# Council looks at trends, ideas to help Lancaster grow

Southwest Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, Growing L ancaster make pitches

BY DAVID TIMMERMAN NEWSEDITOR@TDS.NET

If there was one overriding theme to the June Lancaster Common Council meeting Monday night, it would be the future of the community as the alderpersons received presentations from two different organizations on what is in store for the city, and what things should they look at to make it

Troy Maggied, director of Southwest Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission gave a blunt assessment of the trends for Lancaster and the region - population growth in the area is small, and not enough to replace the retiring 'baby-boom' generation, but there is a real opportunity to attract new people

In the 2010s, Grant County increased in population by 730 people,

to 51,938. At 1.4 percent, this was the biggest county increase in the region, double that of Green County, while Iowa County mostly held steady, and Richland, Crawford, and Lafayette counties all lost population.

Arrows Baseball players recognized SEE SPORTS

For the City of Lancaster, the population increased by 39 people.

Maggied then also showed trends in births and deaths in the county, as well as the 20-year trend that county schools have seen a decline in enrollment by 18 percent from 2000.

"There are not new people to take the spots of retiring people (in the workforce)," Maggied stated. He said that while people may talk about individuals leaving the workforce for a number of reasons, the differences in size of generations is the biggest factor of why employment is so tight in the

"We believe this is the real issue," Maggied stated.

The impact of this event is going to be felt for the next decade in southwest Wisconsin, as more and more of the baby boom generation, retire. Maggied pointed to the combination of effects like school districts like Arena consolidating into Spring Green, or Dodgeville closing the Ridgeway school, while business after business has to put out 'help wanted' signs because they are constantly looking for

He added that it is impacting local governments as well. Maggied referenced that Grant County is looking at having to provide at least 2 percent wage increases next budget cycle in order to attract and maintain employees, as it is already dealing with a number of job openings. Maggied

pointed to the fact that under stateimposed levy caps, the county is nowhere near increasing their budgets by that amount, as they are only allowed to increase the levy by the value of new construction, which is far below

Maggied said that there is an opportunity at this time to deal with this, however. "I think we are going to have an influx to people to the Midwest," Maggied told the council. People who wish to be in a rural setting, people who wish not to deal with extreme temperatures or high rents, will be looking at places like rural Wisconsin in the coming years.

That is in addition to those people who grew up in the Midwest, looking to come back.

"I'm interviewing people who want to come back here," Maggied stated.

He proposed three prongs for the region to make itself more enticing to individuals and businesses that wish to

The first prong is to compete for new residents. That means having an identity and making it visible to potential residents, and have programs that offer ways for people to move in. Maggied pointed to Shullsburg, which has spent the past 30 years rebuilding and improving its downtown, and has business and residential programs to bring in both. Sections of their website detail the programs they have going on.

The second is to collaborate with existing partners. Maggied noted that the county, and different communities can work together to bring in business and residents.

Future | SEE 12A



## School-run daycare has successful first year

Double the projected enrollment, Southwestern follows trend of district childcare programs

BY DAVID TIMMERMAN NEWSEDITOR@TDS.NET

For rural communities across the state of Wisconsin, a lack of spaces in daycare is a pressing issue, with a number of communities simply not having enough daycare options for the demand. For young families looking where to live and where to take their children for school, finding adequate daycare, and being close to where they are, is very important.

In looking for ideas on dealing with this issue, there may be an example close by that offers a solution.

Southwestern District Administrator John Costello has only one real change he could make with the district-operated daycare program that just finished its first school year of operation.

"I wish we would have had it up

sooner.'' The southern Grant County School District that encompasses Hazel Green, Kieler, Jamestown and the southern portion of the county, began looking at the possibility of operating a daycare four years ago, as the offerings for families did not fill the demand in the community.

"They needed to find daycare in other places outside of the community,'

Costello noted of families.

Not having that connection with those children early on, or families who may need daycare that also have children of school-age, can mean that the school district loses those families through open enrollment.

'We lose those kids over time," Costello stated, adding that those families open enroll their children to a school near where their other children can have daycare, and then establish the children in those districts.

"We lose 1-to-2 kids every year because of this (lack of childcare),' Costello said.

Costello took tours of school districts in northern Wisconsin that have established their own daycare facilities. Cambria-Friesland, Schiocton, Antigo are some of small rural districts running daycare programs.

"You are seeing it more and more," Costello said of the trend of districts running their own daycare programs.

Originally, Southwestern was going to have the daycare program up and running for the 2020-2021 school year, but like a number of plans, COVID forced a delay.

The district got things running last August, with an expectation that they

would have 50 children enrolled in the first year. Within the first few weeks, they had 85 enrolled, and currently there are 110 children enrolled, with a

The district was able to scale up to four rooms for the daycare, along with giving time to share activity room space with the school operations. Because of limitations on how many children can be in a physical room, compared to the size of the converted classrooms, Costello added that they are currently working on splitting a room so they can accommodate more kids.

