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## Message from Mark



As 2019 comes to a close, I'd like to take a moment and recognize all our Macomb County employees for their hard work and dedication. Your efforts make Macomb a great place to call home and I'm thankful for all you do. Now, even though this can be a very busy part of the year – both professionally and personally – I hope that you will carve out some time to participate in some (or all) of the many exciting things we have on the calendar.

- Coming up first is our annual Shop Local Macomb campaign, an initiative that encourages spending at locally owned and operated retail establishments. Planning and Economic Development works with our local chambers of commerce to organize this effort and I'm proud of what they've achieved over the last several years. So I ask you to consider participating in the campaign starting Nov. 29 and running through Dec. 8. There's even a chance to win one of five \$500 gift cards! To learn more, click [here](#).

- In just a few weeks, I'll deliver my 9<sup>th</sup> annual State of the County address. I hope you can attend to hear some of the exciting developments underway here in Macomb County and to celebrate our accomplishments together. The event will be held from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 4 at the Macomb Center for the Performing Arts. Afterwards, all guests are welcome to join me at the much anticipated Taste of Macomb, which will feature complimentary hors d'oeuvres and refreshments from dozens of local restaurants. Both events are free to attend, but advance registration is required through this [link](#).

- Our annual Holiday Gathering will be held on Wednesday, Dec. 11 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the lobby of the Administration Building. All employees are invited to share their holiday baking traditions by bringing a batch of a favorite treat or cookie to pass. I hope to see you there so we can celebrate the holidays and the end of the year together.

To get involved, please contact Michele at [coppola@macombgov.org](mailto:coppola@macombgov.org).

- Finally, tomorrow is the Macomb County Santa Parade in downtown Mount Clemens. The weather looks promising, so I encourage all employees to come out and celebrate with us.

Here's to a wonderful holiday season and a very happy New Year!

## Employee Focus

Michael Grix, Chief Election Clerk

## Event Calendar



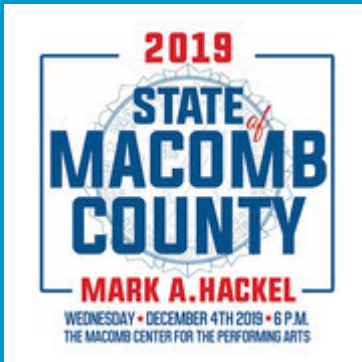
## Macomb County Sheriff's Department Blood Drive

Monday, December 2; 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Sheriff's Department Training Room

43635 Elizabeth Road, Mount Clemens

[Click here for more information.](#)



## State of the County

Wednesday, December 4; 6 p.m.

Macomb Center for the Performing Arts

44575 Garfield Road, Clinton Township

[RSVP here](#)



## Careers in MFG Expo

December 5

Macomb Community College • Sports & Expo Center

14500 E. 12 Mile Road, Warren

[Click here for more information.](#)



This past summer, employees selected Michael Grix, chief election clerk, to act as the newest employee representative on the Macomb County Employees Retirement Board. This voluntary position acts as the voice of employees in policy development, investment options and strategic decisions that keep the Macomb County pension system strong.

"I went through some challenges with my own pension," Michael said. "A former member of the Retirement Board helped guide me and support me through a confusing and sometimes

overwhelming process. I wanted to have a say in the future of our pension system and help make it less intimidating for other employees."

A graduate of Western Michigan University with a degree in Computer Information Systems, Michael first joined the Clerk's Office in 2004, settling into the Election Department after six months. There he has been part of the team responsible for administering all of Macomb County's elections, including programming, ballot design and layout, election inspector training, voter outreach and campaign finance administration.

Outside his election duties, Michael, known as Mike, has been instrumental in designing computer applications to aid the Election Department, Vital Records, Jury Room and Court Section, as well as designing and maintaining web pages for the entire office.

"I love the variety of projects that I've been asked to help with," he said. "My degree is in Information Systems. And while I have a passion for elections, I still love working with computers. I'm grateful to be able to use my skills and training to help move the Clerk's Office forward, making our services more accessible to the public and easier for our employees. We've really made some great strides in the last year or so, restoring the Clerk's Office under Fred Miller."

