

Countryside Connections

FALL 2010 www.countryside-il.org

www.gocountryside.net

Countryside Welcomes New Police Chief



Chief Michael Ruth with wife Sue and Mayor Conrad

The City of Countryside is pleased to announce the appointment of Michael Ruth as the new Chief of Police. Michael Ruth was sworn in by Mayor Conrad at the August 25, 2010 City Council meeting in front of a packed room of family, friends and colleagues.

Michael Ruth began his career in 1978 as a police dispatcher for the Village of Alsip. He also served as a patrol officer in City of Hometown before moving to the Skokie police department. Ruth worked his way up through the ranks in Skokie including patrol officer, sergeant, lieutenant and as of 2003 commander. Ruth's additional responsibilities included hostage negotiator for the Tactical Intervention Unit (SWAT) and public information officer. Ruth was involved in many high profile cases in Skokie including the 1999 hate crime shooting of Northwestern University Basketball Coach Ricky Byrdsong.

Some of Ruth's many accomplishments include initiating a Community Action Plan where police and community partnerships were developed by conducting neighborhood roll-calls and residential foot patrols with the community. He also developed a Citizen's Police Academy which became so successful there was a waiting list. Ruth worked hard to expand and improve the Neighborhood Watch and School Safety Programs in Skokie.

Chief Ruth is a graduate of the Chicago Police Academy, FBI's National Academy, Northwestern University's Center for Public Safety Executive Management Program, FBI Law Enforcement Executive Development Program. Chief Ruth possesses a bachelor's degree from Governors State University and a Master of Science Degree in Criminal and Social Justice from Lewis University. He is also a member of numerous professional organizations including the FBI National Academy Associates, the FBI MLEEDS Graduate's Association, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police and the American Society of Industrial Security. Ruth recently earned the distinguished designation of Certified Police Chief. This accomplishment is an example of Ruth's extensive knowledge and his commitment to law enforcement and the community he serves. Ruth continues to keep current on law enforcement issues as he educates others through online courses at Governor's State University.

Back to School

Children are back at school, so please use caution when driving. Be alert for children walking or bicycling to school and remember to slow down near bus stops and school zones.

Halloween

Trick-or-Treating hours for Sunday, October 31st are 3:00 to 7:00 pm. Countryside Police will schedule extra patrols on that day to ensure the safety of our residents while trick-or-treating. Officers will also have treats on hand to distribute to the children.

Beware of Scams

This is just a reminder to still be alert for “gypsy” scams. This type of scam commonly targets senior citizens. Two or more subjects will come to the door with an excuse to gain entry to your home. These criminals will pose as city or utility workers, roof repair workers, or handymen. Once inside the home (or doorway), one individual will distract the homeowner, while the other steals from the homeowner.

If someone comes to your door and you do not know them or you feel uncomfortable about the situation, **DO NOT LET THEM IN. CALL THE POLICE DEPARTMENT IMMEDIATELY.** This type of criminal is very convincing to a homeowner. If you see something suspicious in your neighborhood, please call us.

Residential Solicitation

Door to door solicitors must comply with local ordinance. If you suspect any unusual activity contact the Police Department at 352-2171.

Carbon Monoxide Safety

Emergency Management and Homeland Security would like to remind everyone about Carbon Monoxide safety during the fall and winter heating season:

As the days get shorter and the nights get cooler, it is once again time to prepare for the fall and winter heating season. Preparations should include a cleaning and inspection of your furnace system to make sure it is functioning properly and exhausting the fumes as it should. An improperly functioning furnace can create Carbon Monoxide (CO₂) which is a colorless/odorless gas that can be fatal if it builds up in your home. In Illinois, every Illinois home is required to have at least one carbon monoxide alarm in an operating condition within 15 feet of every room used for sleeping purposes. Homes that do not rely on the burning of fuel for heat, ventilation or hot water; are not connected to a garage; and are not near a source of carbon monoxide (as determined by the local building commissioner) are not required to install carbon monoxide detectors, but it installation is still recommended.

Carbon Monoxide interferes with the blood's ability to carry oxygen creating a condition called hypoxia. Organs with the highest demand for oxygen--the brain and the heart--are most sensitive to CO₂ poisoning. Infants are also extremely susceptible to CO₂ poisoning and may suffer more serious effects than adults, even at the same levels of exposure. Carbon Monoxide is an odorless gas and exposure causes no obvious symptoms, although people exposed to low CO₂ levels may experience decreased exercise tolerance and shortness of breath during exertion. Tightness across the forehead, flushed skin and slightly impaired motor skills also may occur. The first and most obvious symptom is usually a headache with throbbing temples.