"I would love to meet the needs of daycare," Costello said.

Space is the number one issue for the daycare program, as they had been able to attract staff to fill the need. Costello stated that the daycare staff are treated like support staff for the school district, and thus receive salary, benefits, and paid time off in their positions.

The daycare currently employs 10

Many daycare facilities in rural areas do not have the budgets to offer benefits, and with increased demand for workers, have a tough time to compete

with rising wages in other sectors. Costello gave credit to the Little Wildcat Daycare Director, Racheal Ramaker, who has worked in daycare in the past in Potosi, and noted that in their studying of daycares, it is important to have a strong lead, especially at the beginning.

That leadership meant that they could deal with some early turnover of staff, find part-time people in the community, as well as utilize high school students who have taken childcare classes. "That gives them flexibility," Costello said of staffing.

Operating a daycare was not as a big a leap for Southwestern, as they already established communities programs outside the traditional school setting. Four years ago they established a Community Center, which includes a wellness center and is staffed.

"I believe the school district is the identity of the community," Costello said of creating programs outside the school setting. "The community and school together creates success for the students.

Costello added that the community has been very supportive of the programs they have added.

While the district had to use their general fund to pay for the \$120,000 to

renovate the rooms, they had another place to go to potentially help cover

costs of the program - Fund 80. Fund 80 is a funding source school districts can utilize to help cover any number of programs that are deemed for the community good. Falling outside the state-imposed revenue caps, it is an outside levy that can cover anything from senior education programs, summer recreation, and also childcare programs.

Southwestern began using Fund 80 for its community center four years ago.

It is that community center that is at least 90 percent of the district's \$60,000 Fund 80 levy, as the daycare program is practically self sufficient, but Costello noted how important it was to have that funding available if needed when starting the program.

Another portion of the district's Fund 80-funded programs are joint middle school athletic programs it shares with parochial schools within the district.

The daycare program has practically broken even for the first year, not only covering the salaries of the 10 staff, but also paying the district \$36,000 a year in rent for the space it

Southwestern | SEE 2A

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# Burglars break into roadside attraction

BY JOE HART AND **CHANDLER BRINDLEY** 

Martha Querin-Schultz and her husband were enjoying a quiet evening at home

Saturday June 11, when their

dogs started to go nuts.

Querin-Schultz curates the Museum of Unremarkable Objects, a gallery of artworks housed in a garden shed on her property along Sleepy Hollow Road. As the name implies,

the gallery celebrates things like postage stamps and safety pins-simple objects otherwise unnoticed.

On Saturday, her dogs alerted her to a burglary-inprogress at the museum. She caught a glimpse of a silver sedan as it peeled out, leaving behind an empty beer can in the road, and a mess of smashed art in the museum.

"I cried, I screamed, and I

said more naughty words than I have in a long time," said the

The vandals also stole two artworks (pictured on page 2). Anyone with information is urged to call Crimestoppers or the Crawford County Sheriff's Department.

### Roadside attraction

Querin-Shultz said she was inspired on a trip to Vermont. "I am a huge fan of

things that are quirky and little roadside attractions," she said. "While seeing family, we went to the Museum of Everyday Life. I turned to my husband and said, 'I want to do something like this at home."

Querin-Schultz is an artist and expressed that the museum connects with her passion.

"I already was making art out of reused and recycled things that people do not want," Querin Schultz said. "So, I thought that I can make art out of unremarkable objects."

Most of the displays featured at the museum are reused items. If anything is bought for the museum, it is purchased at either Goodwill or a Thrift Shop, Querin-Schultz said.

#### A happy accident The outdoor section of the

museum began with a fallen cottonwood in 2016. "After it was cleaned up, my

husband was going to grind the stump. 'I said don't! I have an idea for the stump. I'm going to put some stuff on it," she said. Querin-Shultz expressed

that the idea for putting things on the stump is based on a tourist attraction in Mexico called the Island of The Dolls.

"I have a love of making things out of baby dolls,' Querin-Schultz said. "I thought to myself, I am going to make my own little island of the dolls. So, I started doing dolls and soon other people who I have no idea who they are went ahead and left dolls too. Pretty soon, it evolved with over 50 percent of the objects that are here not being anything that I have done,

### Trivial pursuit

Not only does the museum use reused and recycled art for the exhibits, but it also incorporates other interests of Querin-Schultz.

"It ties in with my love of trivia," she said. "The museum also includes my vast knowledge of useless information. If I do a display with a toilet paper roll, I have to do the research on who invented the roll, when it was first used and the patent," she said. "Everything that is in the museum, I have written history the about it. There is a book in the museum that includes what I wrote as well as a brief description by each item."