Mike is a lifelong Macomb County resident, graduating from L'Anse Creuse High School as valedictorian, a drumline section leader and a varsity basketball star. His hobbies include bowling, attending Broadway musicals and rooting for the Tigers and the University of Michigan. He is married to his wife Sara, a special education service coordinator for Algonac Schools, and has two children, Ryan and Josh. He spends a lot of free time working with them on their Cub Scout requirements as part of Pack 97 in Chesterfield.

"I was in Cub Scouts and Indian Guides when I was younger," he said. "I loved spending that time with my dad and my friends...going on campouts, building campfires, getting dirty, exploring in the woods and all that stuff. I'm so happy that my boys are interested in that too. Now I get to experience it and enjoy it from the other side – the parent side."

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## Employee Accolades

**Anna Duffer**



## Home Fur the Holidays Adoption Event

December 13 - December 14  
Macomb County Animal Control  
21417 Dunham Road, Clinton  
Township

[Click here for more information.](#)

## Blog Log

['Tis the season...for holiday shopping](#)

[Geocaching 101](#)

[Macomb County Manufacturing Day gives 2,400 students behind-the-scenes access to local industry.](#)

[How Macomb County is helping connect local suppliers with the defense industry.](#)

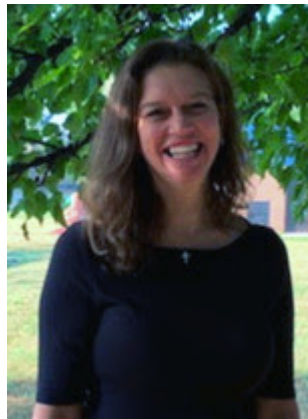
## News Nook

[Macomb County Health Department Assists St. Clair Shores with Lead Prevention Efforts](#)

[Macomb County Health Department urges the public to take action to prevent the flu](#)

[Macomb County Department of Roads Asks Residents to Shake Mailboxes Ahead of Snow Season](#)

[MCPWO Directs Pollution Cleanup in Bear Creek Drain](#)



Earlier this year, Anna Duffer, administrative coordinator for Macomb Community Action, was awarded a DeRoy Testamentary Foundation Scholarship from Walsh College. The full academic scholarship will help her pursue a bachelor's degree in accountancy.

Anna reflected on this in a recent Walsh College [news article](#): "It's financial relief, but it's so much more. When I am feeling overwhelmed, I think about this scholarship and it's like a hand on my shoulder reminding me that nothing is impossible and hard

work does not go unnoticed."

Anna previously earned associate degrees in both accounting and business management from Macomb Community College. By earning her bachelor of accountancy, she will gain knowledge about funding and budget resources, along with management skills that will help her with her work on Macomb Community Action's community development programs and the annual Walk for Warmth event.

The Macomb Matters team would like to congratulate Anna on the receipt of this scholarship. This is an incredible and well-deserved award!



## Andrew McKinnon

The American Society of Employers (ASE) recently recognized Macomb County HRLR Director Andrew McKinnon as one of its Michigan HR Executives of the Year for 2019. McKinnon was one of four [honorees](#).

"The honorees continue to impress me each year, and this year is no exception. The dedication to the HR profession is prevalent in each of the 2019 HR Executives of the Year," said Mary E. Corrado, ASE president and CEO.

The ASE, which is one of the nation's oldest and largest employer associations, presented the awards at its 16th annual ASE Summit on Thursday, November 7. The four winners were submitted through a nomination process and selected based on work that distinguishes them in the field of human resources management. McKinnon was recognized in the "Non-Profit Organization - Small Employer" category.

"Andy is a strong leader that brings creativity and passion to our HR director role," said County Executive Mark A. Hackel. "I am proud to see him recognized on this statewide platform and would like to congratulate him on behalf of the Macomb County organization."

