



GRANT COUNTY

Herald Independent

WISCONSIN'S OLDEST WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

THURSDAY, JULY 6, 2023



EMT OF THE YEAR

Kliebenstein chosen as top example of an emergency responder by State VFW SEE PAGE 3A

Teen Court set youth on right track

For 20 years, program has allowed individuals to correct mistakes

If you are ever in downtown Lancaster on weekends, you may have wondered why, on certain Saturdays, there seems to be activity at the Grant County Courthouse. Some law enforcement, some youth, going in and out of the courthouse. Those individuals are involved in Teen Court, which for the past two decades has placed our county's youth both as jurists of their peers, as well as placed them in the hands of their fellow teens.

Last month, the program received a \$2,500 grant from the Wisconsin Law Foundation for its ongoing efforts.

Currently, high school students from Lancaster, Platteville, and Fennimore converge on the courthouse once a month to look at a group of cases.

An informal atmosphere at the start, the students arrive at 8 a.m., and go off to the jury room, where while enjoying doughnuts, they review former cases, or look at the new ones that will be brought before them.

Things get to business when the teen court members enter the courtroom, where they are sworn in, which includes a provision about confidentiality.

"We don't need the kids going to school and getting made fun of for what they did," said Lancaster Police Chief Deb Reukauf, who is part of the program.

Teen Court handles things much like a regular court case, including having the individual who is brought before them to sit on the witness stand and be questioned. That person's guardians may also get on the stand and talk about the issue, and how it impacted them.

Unlike a typical court process, the length of time people participate is months, not days.

Those participating may take part anywhere from 60-90 days. It starts out with a hearing, with the questions to get a sense on what the case is, and what the responses can be.

Typically, those who have been referred to Teen Court will have to comply with hours of community service, writing letters of apology to those they affected, and also participate as jurors in Teen Court.

In meeting once a month, those participants will check in with the court over those months, giving an update of their progress on their community service.

In addition to community service, counseling can be requested, as well as other items, like having the person write a journal about their thoughts and actions, and creating a calendar showing times they spent with family.

The check-ins during a Teen Court session run much like they do for treatment court, except instead of standing before the judge, the group comes together in a circle.

"We simply ask how they have been doing, how their sanctions are coming, and if the mentoring is ok," Reukauf stated.

They host another hearing at the 60-day mark to let the guardians speak about what is going on.

Once the 90-day review is done, the teens have finished their commitment with Teen Court.

Reukauf noted that for the teens involved, they take getting this opportunity seriously, with many

Teen | SEE 6A



Cooling down on a hot 4th



TOP - A tradition for several fire departments during Independence Day parades is to spray some of the parade-goers with water, and on this very hot holiday, many of the people lining the parade route were all too happy to get wet, as was the case in Cassville July 4.

ABOVE - In Bagley July 1, it was very colorful as parade entries handed out candy, freeze sticks, and more, which were snapped up by the youth along the route.

MAKING THE PITCH

City wants to establish childcare navigator

BY DAVID TIMMERMAN NEWSEDITOR@TDS.NET

"Childcare is someone else's problem."

Lancaster City Administrator David Carlson stated the accepted mindset when it comes to childcare in its relation to economic development. Speaking at the monthly meeting of the Grant County Economic Development Corporation at Vesperman Farms, Carlson and Mayor Stuart Harper gave a presentation to the assembled group, hoping that a position could be created in the county to make childcare someone's job.

Harper told the group that in the past year that he has been looking at childcare as an issue, when the city's largest daycare provider was faced with losing its location, he and Carlson had been doing research on different ways to improve the atmosphere for childcare in rural areas.

In rural Wisconsin, childcare for families is in worse shape than in urban areas, as businesses and larger communities have worked to create locations for citizens or employees.

In rural Wisconsin, most often times the largest employers in a community are still not large enough to create childcare facilities for their own employees, and the cost of a facility and staff usually would push the cost of daycare above what many families can afford.

Harper said that in doing research about the subject, he focused on what was happening with La Crosse County and the City of La Crosse, where they created a childcare advocate who helps existing childcare facilities navigate different programs and opportunities, as well as offer resources for those looking to start or expand.

Harper's hope was that if the communities across Grant County and the county government could band together, they could help in creating a position which would help them all deal with this mutual problem.

Harper said that when looking at this issue, he found that there are three things important for a community to grow - jobs available, housing, and childcare.

Harper noted that there are a number of job openings in Lancaster, and they have different housing projects getting started, like the workforce housing apartments set to start construction this year.

What they don't have is childcare spaces.

"If you were having a child in the next year, you need to get on a waiting list today," Harper stated, noting the demand on the spaces currently available.

He noted that when he started looking at this, the largest provider, Maple Street Kids, was months away from its lease expiring with the school district, and with the district looking to move on from the 1925 daycare is in, that would have meant a loss of 60 spots for children.

A deal was worked out through at least June 2024, and Maple Street is working on options for a new space, although one of the ideas they had looked at - building a new facility on Schacht Field - appears to be a no go due to the large capital

Childcare | SEE 6A



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