

Daily News

Wednesday, May 26, 2021

Recreational marijuana tax revenue goes to local substance abuse services

By [Elisabeth Waldon](#) | on May 26, 2021



From left, Mid-Michigan District Health Department Wellness & Prevention Services Supervisor John Kroneck, Ionia-Montcalm Adult Recovery Coordinator Lori Hull and Montcalm County Circuit Court Administrator Selena Schmidt appeared before the Montcalm County Board of Commissioners on Monday to request the county's \$28,000 share of recreational marijuana tax revenue to go toward local substance abuse services. — DN Photo | Elisabeth Waldon

STANTON — Montcalm County's \$28,001.32 share of recreational marijuana revenue will all be going to the Ionia-Montcalm Adult Recovery Court (ARC), with one amendment — \$8,000 of that amount will then be allocated to the Montcalm Prevention Collaborative.

The Montcalm County Board of Commissioners on Monday voted 9-0 to allocate \$28,001.32 to ARC due to a reduction in grant funding for that court. The \$28,001.32 comes from Edmore Provisionary/New Standard, which is owned by Greg Maki and opened last year in the village of Edmore (the village also received its own separate share of \$28,000 in marijuana tax revenue).

Commissioners took the action after hearing from Hull again, along with Montcalm County Circuit Court Administrator Selena Schmidt and Mid-Michigan District Health Department Wellness & Prevention Services Supervisor John Kroneck, who spoke in support of ARC receiving the majority of the funds.

“\$8,000 toward prevention, \$20,000 toward treatment,” Schmidt summarized.

ARC was developed in 2011 by Ionia-Montcalm Circuit Court Judge Suzanne Kreeger and uses intervention and treatment with judicial oversight, as well as a community-based collaborative team approach to help local substance abuse-related convicts after they enter a plea. The program has had more than 80 successful discharges since 2011, according to Kreeger.

Hull said ARC saw a 56% reduction in funding (from \$32,000 to \$14,000) this past year from its typical Michigan Drug Court grant.

“Adult Recovery Court deals with some very high-risk people,” Kroneck said. “These people are in trouble with the law because of their addictions and behavior. I think we need to pay attention to that and support the ARC. The first priority, I believe, should be with the Adult Recovery Court because of the intensity of their work.”

“There definitely are some problems with the cannabis industries that we’ve got going here,” he added. “THC is fat-soluble and that means it stays in the body for a period of time. So someone may not be high but it’s affecting the way that they think, which is a real problem for businesses. Mental health issues, psychosis, increase of violence and domestic violence, car crashes and it lowers life success is what we’re finding.”



Montcalm County Commissioner Adam Petersen asks a question on Monday about helping to fund Randy’s House, a residential recovery program in Greenville. — DN Photo | Elisabeth Waldon

Kroneck said the \$8,000 for the Montcalm Prevention Collaborative will probably be used to address cannabis issues in the community.

“One of the things we’re finding in the recovery homes is that many of the relapses — be it opioids, be it alcohol, be it other substances — actually get triggered when people say, ‘well, marijuana’s not harmful, I can use it,’ and then it triggers their relapse into their drug of choice,” he said. “That’s not known, people don’t realize that’s going on. We need to do some education as to some of the dynamics that are going on with that and basically the quality of life.

“We just had two illegal grower operations in Montcalm County shut down by the State Police and it’s not because the neighbors called and said, ‘Hey, these people are growing marijuana.’ They called because the odor from those grow operations was permeating and taking away from their quality of life,” he added. “There are some things that we’re really going to have to address as a community and that’s where we’re going to be putting our funding.”

Although commissioners voted 9-0 to approve the motion, Commissioner Michael Beach of Carson City noted, “I’m really disappointed that Ionia’s (County) not getting involved, that it all falls on Montcalm. I think it should be shared.”

Montcalm County Commissioner Adam Petersen of Montcalm Township added that Randy’s House in Greenville has also been in touch with him about needing additional funding.

