

Dickinson County Courthouse Newsletter

January 15, 2015



Employee Spotlight!

Let's get to know our County employees!

The December Newsletter featured the picture of the little girl to the left. Did you guess Sue Duhn?

The following is a little personal information provided by Sue:

Start date with Dickinson County: Started very part time in May 1999 while also going to college. Started full time April 2003

Where born: Estherville, Iowa

Places Lived: Farm NW of Superior, Cedar Falls, Spirit Lake

Hobbies, talents, special interests: Watching my children participate in their various activities, watching football, scrapbooking, reading

Favorite Travel Spots: Black Hills with my family and friends, the ocean, Florida

Favorite Food: Mexican

Least Favorite Food: All nuts and peanut butter

If I were stuck on an island, I would bring (3 things): . My husband, my kids, and a good book

Something few know about me: I have always wanted to go to Lambeau Field to watch a Packers football game

Favorite thing to do in Dickinson County: Spend time with my family doing any activity.

Recipe of the month:

Wontons...

1 (16 oz) pkg. wonton wrappers (these can be found in the tofu area)

In a bowl.

1 pound sausage

1 c. Shredded cheddar cheese

1 c. Shredded mozzarella cheese

1 onion

1 red pepper chopped

1 c. Hidden valley dressing (put in until looks okay but not runny)

Put wonton wrappers in a greased muffin tin. Bake empty wonton wrappers at 350 degrees for 4 minutes.

Pull out of oven and fill with the above and put back in at 350 degree oven for 12 minutes.

2014-----The way it was!

Each Dickinson County Office was asked to reflect on the year of 2014 and shared its most notable event.

Community Services/Mental Health: Beth only has a couple of words for her paragraph for her office. Regionalization of MENTAL HEALTH!



Auditor's office: The Auditor's office lost 40 years of experience but forged ahead with an incredibly talented and knowledgeable staff and we have SURVIVED! We have all gone outside of our comfort zones many a times but we are better County Employees because of it. We will continue to learn all the processes required of the office and provide the integrity and expertise that is expected as County

Employees. I can say for myself and for my co-workers, the pieces of the puzzle are fitting together as we learn the processes A-Z, not just a portion of the process. Life is GOOD! I also need to mention that we survived the November Election. Who would have thought it would have been this crazy...watch out FY2016!



Sheriff's Office: Dickinson County deputies were called to the 28th Street address near East Lake Okoboji in Spirit Lake at 10:25 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 8, 2013, for an unresponsive female. The December murder case that drew authorities to the outskirts of Spirit Lake came to a close with a hearing and series of court filings Monday April 21, 2014.

8-8-2014 at approximately 2:03 am, Dickinson County Sheriff's Deputy Josh Roberts was westbound on Hwy 9 & 71, east of Spirit Lake, driving a Chevrolet Impala patrol vehicle. Laverne Schweertmann (55), of Breckenridge MN was driving a 1977 Harley Davidson motorcycle eastbound in the westbound lane. Roberts swerved to miss the motorcycle but was unable to get out of its path. The motorcycle struck the passenger side of the patrol vehicle. Schweertmann was transported by Ambulance to LRH with incapacitating injuries and then transferred to Avera McKenna Hospital in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Deputy Roberts was not injured in the accident.



Secondary Road Department:

The Dickinson County Secondary Road Department continues to run a tight fiscal budget, and 2014 was no exception. The Road Use Tax Fund accounts for approximately 40% of the Road budget and receipts continue to be very flat. The gasoline tax, which accounts for the largest portion of the Road Use Tax Fund, has not been increased since 1989 in Iowa. Consequently, staffing has been reduced by four employees over the last several years. In December, Bill Lehner was hired as a new Full time Equipment Operator in the Spirit Lake Maintenance Shop. The filling of this position was the result of the promotion of Verlyn Vanderveen to Shop

Foreman which was predicated by the retirement of Dick Larson, the longtime Shop leader. Bill was the first employee to be hired out of the last five (5) employees to have left the Secondary Road Department. We hope that with the national trend of lower fuel prices, the legislature does something about the long overdue fuel tax.

