



# Administrator's Digest

January 17, 2025

## A Note From the Administrator

Happy New Year, Allegan County Community! I hope you are enjoying these updates aimed at reporting organizational accomplishments. Behind these accomplishments are real people who enjoy public service.

In December, I met with most of the county employees with the help of a few Commissioners to thank them for their service and provide them with years-of-service payments. One of the common themes I heard from employees is that they like working in this team-based environment where they can be of service. The County values customer service, which requires engaged employees who model Respect, Integrity, Commitment, and Honesty. A few customer service examples our employees carry out while providing you with valuable and necessary quality services are listed below:

- Employees are conscious of their communication style, i.e., audible voice, eye contact when speaking to someone, tone of voice; communicating professionally.
- They listen effectively and take the necessary action to assist.
- When necessary, they refer you to the appropriate service area and offer alternative options when available.
- They inform you of the normal process time of the inquiry, expected completion, and any delays that may arise.
- If you reach a service area that cannot assist, every effort is made by the employee who answered the call to get you to the correct location. When possible, the employee will place you on hold and contact the service area to ensure someone can assist.

The County relies heavily on customer input to learn how to improve its services. The County is preparing to release another community update highlighting various goals of the Board of Commissioners (Board), which will accompany an invitation for all to participate in a National Community Survey.

I look forward to serving our 2025/28 Board, which will serve its first four-year term due to a change in State law from two years. The Board consists of:

- Chair Gale Dugan (District 5)
- Vice Chair Scott Beltman (District 4)
- Craig Van Beek (District 1)
- Mark DeYoung (District 2)
- Brad Lubbers (District 3)

Robert J. Sarro



## IN THIS ISSUE:

Senior Services,  
Park Programs,  
Job Opportunities,  
And MORE!

# Services

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**Animal Shelter Community Outreach** – The County is partnering with the Salem Township Library; together, they will develop the first project to be held in March. They will have an I-Did-A-Read for the Iditarod Sled Dog Race, and the children will track how many minutes they read during the month. The shelter is collaborating on creating a fun bookmark tracker showcasing some shelter dogs and compiling a list of our favorite animal-related books; they are designing paw prints with our Wishlist items to pass out at checkout. County staff will be invited to speak about what the animal shelter does, how the community can help, and what programs County partner Wishbone Pet Rescue can offer to the community. For additional information, please contact Stephanie Keuning, Animal Shelter Supervisor, at [SKeuning@allegancounty.org](mailto:SKeuning@allegancounty.org).

**Personal Health Services Immunization MVP Certification** – The County Health Department has become certified as a Most Valuable Provider (MVP) by the Michigan Vaccination Partners. This partnership aims to ensure greater equity and access to vaccination for people disproportionately impacted by barriers, as well as promote community inclusion and quality of life for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families. The Autism Alliance of Michigan (AAoM), Brain Injury Association of Michigan (BIAMI), Disability Rights Michigan (DRM), and Michigan Developmental Disabilities Institute (MI-DDI) are organizations involved in MVP partnership.

MVP-certified providers offer accessible and welcoming vaccination and health clinic experiences to all, including those with disabilities. The clinic offers a private sensory-friendly room, and all staff are trained in accessible and sensory-friendly strategies during vaccination and service delivery. The Health Department recognizes the efforts of the Immunization Team—completing the necessary staff training and making updates to the waiting room and clinical space—to ensure that we successfully met the criteria for this prestigious designation and certification.

Please contact the Personal Health Team at (269) 673-5411 to check eligibility and schedule an immunization appointment. For more information about the Most Valuable Provider certification or Immunization Program, please contact Lisa Letts, BSN RN, the Personal Health Services Manager, at (269) 686-4535 or [lletts@allegancounty.org](mailto:lletts@allegancounty.org).

