on August 29**

**Travis Kramer (Highway), 20 years on September 3**

**Benjamin Gavinski (Social Services), 15 years on July 23**

**Lucinda (Cindy) Deener-Price (Orchard Manor), 10 years on August 8**

**Andrea Reynolds (Sheriff), 10 years on September 23**

**Christina Potempa (Social Services), 5 years on August 1**

**Bryann McGuire (Social Services), 5 years on August 7**

**Meghan Blindert (Child Support), 5 years on August 9**

**Cody Trumm (Sheriff), 5 years on September 18**

**Richard Oyen (Facilities & Maintenance), 5 years on September 25**





# *United States of America*

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

Constitution  
 Democracy  
 Fireworks  
 Freedom  
 Marines  
 Navy  
 America  
 Army  
 Veterans

Air  
Force

Bill  
 of  
 Rights

Coast  
 Guard



Pledge  
 of  
 Allegiance

Red  
 White  
 and  
 Blue



Star  
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Land  
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