

**GOODHUE COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES**

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***MEMORANDUM***

**DATE:** July 6, 2006

**TO:** Anne Jacobsen, Red Wing Republican Eagle

**FROM:** Greg Schoener, Director

**RE:** County Monthly Article

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I am forwarding to you a regularly scheduled monthly article from one of the representatives on the Goodhue County Management Team. This particular month's article references Goodhue County Social Services and is attached for your publication.

## GOODHUE COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES CENTER

The Goodhue County Social Services Center is located in the Citizens Building, kiddy-corner from the Goodhue County Courthouse. The Goodhue County Citizens Building was constructed in 1930, two years before the completion of the Goodhue County Courthouse. One will immediately recognize the architectural relationship between the Citizens Building and the Courthouse. Originally, the building was known as the Citizens Fund Building; it was the home of the Citizens Fund Mutual Insurance Company. In 1979, the company moved to larger quarters in the new St. James Hotel, and the building was purchased by Goodhue County. Remodeling began in July of 1980 for Goodhue County Social Services' staff. County staff began occupying the Citizens Building around April of 1981.

The Social Services Center of Goodhue County consists of four units, to wit, the Goodhue County Welfare Department, the Goodhue County Social Services Department, the Goodhue County Mental Health Center, and the Goodhue County Office of Child Support. These four units of government share the same administrative board (The Welfare Board), the same administrator (Greg Schoener), and the same accounting department.

Since 1937, the Welfare Board has overseen the operations of the Goodhue County Social Service Center. The Welfare Board is composed of five County Commissioners and two lay citizens who are appointed to the Welfare Board by the State Commissioner of Human Services, thereby equaling a seven member board. Welfare Board meetings are held at 1:30 on the second Tuesday of every month in the County Commissioner Board Room and all meetings are open to the public.

1. The Goodhue County Welfare Unit helps persons in need to apply for financial aid. The staff is well trained regarding the laws and rules of the programs, the details involved, the verifications needed in processing an application. Applications are taken for Medical Assistance, Minnesota Family Investment Program, Emergency Assistance, Minnesota Supplemental Aid, General Assistance Medical Care, Food Stamps, and Minnesota Care. Eligibility is determined according to program requirements set by federal and state laws.

At one time the cash grants that were allocated to low income families made up the largest percent of the fiscal operations at the department. Years ago there would be 340 households per month or more receiving cash grants. Nowadays that number has dropped to about 110 households per month. Furthermore the fiscal implications of the welfare cash grants now represent just 4% of the overall cost of all client services.

The largest of all the programs that impacts welfare costs in Goodhue County is that of the Medical Assistance program. Therein, are 3,500 persons per month of which 1,915 are adults, most of whom are low income seniors over 65 years old. This program costs about \$30 million per year out of a total County Human Services cost of \$53 million per year.

2. The Social Services unit consists primarily of social workers who arrange and provide specialized case management services to people in Goodhue County who have various life adjustment problems.

The work is primarily focused on problems relating to child abuse and neglect, mental illness, mental retardation, aging and chemical dependency. Case management services are provided to

remove or ameliorate the risk conditions within these population groups. This unit is also responsible for the handling of the recruitment and licensing of family day care homes and foster care homes in the county.

3. The Goodhue County Office of Child Support is located on the third floor of the Citizens Building. The unit is responsible for collecting child support payments from absent parents. This unit works with families who are on public assistance, as well as anyone else wishing assistance in collecting child support payments. The Child Support Unit works closely with the Goodhue County Attorney's Office, the Goodhue County District Court, and area employers in the establishment, enforcement and collection of child support monies. The staff assists in the establishment of the paternity, the locating of absent parents and the compliance with court ordered payment plans. Collections for 2006 are estimated to total \$6.1 million.

4. The Goodhue County Mental Health Center, is located in the lower level of the Citizens Building, and is licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services as a Community Mental Health Center. Staff is experienced, licensed mental health professionals offering a wide range of psychological services to meet client needs. For example, individual, couple, family and child therapy; psychological evaluations; parenting evaluations; substance abuse evaluations; psychiatric consultation; and, medication management.