Veteran Affairs:

Two Tax Breaks were initiated for Iowa Veterans in the past year:

- 1) Disabled Veteran's Homestead Tax Credit - This recently-enacted legislation provides 100% exemption of property taxes (primary residence) for 100% disabled service-connected veterans and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) recipients.
- 2) Military Tax Exemption - This recently-enacted legislation exempts federal retirement pay received for military service and survivor benefits from state individual income tax



Treasurer's office:

One of the most notable happenings in the treasurer's office this year involved changing banks. We bid out the county's banking business in November, following completion of our 3 year agreement with Bank Midwest who had won the bids for our business over the last 6 years. This time Northwest Bank gave us the most favorable bid, so we made the switch. I look at interest rate, security features, technological ability and depository capacity. The transition began in December. It is a large endeavor as we have over 20 accounts and do business utilizing ACH credits/debits with a number of state, federal and local entities. We also handle our county's motor vehicle business, tax collection, claims, bonds, payroll, med benefit program and receipts for our various county offices. We've had a good relationship with Bank Midwest in the past and are looking forward to our new partnership with Northwest Bank.

On a more personal level, we've had notable staffing changes. Christina Ostovic became the motor vehicle deputy on 1/1/2014, following Julie Lande's retirement. Julie had been the motor vehicle deputy for many decades under 3 treasurers. Christina had big shoes to fill, and she has gotten off to a great start!



IT/GIS:

Amy and I feel lucky to get to work at helping make each of your offices. In the past year each office had some sort of change or implementation that we helped with. Major projects that were implemented in the IT/GIS were new servers and switches. There have also been many map requests especially with all the hog confinements. Overall, our goal is to use technology to help make each

department's job easier and we hope we have accomplished that in 2014. We will continue to work towards that goal in 2015.



Recorder's office:

I'm happy to be continuing in my elected role for 4 more years and although we've always had a role of retaining historic land/vital/recreational vehicle documents, in the last year we've also begun to focus on back-up and digital Historic Preservation. We are continuing these efforts in 2015.

Conservation:

If you didn't make it out to one of the county areas then you missed a lot of progress, and I am here to share with you some of those great projects. Orleans Beach received a new look with new playground equipment and a new shelter house, with a new bathhouse planned for 2015. Many new displays were placed into the nature center with one of the largest attractions being the indoor bee hive, which help to generate one of the biggest Bee & Butterfly Festivals ever, with more than 500 people in attendance. We were able to add two swans to the wetland south of the nature center during the summer months. We designed and presented many new environmental programs to the public and joined forces in several projects with other community organizations. A new direction for the recycling center was implemented to assist in the overall recycle process of many items that would normally end up in the landfill. As you can see, we had an amazing 2014 and will continue our progress in 2015.

Environmental Health/Planning & Zoning:

There was a changing of the guard in the Environmental Health and Zoning office. Barb Woodley retired after almost 28 years of service, and Megan Kardell was hired in May as her successor.



E911/Emergency Management:

E-911: Upgrades to the 911 system for Next-Generation 911 and being appointed to the Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications Systems Board by Governor Branstad.

Emergency Management: The severe weather that hit, most notably the June storms, and the ensuing Federal Disaster Declaration - the sixth federal disaster declaration for Dickinson County in the 11 1/2 years I've been here.

Assessor's Office:

Vanguard Appraisals, Inc. is finishing up with the reappraisal for commercial, industrial and grain elevator properties in Dickinson County. The purpose of the reappraisal is to equalize property assessments so that each taxpayer is responsible for paying their fair share of property taxes. Vanguard started this process in October 2013. They have compiled information to be used to estimate the fair market value of each property. Information collected included: type of construction, type of interior finish, physical condition of the property, age of structure and exterior measurements. A complete sales analysis, local construction costs and economic conditions were also considered. Notice of final value estimates will be mailed in February for these properties. The property owners have an opportunity to meet informally with a Vanguard representative to discuss their revaluation in March.

DO YOU REMEMBER THESE SPOTLIGHT PICTURES FROM 2014?



Motivational quote for the month:

"If you do what you always did, you will get what you always got."

Anonymous