Kroneck affirmed that Randy’s House, a residential recovery program, has a significant financial need to the point where the \$28,000 would only be a drop in the bucket.

“Randy’s House is a recovery center and they’re in a pretty tough situation,” Kroneck said. “The \$28,000 we’re talking about here won’t touch their piece. They’re going to have to lay off six people by the end of June.”

Kroneck said Mike Helmer of Randy’s House will be meeting with the Substance Abuse Disorder Advisory Council next week to talk about alternative funding for the Greenville center, including a proposal related to the state liquor tax revenue that the county receives (about \$100,000). That proposal will be brought before the Montcalm County Board of Commissioners at a future date.

Montcalm Prevention Coalition equips youths to live and lead healthy lives

KAREN BOTA
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It is often said that today's youth are tomorrow's leaders. The Montcalm Prevention Network is doing everything it can to ensure that young people are getting the skills they need to become strong future leaders, including choosing a healthy lifestyle.

The Montcalm Prevention Collaborative is a grassroots coalition initially formed in 2009 as a collaboration between two previous prevention groups: Tobacco-Free Montcalm and Montcalm Coalition to Prevent Underage Drinking. Coalition members include concerned parents, community members, business leaders, organization representatives, and youth who are committed to making a difference in Montcalm County.

The coalition is funded through a grant from the federal Drug-Free Communities Support Program with approved work in two major areas: underage drinking and prescription drugs, and two minor areas: tobacco and marijuana. The coalition's primary goal is to invite everyone to the table to help build long-term coalition sustainability to continue the prevention work in Montcalm County.

The Montcalm Youth Wellness Team was formed in 2017 to empower young people to make good choices for their health and well-being, and also to develop leadership skills to facilitate positive, social change. The idea is that when youth are given the tools to recognize and analyze the risk factors and local conditions that affect health and substance use in their own schools and communities, they can identify and tackle the issues that are important to them by becoming more involved in community organizing activities, as well as more civically and politically engaged, according to Carl O'Connor, Great Start director for the Montcalm Area Intermediate School District.

"The Youth Wellness Team meets and continues to support youth in our seven school districts on building leadership skills," O'Connor said. "We send them to the National Leadership Institute so they can participate in the CADCA (Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America) pieces, and they come back with information to promote prevention programs in the community."

Eighth- through 12th graders from across the county meet monthly to plan projects and events that have included being part of Greenville Public School's anti-vaping team; Sticker Shock, an initiative to bring awareness of the problem of underage drinking in partnership with the Montcalm County Sheriff's De-



Members of the Montcalm Youth Leadership Team members meet with Sen. Gary Peters during the 2019 Youth Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C. — Submitted photo

partment; "Be Nice"; attendance at prevention conferences and symposiums; offering support for vaping ordinances; and more. Team members are prevention ambassadors, and help spread the message across social media. But they also practice talking to leaders and being leaders themselves, O'Connor said.

"They really develop youth protective factors and resiliency skills. That's where we're going to make the most impact," she added. "Research tells us that's what every child should have to become healthy adults. ... and they'll be less likely to use substances. Really, it's the first line of defense against use."

According to John Kroneck, wellness and prevention services supervisor for the Mid-Michigan District Health Department, research shows that if a 15-year-old begins experimenting with drugs and alcohol, they will likely continue to struggle with substance use throughout their life.

"If they don't by the time they are 21, they're only going to use socially, and not have problems with it," Kroneck said. "It's about interrupting the experimentation."

While the coalition also does various prevention activities, such as working

with local law enforcement and hospitals on making medication drop boxes available throughout the county and holding medication drop-off days, its work with youth is what O'Connor is most proud of.

"It's the jewel in our crown," she said. "We do tobacco and alcohol compliance checks, and the Youth Wellness Team is a big part of that. With that youth engagement and partnerships, that's the most important piece that will have the most long-term impact."

