

Executive Update



Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker's Weekly Newsletter

February 6, 2009

Message from County Executive Walker

Rapidly growing caseloads and less support from the state are driving the challenges faced by those seeking public assistance.

In response, I asked the state (nearly five years ago) to take over the full functions of the state mandated program. The reason was simple. State workers cost less than county workers and the state could hire more people to serve those in need – all for the same cost.

Unfortunately, the state denied the request.

Last year, we proposed contracting with IMPACT and the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee to run the call center operations in our 2009 budget. This move would allow 87% more calls to be served by the call center.

Unfortunately, the County Board rejected this proposal.

Now, I am asking the state to take over this program. Earlier this week, they informed the county that they will be taking over management of the program but would still rely on county employees to do the work.

This is the worst of all solutions:

Does not add workers: *The plan proposed by the state will keep county workers. The only advantage to having the state take over the program is that they have the advantage of hiring more state employees for the same cost. Instead, they keep the same number of workers and put their own state staff in place to supervise them.*

Anyone who has seen the Milwaukee Child Welfare system knows that just having the state manage a program without more staff is not the solution.

Exposes county taxpayers: *Since the workers will still be county employees, our county taxpayers will be exposed to any increased costs. In 2004, the state cut*

funding for this program by \$2.4 million and only put back \$1.2 million. This is an actual cut and not an increase. Local taxpayers already pay over \$3 million to cover that hole and the costs of an ever-increasing caseload – and they would have to cover all of the risk.

Keeps workers in county pension system: *Again, since the state will continue to use county employees, the workers will continue to earn time in the county pension system.*

People seeking public assistance do need more help. But asking the state government to do it with the same staff is not the right answer. Changing who does the work and how they are held accountable for results will lead to success.

Scott

Milwaukee – Waukesha transit initiatives



Waukesha Mayor Larry Nelson, Waukesha County Executive Dan Vrakas, and Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker (pictured above L-R), held a joint news conference at the Downtown Transit Center in Waukesha to announce a cooperative transit plan.

Representatives from the Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS), Waukesha County Transit and Waukesha Metro identified several initiatives including

dropping the 25 cent transfer fee – a 50 cent per day reduction for daily commuters who transfer between the systems. The van pool program in Milwaukee County will serve as a model for Waukesha County to implement a similar transportation alternative. Fare boxes on both MCTS and Waukesha Metro are at the point of replacement and the two systems will work to purchase uniform fare boxes to allow for easier fare payments and transfers.

Milwaukee County, Waukesha County and Waukesha Metro representatives will continue to work together to explore other opportunities to partner to increase system coordination.

USO grand re-opening



County Executive Walker, pictured above with Greg Jacobs – USO President, and Jessica Stice – USO Executive Director, spoke at the grand re-opening celebration and cake-cutting ceremony of the USO at the Milwaukee County War Memorial on Wednesday. County Executive Walker issued a proclamation acknowledging the USO's mission to enhance the quality of life of the US Armed Forces personnel and their families by providing recreation and support services. The USO of Wisconsin has been in operation for over 40 years.

Winter events in parks

Milwaukee County Parks offer a wide assortment of winter activities both indoors and out. Try something new and check out the parks!

The **Door County Sled Dog rides at Veterans Park** have generated a lot of interest for riders and spectators. The dog sled rides will continue at Veterans Park, 1010 N. Lincoln Memorial Drive by the open-air pavilion near the Brady Street bridge on Saturdays and Sundays from 11am – 1pm through March 9. Temperatures must be below 40°F and there must be about 4" of snow. Rides are also offered during Tuesday and Thursday evening training sessions at 7pm. Rides cost \$15 for adults, \$10 for children. Call the **dog sled hotline at (414) 967-9677**.

Music Under Glass at the Domes is new this year and already drawing an enthusiastic audience. The series of live music concerts at the Mitchell Park Domes, 524 S. Layton Blvd., are held in the Show Dome on Thursday nights from 6:30pm to 8:30pm through March 26. The new lighting is shown off at shows at 5:30pm and 8:30pm. Food and beverages are available for purchase, no carry-ins allowed. The Legoland train show is also on display through March 22. Regular admission rates are \$5.50 for adults, \$4.00 for children ages 6-17 and free for children 5 and under.

The scheduled performers for February are:

Feb. 12 – OGD Trio (Jazz)

Feb. 19 – Reverend Raven & The Chain Smoking Altar Boys (Blues)

Feb. 26 – Stealin' Strings (Blue Grass)

Visit www.countyparks.com for other activities, including cross-country skiing, tobogganing, ice fishing clinics, ice skating, sledding and more.