According to Querin-Schultz, not everything that is

in the museum belongs to her. "About every month it grows," she said. "People are always donating things. Rick Sanford and Joe Chamberlain, co-curators of The Little Free Art Gallery on Elm have done several displays in the museum. I have had displays sent to me from the States of Washington, Colorado and Florida," she said. "Many people see the museum on Instagram and they message me and ask if they can send something to display. The people mail it to

me and we display it." Although the museum is in rural Crawford County and not near a metropolis, it still attracts a lot of people according to Querin-Schultz.

"On the weekends and evenings we hear them laughing and talking." she said "We have comment cards in which we do get quite a few of those. I cannot even venture to guess how many people we get. Sometimes there are five to 10 UTVs parked with people walking around at a time,"

Open year round, the museum is open for self-guided tours at 43525 South Sleepy Hollow Road near Mt. Zion

"Just stop by and enjoy," Querin Schultz said. "I just ask that nobody take anything except photographs and share your ideas."

### Riko retires from Sheriff's Department

BY CHANDLER BRINDLEY

Retirement has its perks. But they're not sunny Florida or a ClubMed when you're a drug-sniffing K-9 patrol dog like Riko. His wants are a little more humble.

"He will be relaxing at home with family and enjoying all the toys and treats that he wants," said Detective Ben Keller, Riko's handler.

The Grant County Sheriff's Department celebrated Riko's service and retirement on Wednesday, June 1. The dog joined the department in April 2016 and has been a valuable asset to the force, according to Keller and Sheriff Nate Dreckman.

"When he began, he was a dual purpose patrol dog," Keller said. "This means that he is trained in narcotic detection, article searches, tracking people, as well as building searches and area searches," he said. "Narcotic searches in vehicles would probably be the most common, but he has also helped with narcotic searches in area schools and buildings, along with the Wisconsin Secure Program Facility in Boscobel.'

According to Dreckman, the average number of years for a K-9 dog to be in service is about seven years.

"They are a high drive animal," Dreckman said. "When they work, they work hard. On average, we usually have them for about six to eight years in Grant County,"

The Sheriff's Department

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K-9 unit was formed in 2001 when K-9 Coda, a Belgian Malinois, joined the department. Riko is the seventh K-9 at the Grant County department.

New K-9

Riko's replacement is a

dog named (for now) Vezer, a Malinois Shepherd mix, and Matt Small will be his handler, and as such has the right to re-name him.

Small and Vezer begin training next month, according to Dreckman, and

County. "He will be up there for several weeks where he will do one on one training with the trainer up there and An introduction of K-9

takes place off site in Dodge

Vezer will be on the Grant County Sheriff's Department Facebook Page.

### **Donation Funded**

Upcoming fundraisers will help defray the cost of Vezer's training. In fact, the K-9 unit, founded in 2001, runs off donations, according to Dreckman. "We really appreciate the

people who have donated over the years and continue to donate. The donations are what helps keep the program

"Social Services is going to hold a fundraiser for the program in July," he said. "It will be a brat sale and so

### Therapy K-9

Vezer will soon have some company coming his way, but it won't be a drug-busting buddy. The department is also getting a therapy K-9 whose job is to help staff members with the stress of their jobs.

"It was found that therapy dogs were very useful during the Jayme Closs incident that happened up in Barron County," Dreckman said.

The Sheriff reports that Cassara Bray will be the handler, but she hasn't chosen a dog yet. The program is projected to be up and running by the end of summer.

### Southwestern

### FROM PAGE 1A

In addition, Costello said that one of the anticipated byproducts of the program is happening, as there are at least four open-enrollment students coming this fall because they will have younger siblings that are enrolled in the daycare program. Costello said that means another \$30,000 for the

But more important than attracting students to the school, Costello states that it means one very big thing that families do not have to worry about. "It takes the stress off the families," he said.

That includes stresse for school-age children. At least one-third of the children enrolled are of school age, participating in the beforeschool and after-school programs (the daycare operates from 6 a.m. until 6 p.m.). Those children come to the program after school, and staff make sure they are working on homework or projects.

Acoustic

One of the big benefits is occurring this summer, however, as the daycare program works in tandem with the district's summer school program. For the school age children involved with the daycare program, they simply shift to summer school during the morning, and are not billed for when they are participating in those classes.

"All they need to do is drop them off," Costello said, noting that the district handles moving the students between the two

The district's summer school program has approximately 200 students, and Costello said that they have active participation with teaching staff as they get to create programs a little different than they would have during the school year.

The program has been so successful this past year, it has inspired another district to emulate it, as the Shullsburg School District is setting up their own daycare, based on Southwestern's model, this fall.



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