**Veteran Food & Fuel Assistance Program** – The County was notified that the FY25 County Veteran Service Fund (CVSF) grant request provided through the Michigan Veteran Affairs Agency (MVAA) has been accepted and awarded in full, totaling \$99,760 in available funding for the Veteran Emergency Food & Fuel Program. The original grant monies were earmarked for emergency food assistance through food-only gift cards to Meijer stores. A grant amendment was made mid-way through the FY24 cycle to diversify the grant to further assist veterans' needs of fuel assistance to get to work/school/childcare. Fuel-only cards were purchased through Speedway and made available with food assistance if requested on the application. This reimbursement grant originated during the COVID pandemic as an opportunity to help local veterans offset the rising cost of living and challenging economic climate and assist the Counties in establishing or enhancing their local veteran services departments. As a result of the successful FY24 outcomes of the grant amendments, the FY25 grant will also include food and fuel assistance, outreach, and education for veteran services. Our team looks forward to positively impacting the lives of veterans and their families through these available grant funds. For more information, contact Jen Garcia, Veteran Services Director at [jgarcia@allegancounty.org](mailto:jgarcia@allegancounty.org).



# Services

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## Senior Services

Island City Quilters Guild in Plainwell has been sewing over 330 beautiful, unique, quilted placemats for the senior millage Home Delivered Meals program. The Guild contacted Senior Services again this year to donate and brighten the holiday spirit of Home Delivered Meal clients. Community Action of Allegan, the nonprofit contracted provider for meal delivery placemats County, the nonprofit contracted provider for meal delivery, will deliver the placemats with meals in early December.

Contract renewal for senior millage services is underway through year-end. Service provider expansion is planned for Adult Day Services and Essential In-Home Supports to add a minimum of one new provider for each service line, helping to reduce waitlists further. Of the five senior services available, the two listed above are the only services with a waitlist of 3-6 months. Home-delivered meals, Personal Emergency Response Systems, and Senior Transportation have capacity and immediate access.

Adult Day Service and Essential In-Home Support contract renewal is underway through year-end. Senior Services plans to add contractors to supplement both service lines in Q1 of 2025. Adding additional contractors will help reduce the current waitlists for these services. All other senior millage services have current capacity and immediate access. Allegan County seniors aged 60 and over interested in millage services can visit [www.allegancounty.org/Seniors](http://www.allegancounty.org/Seniors) and submit an online referral for millage services if needed.

The Commission on Aging (COA) hosted a community senior needs discussion on January 15 in conjunction with the first COA meeting of the year. This multi-platform community event drew more than 30 attendees. Attendees included members from service agencies, hospitals, public health, and home care agencies, as well as interested seniors from around the County. The discussion was led by Western Michigan University Homer Stryker School of Medicine in partnership with Ascension Borgess Allegan Hospital, the County Health Department, Community Action of Allegan County, and the Multi-Agency Collaborative Council (MACC). The information gathered from the senior needs discussion will update the Community Health Needs Assessment and Implementation Strategies to improve health and wellness for this community. Highlights around senior health and social needs included social isolation, caregiver decline, and burnout, the rising cost of living for seniors, nutrition, transportation, lack of senior housing availability, and the need for health and social navigators for seniors to thrive.



For more information, please contact Jen Garcia, Director of Senior and Veteran Services, at (269) 686-5144 or [jgarcia@allegancounty.org](mailto:jgarcia@allegancounty.org).

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# Services

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**Holiday initiatives** – On December 19, 2024, a representative from the County delivered thirty (30) care packages to Outlook Academy for students. County Transportation provides school-of-choice transportation for several Outlook Academy students throughout the county. As part of an initiative to give back to the community, transportation staff, including drivers and dispatchers at MTM Transit and county personnel, assembled gift bags that included personal care items and small gifts donated by staff. In addition to the donation drive, Transportation organized an initiative to bring holiday joy to residents at Ely Manor through handwritten cards. Since announcing this initiative a week before Christmas, cards began to pour in from several Allegan County service areas and departments. The County exceeded its goal of collecting 90 cards for nursing home residents with everyone's support.