Domenic Cedillo has served on the Youth Wellness Team since he was a freshman at Greenville High School. As a senior this fall, he will lead the team. Domenic got involved because he believes in helping people, and this was his way to give back to the community.

But he also has some aspirations of a career in politics, and he has enjoyed the opportunities to speak with local, state and federal leaders.

"It's super cool that you get to be up there and advocating," Domenic said. "Change comes from the bottom up. If no one is advocating, it's hard to change. In our community — and in others — there is a problem with substance abuse, partic-

ularly with children. I think policy is needed to make some changes."

Domenic has had the opportunity to attend CADCA trainings, which he called "very awesome, very important and very informational."

"We get to learn methods and tools and the process to mobilize your community, to make changes around substance abuse, and sometimes anti-bullying campaigns," he said. "You get a lot of different ideas. Some things work in some communities, and some things don't, but that's one of the most valuable things you can pick up from there."

"My time with this organization has been amazing, and nothing short of awesome," Domenic said. "There are a lot of great and important things that have to be done still. We are looking for people willing to step up to the plate and be responsible."

For questions about the Montcalm Youth Wellness Team, email Amy O'Brien at amy@gacfm1.org, or Jodie Faber at coordinator@montcalmprevention.org.

To learn more about the Montcalm Prevention Coalition, visit montcalmprevention.org online.

Daily News

Wednesday, June 9, 2021

Assessing Montcalm County's health needs, resources

By [The Daily News Staff](#) | on June 09, 2021

STANTON — This year brings with it an opportunity for partnering agencies in Montcalm County to implement a new cycle of a community health needs assessment (CHNA).

A CHNA is a systematic process of data collection, analysis and community input that identifies key health needs and issues impacting the county. This assessment process will then transition in early 2022 to a subsequent process of strategizing ways of addressing identified health needs and implementing a community health improvement plan (CHIP).

This process of community health assessment and improvement has become a standard procedure for both local hospitals and public health departments after the 2010 passing of the comprehensive health care reform law known as the Affordable Care Act. The process is cyclic in nature and typically is carried out every three years.

With the recent kickoff of a new assessment cycle, partnering organizations that include Spectrum Health United and Kelsey, Sheridan Community Hospital, Mid-Michigan District Health Department, Montcalm Care Network and others, are interested in receiving input from the community. Here are a few ways you can assist us.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

The purpose of this survey is to gather information regarding the experiences individuals have in accessing health services in the county, and their perception of the barriers and resources for living a healthier life.

Access the online survey via this link: redcap.link/rlydbog

Completing the survey should take no longer than 10 minutes.

FOCUS GROUPS

Three facilitated group meetings will be held, each involving approximately 10-12 individuals. The purpose of hosting three focus group meetings involving Montcalm County residents is to gather more in-depth information regarding personal experiences accessing health services, particularly among the under-served.

If you would like to participate in a focus group and share your experiences, contact Rex Hoyt at the Mid-Michigan District Health Department at (989) 831-3627 or email rhoyt@mmdhd.org.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

If you represent a Montcalm County organization and would like to participate in the assessment, or if you are a county resident and would like to know more about the process, contact Rex Hoyt for more information.

Monthly planning meetings are held at 1:30 p.m. on the fourth Monday of the month via the Healthy Montcalm Steering Committee. Currently the meetings are held virtually.

The Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties.

Bill to aid eateries spurs query

Who pays if food service licensing fees are waived?

Craig Lyons Lansing State Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Legislation aimed at helping food service establishments could leave local health departments operating at a loss.

The two Michigan Senate bills would waive licensing fees for one year to help food service establishments recover from financial losses suffered during the pandemic. But waiving those fees could leave local health departments hundreds of thousands of dollars in the hole because the legislation does not include a mechanism to offset the local revenue loss.

The bills, introduced by Sen. Curt VanderWall, R-Ludington, passed the Senate in May by a 20-16 vote and are currently pending before the House of Representatives.

"It's not a bad idea at all, in concept," Ingham County Health Officer Linda Vail said. "There should be a way to fill that budget hole."