Thank you for all your hard work and dedication, Andy. And again, congratulations on the Michigan HR Executive of the Year award!

Would you like to nominate someone to be recognized in the Employee Focus or Accolades sections? Please send your suggestion

to [maria.zardis@macombgov.org](mailto:maria.zardis@macombgov.org)

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## New Hires/Retirees



### **Peter Locke retires from Macomb County!**

The Macomb Matters team is pleased to recognize Peter Locke on his retirement from Macomb County! Peter has served as an emergency management aide for Macomb County Emergency Management and Communications since 2002. Prior to that, Peter was with the Dearborn Fire Department for 26 years. He retired from that department as a lieutenant and in a dual role, as the city's emergency management coordinator. Recently, we asked Peter to reflect on his years of service for this newsletter.

#### **What will you miss most about working for Macomb County?**

I will miss my coworkers, all of the county employees I have had the pleasure of knowing and working with and all of the fine first responders in Macomb County. It wasn't the work that I enjoyed as much as the people the work introduced me to.

#### **What are you most proud of in your career with Macomb County?**

I think that I am not as proud as I am happy with the work we in Emergency Management do every year to assist our first responders and our citizens to be more aware of the threats that we in Macomb County face. Macomb County is a good and safe place to live and work but there are still threats out there. We work hard every year to keep the public informed and our first responders ready. That is all anyone can do and I think we in Emergency Management, as a team, do it quite well.

#### **What are your post-retirement plans?**

For anyone who knows me, I am ready for my annual trip to Disney World. After that I look forward to throwing away my alarm clock and just letting life happen. I don't mind getting up early, I just don't want to have to get up early. It's the retirement mindset that I look forward to. I have had 44 years, both here and at the Dearborn Fire Department, responding to emergencies and traumatic events. It will be nice not to have to worry whenever the weather becomes threatening.

On behalf of the Macomb Matters team, congratulations on your well-deserved retirement Peter!

Click [here](#) for a list of New Hires/Retirees

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## Meet the Blue Coats

When you enter or leave most Macomb County facilities you will oftentimes





encounter a friendly face wearing a navy jacket, white oxford shirt and tie. These individuals are known as Blue Coats, and they're the first point of contact for employees and visitors at county and court buildings. But this team provides a much greater service beyond greeting guests -- they're trained professionals that keep our buildings secure and the people in them safe.

Blue Coat Supervisor Chet Keller recently spoke with the Macomb Matters team to give our readers a better understanding of the team's role at the county.

"We are people just like everyone else," he said. "We have a job to do just like everyone else."

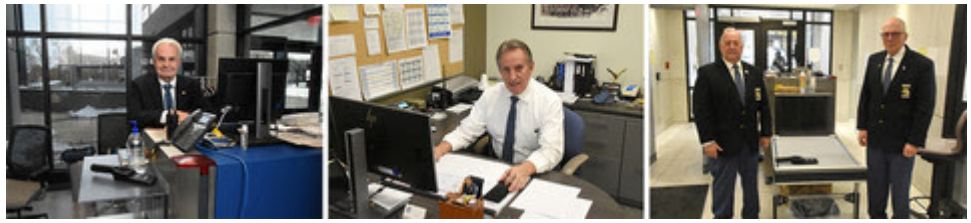
In the interview, Keller shared the structure and responsibilities of the Blue Coats. First and foremost, they are administered through the Sheriff's Department and are stationed at seven county and court buildings, including the Administration Building, the Old County Building and the Circuit Court. Their main responsibility is keeping weapons of any type from entering county facilities, including knives, scissors, pepper spray, any sharp objects and tools. With a team that is 80 to 90 percent retired police officers, the Blue Coats excel at this task. But of course, county employees and visitors can help them with this work. When asked how, Keller shared the following:

"At times, citizens and employees may have bad days where they think it unnecessary to go through the entrance points and comply with the very simple rules," he said. "It may take a few moments and some direction, but for the most part, all will understand and comply. Just remember, this is for the safety of all people in the buildings."

