

LAKE COUNTY

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‘A lot of people have to make difficult choices’

Organizations using state grant to fend off local homelessness

By Steve Sadin
News-Sun

One way to reduce the number of homeless people in Lake County is to keep them in their homes when they are put in a situation where they must choose between paying rent or the mortgage and another life necessity.

Liz Werning, the interim director of housing counseling programs for the Lake County Housing Authority, said once a person is forced out of their residence through eviction or foreclosure, their problems can mount exponentially.

“Once they have to pack up and

move out of their home, there are so many more things they have to deal with,” Werning said. “There may or may not be children in school. They have to explain it on a rental application.”

“We’re trying to help households on the verge of homelessness stay in their homes,” added Eric Foote, PADS’ director of finance and operations. “A lot of people have to make difficult choices.”

Waukegan Township Supervisor Marc Jones said there are several reasons an individual can fall behind on rent or their mortgage due to circumstances beyond their control, leaving them with excruciating choices. His office deals regularly with people in emergency situations.

“In my experience there is a wide array of potential hardships, from a dissolution of marriage,

to unemployment, to unforeseen medical or health expenses,” Jones said.

Waukegan Township, the Lake County Housing Authority, and PADS Lake County are currently working in partnership with the Lake County Coalition for the Homeless to help people stay in their homes rather than join the ranks of the unhoused.

All three organizations are working on a \$1.32 million grant from the Illinois Department of Human Services funneled through Lake County to provide help countywide to anyone not more than three months behind on their rent or mortgage or in need of help to make a security deposit.

Foote said applications will be processed until the funds are exhausted. Anyone who received help with housing payments in the

past two years is not eligible. In a rental situation, Werning said the landlord must agree to participate.

All three organizations are processing applications — the program continues until the funds are exhausted — but Jones said only Waukegan Township is assisting those behind on a mortgage or utilities.

Werning said the hardship cannot be of the tenant’s or homeowner’s making. Jones said if the individual is unemployed, they must make an effort to find work. Along with bringing the mortgage or rent current, the assistance can cover the next two months.

“They have to identify how the hardship (came to be), and how you will have the income to allow you to be sustainable,” Jones said. “We can do a soft handoff to Lake County Workforce Development,”

he added, as a way to help the individual find work.

Between the time the program started on July 16 and July 25, Jones said the township received 126 applications for assistance from around Lake County. Municipalities include Waukegan, North Chicago, and Zion. Beach Park, Gurnee, Mundelein, Lake Bluff and Antioch.

“These numbers are staggering, but they also reflect the importance of this valuable initiative,” Jones said.

Mortgage and rent assistance from the state began in earnest with the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. People started having issues with rent and mortgage payments then, and programs through the state have continued.

“It’s done nothing but go up since COVID,” Foote said.

LAW & ORDER

Police say siblings lied about fatal crash

By Clifford Ward
Lake County News-Sun

A brother and sister have been charged with obstruction of justice after authorities said they lied about their involvement in a fatal crash in October.

Jordan Ricks, 29, and Asia Ricks, 23, both of Beach Park, were charged after an investigation revealed that they misled police about the accident that killed Daniel Davis, 56, of Beach Park, according to authorities.

Davis died on the night of Oct. 18, when he was travelling south on Green Bay Road at what police said was at high speed and ran into a Kia that made a left turn in his path at the Chaplin Drive intersection.

The brother and sister told police that Jordan Ricks was driving the Kia at the time and Asia was in the passenger seat, according to reports. However, police now say that Asia Ricks was actually driving, and that Jordan Ricks came to the scene after the collision.

“The investigation revealed the siblings fabricated the story because Asia was likely under the influence of alcohol at the time of the crash and did not want to be held accountable for her actions,” the Lake County Sheriff’s Office said.

The pair turned themselves in for processing after they were indicted by a grand jury. They are scheduled to be arraigned on Aug. 28.

National Night Out

A number of police departments across Lake County will be participating in the annual National Night Out event, which takes place on Tuesday.

National Night Out is a nationwide campaign aimed at fostering better relationships between communities and their police departments.

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Family members enjoy the Reading Nook in the Waukegan Public Library’s newly renovated Youth & Teen Services Department. STEVE SADIN/PHOTOS FOR NEWS-SUN

Renovated youth services area debuts at Waukegan library

‘A space designed to spark imagination, collaboration and a lifelong love of learning’



Children head to the STEM Station in the Waukegan Pubic Library’s newly renovated Youth & Teen Services Department.

By Steve Sadin
News-Sun

“Amazing” was a frequently used word coming from children, teens and their parents as they browsed the shelves, nooks, and other parts of the freshly renovated Youth & Teen Services Department of the Waukegan Public Library.

“It’s amazing,” Lucas Thomas, a sixth grader at Robert Abbott Middle School, said as he and his fifth-grade brother, Alex, explored the STEM Station. “I like the science part. It’s fun.”

“This is amazing,” Maxte Romero said as she watched her children growing plants in the Nature Lab next to the STEM Station. “It’s educational.”

When Tatiana Mendez’s 4-year-old daughter was asked what she

thought about the new, enlarged bookshelves designed for volumes for the youngest children, she looked around and gave a thumbs-up sign.

“I love this,” Mendez said. “It lets you see the whole book, and there’s lots of room.”

The Thomas brothers, Romero’s children, and Mendez’s youngsters were among the visitors at the grand opening and ribbon-cutting of the Waukegan Public Library’s newly renovated Youth & Teen Services Department on Wednesday, officially opening it to the public.

When the library opened in late 1965, deputy director Amy Grossman said the lower level where the Youth and Teen Services Department is located was nothing but a basement.

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LAKE FOREST

Fans come from near and far every summer for Bears training camp

By Daniel I. Dorfman
Pioneer Press

Some traveled great distances, some just a few miles. Either way, Chicago Bears fans are once again arriving in Lake Forest this summer, seeking a glimpse of what their favorite football team will look like in 2025.

Training camp is underway at

Halas Hall, with the Bears hosting fans in preparation for the upcoming regular season.

“It gives you a front row experience on what this season will look like,” Lake Forest’s Kelly Brincat said at the July 30 practice, one of several open to the public from late July into August.

Many years fans say they come to training camp to watch a high

profile new player. Last year that was quarterback Caleb Williams as the overall number one pick in the 2024 draft entered his rookie year. However, this year a main focus is new head coach Ben Johnson, hired to turn around a team coming off a disappointing 5-12 campaign.

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Bears tight end Cole Kmet signs autographs after the July 30 practice at Halas Hall in Lake Forest. DANIEL I. DORFMAN/ FOR PIONEER PRESS