**December Outreach Initiatives** – On December 6 and 7, 2024, County Transportation participated in four parades – Allegan, Wayland, Plainwell, and Otsego. A bus was decorated for the events, with transportation staff walking alongside the bus to hand out candy. One of the ACT drivers joined the fun by dressing up as the Grinch and interacting with members of the public. In addition to the parades, County Transportation participated in the Festive Friday event in Downtown Allegan on December 13. A bus was set up as a “warming area” for downtown visitors, and a table was set up with hot water and an assortment of hot beverage packages – hot chocolate, cider, tea, and coffee. Approximately 125 individuals stopped by in the evening to get a hot beverage and speak with transportation staff.



**Transportation service enhancements** – In November, County Transportation responded to the need to extend evening service and offer more opportunities for Saturday service. Two additional buses have been put on the road on Saturdays, and several buses are available to provide evening service on weekdays until 9 p.m. There has been a significant increase in the number of work trips requested throughout the county, and the Rider App remains a popular choice among passengers, with over 350 downloads since its launch. While the expanded hours of service were initially announced as a soft launch or pilot, the number of riders has grown enough to support maintaining this level of service on a continued basis moving forward.



For more information, please contact Whitney Ehresman, Transportation Director, at (269) 686-4529 or [wehresman@allegancounty.org](mailto:wehresman@allegancounty.org)

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# Services

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**Parks Recreation and Tourism Newsletter** – The County Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Department is excited to pilot a quarterly newsletter, to launch in 2025. This initiative aims to enhance communication, increase public awareness, and engage both residents and visitors with updates and opportunities across our parks, programs, and tourism offerings. The newsletter will serve as an accessible, streamlined resource to inform the community of activities, updates, and opportunities related to Allegan County Parks, Recreation, and Tourism. The goal is to foster community involvement, promote local tourism, and share recreational programming. Utilizing existing department resources and staff for content creation and design, distribution will be digital (email, website, and social media platforms), reducing printing and mailing expenses.



**Ely Lake Playground Installed** (Last Updated on 9/13/24) – The playground installation is complete and ready for use; pictured to the right.

**County Services Complex Hunting** – In 2011, the Board of Commissioners adopted a hunting policy for the Dumont County Services Complex property. In late 2019, the Board transitioned to a lottery system. Since 2020, this lottery system has allocated permits for deer and waterfowl hunting. Detailed information about the lottery process, application instructions, and hunting rules can be found on the [Hunting at Dumont Complex Property](#) website.

Since its inception, the hunting lottery has grown significantly. In the first year, 9 deer hunting applications were received, with 3 permits awarded, and 3 waterfowl applications received, with 6 permits awarded. This year, 28 deer hunting applications were received, with 9 permits awarded, and eight waterfowl applications were received, with 8 permits awarded. This growth is attributed to increased marketing efforts via social media and the department’s website. The County periodically reviews its policies for possible improvements.



For more information, please contact Brandy Gildea, Parks Manager at (269) 686-9088 or [bgildea@allegancounty.org](mailto:bgildea@allegancounty.org)

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# Services

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**County Park Programs** – The County is excited to partner again with the Outdoor Discovery Center (ODC) to offer engaging, family-friendly programs at our county parks. This year, we've added three exciting new programs to the lineup! All programs are free to the public, but participants must register through the Outdoor Discovery Center (ODC) at <https://outdoordiscovery.org/programs/#communityprograms>. Below is the schedule of planned programs for 2025:

- **Saturday, January 18, 2025 – Snowshoe Hike**  
**Location:** Bysterveld County Park  
**Time:** 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM  
Explore the snowy trails in traditional Ojibwa-style wooden snowshoes with naturalists from ODC. Search for fascinating plants and animals along the way. Snowshoes are available for ages 8+, or you can bring your own. A sled is welcome for pulling little ones. A minimum snow base of 4 inches is required for loaner snowshoes.
- **Thursday, May 22, 2025 – Springtime Story**  
**Location:** Gun Lake County Park  
**Time:** 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM  
Bring the little ones for a fun story and stroll through the park! Learn about animals waking up for spring, returning wildlife, and how animals prepare for the warmer season. You may even meet an animal ready for spring!
- **Wednesday, June 25, 2025 – Family Kayaking**  
**Location:** Littlejohn Lake Park  
**Time:** 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM  
Join naturalists from ODC for an evening of kayaking on Ely Lake. Kayaks, paddles, and life vests are provided. Whether you're a beginner or an experienced paddler, this program is perfect for learning or enjoying a relaxed paddle along the shoreline.
- **Friday, July 25, 2025 – Up Close and Wild**  
**Location:** West Side County Park  
**Time:** 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM  
Learn about Michigan's reptiles, amphibians, and birds during this live animal presentation. Engage with a naturalist and, depending on the group size, get a chance to handle some of the wildlife during or after the program.
- **Tuesday, August 19, 2025 – Birds of Prey**  
**Location:** Gun Lake Park  
**Time:** 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM  
Experience live hawks, owls, falcons, and eagles up close! Learn about their unique adaptations, hunting strategies, and conservation efforts during this captivating presentation led by expert naturalists.
- **Saturday, August 16, 2025 – Family Kayaking**  
**Location:** New Richmond Bridge Park  
**Time:** 9:30 AM – 11:00 AM  
Paddle the Kalamazoo River and enjoy the calm waters with ODC naturalists. All equipment is provided, and this relaxed paddle is great for beginners or anyone looking to explore the marshy and forested sections of the river.
- **Saturday, September 13, 2025 – Incredible Insects**  
**Location:** Bysterveld County Park  
**Time:** 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM  
Discover the fascinating world of insects through hands-on activities, live displays, and a chance to catch insects in a meadow using sweep nets. Learn about their vital role in ecosystems and their incredible adaptations.
- **Friday, October 11, 2025 – Night Hike**  
**Location:** New Richmond Bridge Park  
**Time:** 7:30 PM – 8:30 PM  
Explore the wonders of the outdoors after dark! Compare your senses to those of nocturnal animals as you experience the sounds, smells, and sights of the night. This engaging program is perfect for families and nature lovers.



For more information, please contact Brandy Gildea, Parks Manager at (269) 686-9088 or [bgildea@allegancounty.org](mailto:bgildea@allegancounty.org)

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# Engagement

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## 13 [CURRENT OPEN POSITIONS](#)

Position	Department	Current Status
Law Clerk (2)	Circuit Court	Unfilled
Deputy Sheriff (3)	Sheriff's Office	Unfilled
Telecommunicator (6)	Central Dispatch	Unfilled
Youth Specialist	Youth Home	Unfilled
Enforcement Specialist	Friend of the Court	Unfilled
Plus various <a href="#">Boards &amp; Commissions</a> opportunities:		
Brownfield Redevelopment Authority		
Economic Development Commission		
Material Management Planning Committee		
Parks Advisory Board		
Tourist Council		



For more information, please contact Lyn Holoway, Human Resources Manager, at (269) 673-0537, [lholloway@allegancounty.org](mailto:lholloway@allegancounty.org).