In terms of how employees can help in an emergency, Keller stated:

"Emergency preparedness is paramount. When given directions by Blue Coats or Deputies, please respond in a calm and courteous manner. The directions are for safety in exiting the building and where to go in the particular emergency."

In situations like an emergency, experience matters. Which is why it is important to note that the Blue Coats are more than prepared. Their average tenure is five to eight years on the job. Some individuals have even more time under their belt. For instance, Keller has been at the county since 2001. Then there's James Scanlon, Dan Burbeula and Gary Sibears, who have all worked as a Blue Coat since 1999. Finally, there's John Osier, who has served on the team since 1997. That is an incredible amount of time for any person working any job, so the Macomb Matters team would like to recognize and thank these individuals. Additionally, we would like to thank all of the Blue Coats for their service. The efforts of this team keep the county safe day in and day out and we appreciate all you do.



## Erika Lynn Ladas Tribute



On the morning of October 8, 2019, Macomb County Dispatcher Erika Ladas was heading home after her shift, when a tragic accident took her life. A southbound vehicle on North Avenue struck a deer and sent it into Erika's vehicle, which was heading northbound. Erika sustained fatal injuries. While there are a number of

things to worry about, this type of event doesn't even cross our minds. It provides a context to remind us how truly fragile life can be and to focus on the things that matter.

Erika had a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from Michigan State University, and wanted to follow in her father's footsteps to work in law enforcement. Even while pursuing that dream, she found time to do the things she enjoyed. She loved movies and books, especially the Harry Potter series. She enjoyed shopping and make-up, and most of all, she loved spending time with her family.

Erika joined the county in January 2019. Sheriff Wickersham noted that she would be missed, stating: "Erika was an asset to the Macomb County Sheriff's Office... she was a part of our law enforcement family. She worked diligently in dispatch to provide public safety to our citizens in need."

Erika is survived by her two young children, Mason and Hazel, her mother, her longtime boyfriend and her siblings, as well as many extended family members.



The Michigan Fraternal Order of Police is collecting donations for Erika's family. If you would like to contribute, please visit their website at <http://www.mifop.com/>. They will also accept checks through the mail, at MIFOP Foundation, 1457 East Twelve Mile Road, Madison Heights, MI 48071. Please indicate "Erika Ladas" in the memo line.

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## Get ready for the 2020 Census

Everyone is important and everybody counts! And while that is true every day, it will be especially so beginning April 1, 2020. By that date, every home in America will have received an invitation from the government of the United States to be counted for the 2020 Census. Your responses shape the future of your community. Consider this:



- **Census data influences funding!** Information collected is used to determine how much federal funding and resources are directed to your states and communities each year. This includes funding for classrooms, roads, the environment and disaster recovery.
- **Census data is used for**

**purposes of representation!** If there is an increase in population in your area, you want to make sure you're getting the representation your community deserves.

- **Census data is used by private industry!** When companies such as Walmart or Costco are considering where to locate new stores, or manufacturers are scouting locations for new factories, they study census data to see if a community is a good fit. Companies also use the information to decide which products or services to offer.

The Census is mandated by the United States Constitution and was first conducted in 1790. At that time, individuals had to be counted manually – in person, by count takers who travelled door-to-door on foot or horseback, with pencil and paper in hand. Today, you can answer by phone or mail, and, for the first time ever, online (even from your mobile device)! With today's technology, we've never had a better opportunity to gather a complete and correct snapshot of our country. Make sure you're counted!

For more information about the 2020 census, how you can do your part and why it matters, please visit <https://2020census.gov/>.

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## County departments partner with a local FIRST LEGO League team



The Macomb County Department of Roads and the Department of Planning and Economic Development recently worked with students from the Roberts Elementary School FIRST LEGO team. FIRST Lego League is a component of FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology), a global program that encourages interest in science,

technology, engineering and math. Roberts Elementary reached out to the county for assistance with the FIRST Lego League regionals, which took place on November 16. The team took first for gracious professionalism and fourth overall, and now advances to the state competition on December 7 at Mason High School. Teams are competing in the CITY SHAPER Challenge to solve real-world challenges facing their communities. The Roberts LEGO Robotics team project will focus on winter maintenance, road conditions, technology and the environment.