"If there's a way to replace those funds, I support that," she added.



The Michigan Capitol in Lansing. FILE PHOTO

If the bill passes, fees will be waived for 973 establishments in Ingham County, 513 in Barry and Eaton counties and 540 within the Mid-Michigan District Health Department, which covers Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties.

Food service licensing is the responsibility of local health departments, which set their own fees. As a part of the process, health departments inspect establishments and review food services plans, according to the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural De-

velopment.

The licensing fees, which are paid annually, range from \$152 to \$935 for ICHD, \$155 to \$732 for BEDHD and \$201 to \$604 for MMDHD. The fees vary based on the type of food service establishment.

ICHD and BEDHD did not provide estimates of the financial loss if the bills pass. MMDHD estimates losing \$236,551.

"...Food service license fees support 50% to 75% of the cost of supporting food safety activities at the local level, so the bills could have a greater fiscal impact on local food safety activities than on State government," a legislative analysis of the bills said.

MDARD could lose more than \$5 million, according to a legislative fiscal analysis.

VanderWall said, during an April committee hearing, that the bills will provide relief to the businesses that had to closed during the stay-at-home orders. He said the waived fees will not come close to making the business owners whole from the losses they suffered.

"It is a small gesture," VanderWall said.

The food service industry was one of the hardest hit during the pandemic, especially for the state's locally-owned businesses, Vail said.

"I don't think it's completely unreasonable," she said.

VanderWall said COVID-19 relief money from the American Rescue Plan Act will keep communities from taking a hit if these fees are waived.

MMDHD Health Officer Marcus Cheatham said he's already spoken with county administrators about the potential need for relief funds to offset the loss as he expects the bills will move forward.

"I can't imagine them not passing it," Cheatham said.

Like local governments, the state too is receiving substantial relief fund dollars, Vail said. The Legislature should look for some source of funding because it will create a budget hole for local health departments, she said.

Consideration should be given to where the local revenue comes from if it's not coming from fees, Vail said.

"It seems like there ought to be a way to fund that if that's what you'd like to do," she said. "I think there needs to be a funding mechanism for it."

The pandemic has also been hard on local health departments as staff has tried to keep up with regular duties but also responding to COVID-19, Vail said. Ingham County scaled back on many operations to meet the pandemic's demands, she said.

Public health needs to get back to functions outside the pandemic at this point, Vail said.

"We need the funding to have the staff to do those things," she said.

Contact reporter Craig Lyons at 517-377-1047 or callyons@lsj.com.

Obituaries

To place an ad, call 586-826-7171 or visit mideathnotices.com/place.php

TODAY'S OBITUARIES AND DEATH NOTICES

Name	Age	Town, State	Death Date	Arrangements
Coats, Robert	44	Leslie	10-Jun	Gorsline Runciman Funeral Homes Ball Dunn Chapel
Cole, Robert Allan	76	Lansing	09-Jun	Gorsline Runciman Funeral Homes Tiffany Chapel
Corbin, Howard "Skip"	70	Holt	11-Jun	Palmer, Bush & Jensen Family Funeral Homes, Holt Chapel
Davis, Reiko	90	Charlotte	09-Jun	Pray Funeral Home
*Jensen, Edward James	59	Lansing	10-Jun	Gorsline Runciman Funeral Homes DeWitt Chapel
Redzimski, Kimberly	56	East Lansing	10-Jun	Gorsline Runciman Funeral Homes East Lansing
*Thelen, Jean M.	85	Westphalia	11-Jun	Lehman Funeral Homes

* Additional information in display obituaries

Obituaries appear in print and online at www.legacy.com/obituaries/LSJ

Jean M. Thelen

WESTPHALIA - Jean Marie Thelen, age 85, of Westphalia, loving mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and friend.



Edward James Jensen

LANSING - Edward James Jensen, 59, of Lansing, joined our Heavenly Father, on June 10, 2021, surrounded by his family.