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# Engagement



**Employment** (Last Updated on 10/26/24)  
2024 as of Quarter 3:

<b>TURNOVER/RETENTION (Regular FT &amp; PT Only)</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>
# of Terminations (includes Retirees)	12	13	24
Average length of tenure of terminated REG employees	8.2 years	4.6 years	3.3 years
Turnover % of new REG employees (<=1 year)	12.50%	31.25%	13.60%
Turnover % of REG employees	2.70%	2.90%	5.40%
Total average number of REG Employees	432	445	441
Notes: # of terminations due to retirement	0	1	5
<b>RECRUITMENT</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>
Jobs Posted	16	16	14
# of Days to Hire (KPI)	52	57	58
# of New Hires	24	38	22
# of Promotions or Transfers	7	24	16

**CURRENT NUMBER OF ACTIVE REGULAR FULL-TIME AND REGULAR PART-TIME EMPLOYEES:**

**446**



For more information, please contact Lyn Holoway, Human Resources Manager, at (269) 673-0537, [lholloway@allegancounty.org](mailto:lholloway@allegancounty.org).

# Engagement



## 2 NEW HIRES

Position	Department
Probate Court Administrator	Probate Court
Courthouse Security	Sheriff's Office

## 2 LEFT EMPLOYMENT

Position	Department
Corrections officer	Sheriff's Office
Assistant Prosecuting Attorney	Prosecutor's Office

## 9 PROMOTIONS/TRANSFERS

Position	Department
Director of Juvenile Probation – Atty Referee	Circuit Court – Family Division
Chief Assistant Prosecuting Attorney	Prosecutor's Office
Assistant Prosecuting Attorney III	Prosecutor's Office
IV-D Establishment Attorney – Atty Referee	Friend of the Court
Assistant Public Defender III	Public Defender's Office
Assistant Public Defender III	Public Defender's Office
Domestic Relations Atty Referee	Friend of the Court
Juvenile Probation Officer – Truancy Specialist	Circuit Court – Family Division
Court Recorder / Judicial Secretary	Circuit Court



For more information, please contact Lyn Holoway, Human Resources Manager, at (269) 673-0537, [holoway@allegancounty.org](mailto:holoway@allegancounty.org).

# Operations

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**Courthouse Construction** (Last Updated on 10/25/24) – With the completion of the southeast corner of the courthouse, Judge Bakker successfully held the first circuit court proceedings in the new space on January 9, 2025. With the court now operational, the team continues to work closely with the Judge on minor improvements to the space as they are discovered (e.g., additional tables, lighting, soundproofing, etc.). Judge Jipp has also begun holding court the week of January 13 in Judge Bakker’s former courtroom.

Though construction on the new District Court courtroom is completed, there are a few furniture-related items that are still being modified to prepare for Judge Baillargeon to move into this space by the end of February due to delays in the manufacturing of the custom furniture. Lastly, the new Friend of the Court hearing room is also completed and use will begin as the FOC office staff begin reconstituting the suite, which will begin in the coming weeks.



**Courthouse Renovation** (Last Updated on 10/25/24) – Renovation work is still progressing in the former Register of Deeds office to prepare for the Clerk’s and Vital Records offices to relocate to once completed. The original timeline to be completed was estimated to be January 31, 2025. However, due to construction teams having to pivot to the new courtroom construction to complete by the end of the year, this space had to be inevitably delayed. It is not slated to be completed by the end of February, with furniture installed during the last two weeks. Provided there are no renovation issues, the Clerk and Vital Records teams should be able to occupy their new space by mid-March.

Work has been completed on the new Legal Assistance suite, with furniture installation to be completed by January 31, 2025. The construction team has begun renovating the Circuit Court Administration suite and the north-wing public restrooms on the first floor.



For more information, please contact Steve Sedore, Executive Director of Operations, at (269) 673-0373, [ssedore@allegancounty.org](mailto:ssedore@allegancounty.org).