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## Healthstyles



While the holidays can be fun and festive, they can also be stressful. To help deal with the stress of cooking, shopping and merry making, Healthstyles is excited to announce exercise offerings for all Macomb County employees. All levels of fitness are welcome!

### **Jazzercise Mount Clemens**

Located in Mount Clemens, Jazzercise offers convenient, accessible and fun classes for everyone. Courses focus on realistic, attainable and manageable goals and are provided at an affordable rate. Macomb County employees receive 10 percent off of monthly memberships. Click [here](#) for more information.

### **Zumba and Yoga**

Located in the activity center of the Verkuilen Building, employees can enjoy on-site Zumba and Yoga classes.

Zumba: All levels of fitness are welcome. Wednesdays 5 pm - 6 pm

Yoga: All levels of fitness are welcome. Mondays; 5:30 pm-6:30 pm. Please bring a mat.

Click this [link](#) or contact the Healthstyles Committee directly at [healthstyles@macombgov.org](mailto:healthstyles@macombgov.org) for more information and dates.

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## For Your Benefit



### **A message from Andrew McKinnon**

In the HRLR department it is officially negotiating season. We are working hard to make positive progress in our collective bargaining agreements when it comes to organizational efficiencies and compensation. Fortunately, we have held the line on health care costs for all groups that have been ratified and approved prior to January 1, 2020.

While tax avoidance isn't usually viewed as an increase in compensation, it is real money in your pocket. I say this because it is getting close to the time that you have to have spent all of the money in your Flexible Spending Account ("FSA"). An FSA allows for employees to put money into an account pre-tax and spend it on qualifying medical expenses without any tax consequences on the spend. Essentially this is money that can be spent without ever being taxed.

I often think about tax being at least 20%, after the State and Federal government get their cut. This means that putting \$1,000.00 into a FSA has \$1,200.00 of buying power. It's not that simplistic, but it's close.



Please don't forget that if you elected to have a Medical Flexible Spending Account ("FSA") in 2019, those funds must be spent before March 15, 2020. Additionally, Dependent Care FSAs must be spent out by December 31, 2019. If either is not spent out by the deadline they are forfeited according to IRS rules.

In addition to the usual products offered through the county, this year we also offered the High Deductible plan ("HDHP") with a Health Savings Account ("HSA"). We received a number of thoughtful questions and interest in this plan, but we continue to have limited participation. We will continue to seek products that may be of interest to our staff and offer them as options.

I appreciate you taking the time to read our Macomb Matters periodical and I wish you all Happy Holidays.

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## Perks at Work



### Save on holiday travel with Perks at Work

The Macomb County Perks at Work program can help you save on travel with discount pricing and easy price compare options. You can save up to 60 percent on rental cars, and anywhere from five to 60 percent off select

hotels. The travel results will pull together the best offers from multiple travel sites, including Priceline, Expedia and Booking.com.

The best part? When you book through Perks at Work, you earn WOWPoints to be used on future purchases!

In addition to discount travel, Perks at Work is offering the following discount days in December:

- Electronics Fair – 12/4 – 12/6
- Tickets Fair – 12/5 -12-6
- Free Shipping day – 12/13
- Last Minute Gifts – 12/11 to 12/24

Log onto your Macomb County Government Perks at Works account at [www.perksatwork.com](http://www.perksatwork.com)

Not a member yet? Go to the website, register for free with your personal email account and get full access to all available discounts. (Company code: Macombgov78).

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## BOC seeking nominations for the Casual Day Program

The Board of Commissioners is pleased to announce the continuation of the Macomb County Casual Day Charitable Collections Program. Through this effort, participating employees may wear casual clothing to work on Fridays if they donate

at least a dollar. That money is then shared with various charities. Since the program was first adopted in 1994, nearly \$702,000 has been donated!

Please note - the Board of Commissioners is now seeking nominations for charities that can benefit from the 2020 Casual Day Program. **Employees, or anyone, who would like to submit the name of a charity to be considered should turn in written requests to the Board office no later than Friday, December 6, 2019.** All requests should be written on letterhead from a designated official of the charity and must be accompanied by a current 501(c)(3) certificate and solicitation license from the State Attorney General's Office.

Eligibility criteria and program details were shared via email in October. Please review those documents ahead of submitting a charity for consideration so you can ensure your request is in compliance with Board policy. If you have questions, or need more information about this program, please contact Laura Murphy at (586) 466-4524.

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## MMYH Ambassadors

### Veterans Services

Welcome to MMYH Ambassadors! Where all you need to do is read this article and take the quiz for a chance to win cool county swag! Why do all this? Well, as a county employee you can help guide your family, friends and neighbors to important programs that fit their needs. Our goal with this ambassador section is to help you get to know these programs.

So let's get started. In this edition, we highlight Macomb County Veterans Services. This is an important department for local veterans, as the process of finding, applying for, receiving and maintaining veterans benefits can be confusing and frustrating. The department's goal - to provide outstanding service to veterans and their families by maximizing the receipt of veterans benefits and eliminating or reducing the frustration and confusion that go along with the process.

The Veterans Services office is located at the Verkuilen Building. Here, hard-working staff help veterans get the benefits they deserve including but not limited to:

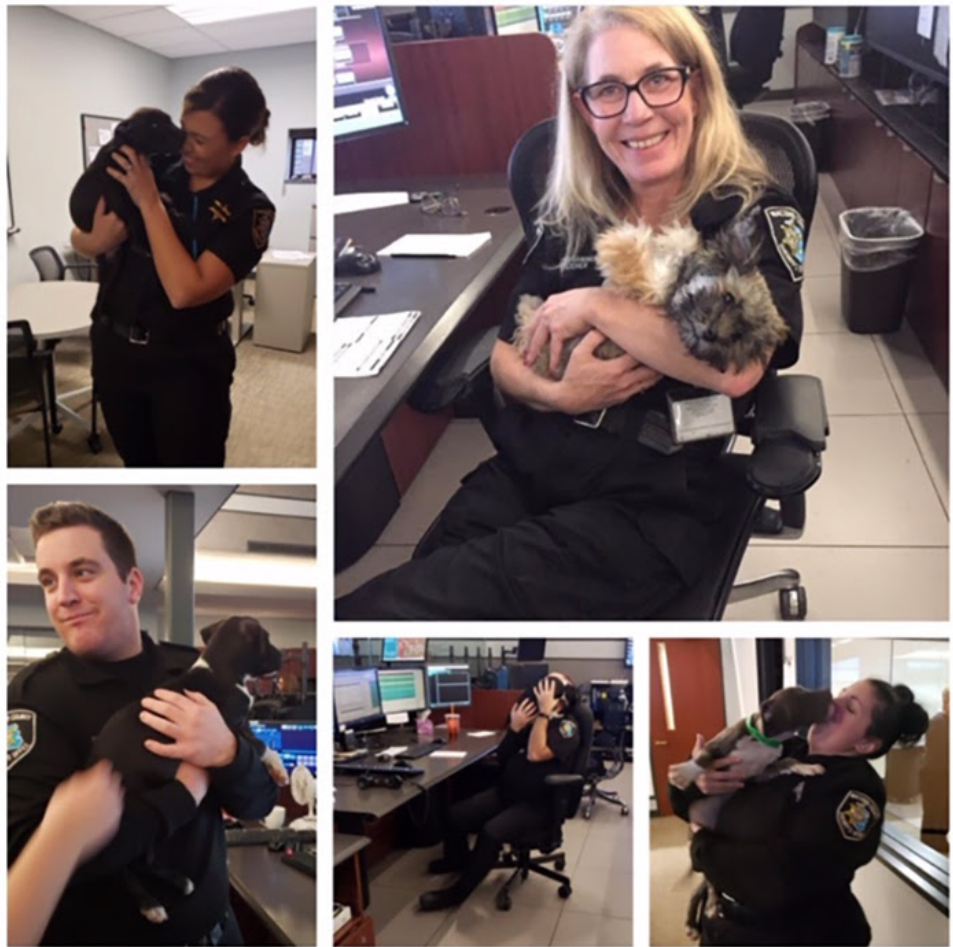
- Burial allowance
- Dependency
- Compensation for service-related death
- Grave markers
- Death pensions
- Medal requests
- Burial in national cemetery
- Education for spouse and children