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# Operations

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**VHF System and Outdoor Siren Test** (Last Updated 9/13/24) – On January 3, 2025, Emergency Management, in collaboration with Central Dispatch and local public safety units, conducted the scheduled test of the outdoor warning sirens. The test utilized the new VHF equipment installed by Aux Comm to activate the sirens using the Dispatch consoles. During this test, all sirens in the county activated except for two:

- Gun Plain Township siren on 10<sup>th</sup> St. across from the Plainwell airport. West Shore Services has previously worked on this siren, and they advised that the brushes inside the siren were burned and worn. Both sets of brushes were replaced. West Shore Services technician also cleaned and tested the siren. West Shore advised that the possible reason this site goes through brushes could be that the springs are weak on the brush holders. Parts are no longer available for this model of siren (RSH-10). Unfortunately, despite the efforts to make the repairs, the siren received a signal but did not sound. The local unit will consider the next steps.
- Siren did not activate at the Otsego Township siren on 12th St. Waiting to hear from West Shore regarding their findings for this site.

For more information, contact Jeremy Ludwig, Director of Central Dispatch, at [jludwig@allegancounty.org](mailto:jludwig@allegancounty.org) or (269) 686-5211.



# Financial

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**Marihuana Operation and Oversight Grant (MOOG)** is all about making the community safer and more informed when it comes to cannabis. Here's what it includes:

- ✓ **Locked Bags for Dispensaries:** The County provided over 1,000 secure bags to local dispensaries to help consumers safely transport and store marijuana products. This also encourages a positive relationship between the County Sheriff's Office and local dispensary businesses. Feedback received from a Saugatuck Dispensary Manager, "I wanted to inquire about the possibility of receiving more substance abuse bags for our location, as our customers find them highly valuable and appreciate having them available."
- ✓ **Social Media Campaign:** The County launched a SnapChat campaign to spread the word about safe cannabis use, tackle misinformation, and encourage smart choices. The campaign had over 160,000 impressions.
- ✓ **Educational Opportunities for Youth:** The County purchased supplies and trinkets to create engaging opportunities for the Sheriff's Department and OnPoint Services to talk to young people. This also gave (9) local School Resource Officers something to hand out, making it easier to start those important discussions about risks, benefits, and responsible use.

For more information, please contact Jennifer Ludwick, Executive Director of Finance, at (269) 673-0228 or email [JLudwick@allegancounty.org](mailto:JLudwick@allegancounty.org).



# Financial

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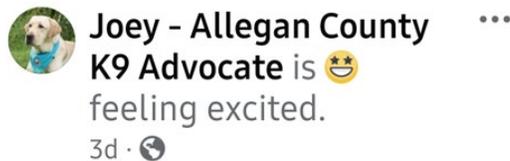
**Crime Victims Grant – Prosecuting Attorney Canine Advocate, Joey** During the 2024 fiscal year, Joey, the Canine Advocate, was hard at work! Joey has worked with children, teens, and adults to provide comfort and support and also assisted with 18 Circuit Court trials or District Court preliminary hearings. He participated in 132 interviews and community presentations on the Canine Advocate Program. Joey was also able to provide comfort and support for students and teachers after the Oxford High School and Michigan State University mass shootings.

Joey attended Safe Harbor’s pinwheel garden event in April. In October, he participated in “Wear Purple Day” in observance of Domestic Violence Awareness Month. He also participated in the community trunk-or-treat event hosted by the Allegan County Department of Human Services and visited several departments within the County Buildings.

Joey has his own Facebook page with occasional uplifting posts and holiday messages, make sure to follow Joey on Facebook. Joey has been featured in Canine Advocate calendars, websites and with the 1Fur1 Foundation. Joey has received many thank you letters and pictures from many children he has met and supported. Several “little Joey” toys have been provided to child victims he’s worked with after their case has been completed.

Joey's birthday is today; he is 7 years old. Please join Allegan County in wishing Joey a Happy Birthday!

For more information, please contact Jennifer Ludwick, Executive Director of Finance, at (269) 673-0228 or email [JLudwick@allegancounty.org](mailto:JLudwick@allegancounty.org).



Joey made the cover and the month of November!



[praisemypet.com](http://praisemypet.com)





**Feedback is important to us.**  
Please take the time to fill out a  
survey on any county service  
you may have received.  
[Click here to tell us how we are doing.](#)

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