To learn more about the department and the services it offers, click [here](#).

Now - think you're ready to complete the ambassador quiz? Click [here](#) to get started and stay tuned for the next issue, where we'll cover a new topic.

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## Paw Print



### **Greetings from Chief Randazzo!**

Recently, Macomb County suffered the tragic loss of a colleague, Erika Ladas, a dispatcher with the Sheriff's Department. It was a devastating event for all of us. During times like these, it is natural to want to help, but also to wonder what anyone could possibly do to ease the pain of others. Often, we are told "just be there." That can be hard. As people, we want to feel useful, we want to say the "right" thing and do the "right" thing. Staying present, and listening, and being unable to do something, is an awkward, uncomfortable state for most people.

Animals, however, are uniquely gifted to operate in that space. When a hurting person expresses their grief and sadness, animals don't feel awkward. They don't feel uncomfortable. They are perfectly content to just "be." They are patient. They don't judge. They live in the now, and when the painful emotions are in the present, they are too. Over and over again, for as long as is necessary.

With that in mind, in the face of this tragedy, it was our privilege to bring some puppies to visit the employees at the Dispatch Center. As only puppies can do, they brought unconditional love and acceptance in the face of overwhelming grief. It is our hope that, amid the furry hugs and kisses, our fellow employees found some comfort, if only for a moment.

I wish everyone a Thanksgiving filled with gratitude. It is my heartfelt desire that everyone has someone to be there for them; furry or otherwise. If you are interested in adopting an animal, please visit our website at <https://animalcontrol.macombgov.org/Animalcontrol-Home>. Take care.

## Recipe Corner - Sweet Potato Muffins

### Ingredients

- 4 tablespoons margarine
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2/3 cup mashed sweet potatoes
- 1 egg
- 3/4 cup flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/2 cup skim milk
- 1/4 cup chopped pecans
- 1/4 cup chopped raisins



### Utensils

- Medium mixing bowl
- Large mixing bowl
- Mixing spoon
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Beaters
- 1 1/2 inch mini muffin tin

### Directions:

1. Wash your hands and clean your cooking area.
2. Preheat your oven to 400<sup>0</sup>F.
3. In a medium mixing bowl, cream margarine and sugar.
4. Add the egg and sweet potatoes; mix well.
5. In a large bowl, stir flour with baking powder, salt and spices.
6. Alternate adding milk and the potato mixture to the large bowl with your dry ingredients.
7. Fold in nuts and raisins.
8. Spoon into greased 1 1/2 inch muffin tins, filling each 2/3 full.
9. Bake at 400<sup>0</sup>F for 10 minutes or until golden brown.
10. Let cool for about 5 minutes before serving.

The Macomb Matters Committee would like to thank the hard-working staff at MSU Extension for their recipe contributions. For more information about the programs MSU Extension offers, please visit <https://msue.macombgov.org/MSUE-Home>.

### Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 mini muffin

30 servings per recipe

Calories.....53 calories

Fat.....2g

Saturated fat.....0g

Cholesterol.....7mg

Sodium.....92mg

Carbohydrate.....8g



Fiber.....0g  
Sugars.....5g  
Protein.....1g  
Vitamin A.....9%  
Calcium.....3%  
Vitamin C.....1%



[www.macombgov.org](http://www.macombgov.org)  
(586) 469-7001