Symptoms of mild to moderate CO₂ poisoning may resemble winter flu or gastroenteritis, particularly in children, and include nausea, lethargy and malaise. As the CO₂ level or exposure time increases, symptoms become more severe and additional ones appear: irritability, chest pain, fatigue, diminished judgment, dizziness and dimness of vision. Higher levels cause fainting upon exertion, marked confusion and collapse. If exposure continues, coma, convulsion and death from respiratory arrest can result.

If your CO₂ detector activates, you should exit the building and contact the Fire Department. Please be able to provide the Fire Department if anyone is exhibiting symptoms as described above.

Emergency Management

A New Look

Countryside's Emergency Management program unveiled its new vehicle graphics design to increase visibility and safety while aligning with our role in emergency management. The new graphics were modeled after the graphics design of our Police Department, yet were altered to distinguish the two departments. All the graphics on the vehicles are also reflective which at night will provide improved safety when the units are deployed for any emergency situations.



Community Briefs

Street Resurfacing Update

Our community will be benefitting from the following street resurfacing projects undertaken by the City of Countryside, Lyons Township Sanitary District and the State of Illinois:

Projects Completed to Date:

Joilet Rd. from East Av. to Wolf Rd.
9th Av. from 55th to Plainfield

Projects Scheduled for Completion this Fall:

Sunset from 74th St. to 5th Av. Cutoff (street and drainage)

Kensington Av. from 61 St. to end of cul-de-sac (curb work, catch basin repair work and new street)

61 St. from Brainard Av. to Jovic Ct. (curb work, catch basin repair work and new street)

Northeast Ct. from 55th St. to Willow Springs Rd.

Northwest Ct. from Willow Springs Rd. to 55th St.

Madison Av. from 55th St. to 57th St. (grind and resurface)

56th St. from LaGrange Rd. to East Av. (grind and resurface).

Ward 1 Report

Alderman Robert Pondelicek

Alderman Michael Smetana

1. The City Council recently approved a special use and business license for Extreme Mixed Martial Arts and Fitness at 51 East Plainfield Road. The business will specialize in the training of the martial arts discipline and offer fitness and cardio classes.
2. This past summer, Ideal School went through an extensive remodeling and expansion project. Reconstruction on the park and outdoor areas will begin in the early part of fall. The improvements include a complete reconfiguration of the parking lot and park, a lighted walking path, new playground equipment, new tennis courts, and new basketball courts.
3. Street repair updates: 9th Avenue between 55th Street and Plainfield Road was ground and resurfaced, 56th Street between LaGrange Road and East Avenue is the next street on the project list.

Ward 2 Report

Alderman Karen Michalczyk
Alderman John Von Drasek

1. Please be aware of school children in the morning waiting for the bus.
2. Rafferty's is presently undergoing phase 2 of the outdoor dining addition to their business.
3. Please visit Flagg Creek this fall for a great round of golf. While golfing, stop and look at the leaves changing colors on the trees. The fall colors of the course are remarkable.
4. Lorraine Drive watermain replacement update: The City will be addressing the settling issues in the Spring 2011.
5. Please welcome AJ Crafts N More to Ward 2. The business will specialize in a variety of different handmade crafts.

Countryside Welcomes New Businesses

AJ Crafts and More
6526 Joliet Road
Craft Store

Edward Jones
6555 Willow Springs Road
Financial Planning Office

Extreme Mixed Martial Arts & Fitness
51 E. Plainfield Road
Martial Arts & Fitness

Schwartz Excavating
7023 Willow Springs Road
Office

Spirit Halloween Superstore
9945 W. 55th Street
Retail Sales

Thipi Flowers
27 W. Plainfield Road
Flower Shop

General Election - Vote November 2, 2010

Last day to register in person at City Hall: 10-5-10. For more information, go to www.cookcountryclerk.com

Offices up for Election

U.S. Senator
U.S. Representatives
Governor
Lieutenant Governor
Attorney General
Secretary of State
State Comptroller
State Treasurer
State Senators (some)
State Representatives
Cook County Board President
Cook County Commissioners
Cook County Assessor
Cook County Clerk
Cook County Treasurer
Cook County Sheriff
Cook County Board of Review
Commissioner (1st District)
Appellate and Circuit Court Judges
Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Commissioners
Regional Superintendent of Schools



Mayor Conrad and Alderman Michalczyk present to Pleasantview Fire Chief Hermes a donation of stuffed animals at their Board meeting. City funds were not used for this purchase

Ward 3 Report

Alderman Sean McDermott

Alderman Wayne Straza

1. The Salem Square redevelopment project is underway. The construction of the retail outlot building near Plainfield Road began late summer.
2. Please welcome Thipi's Garden and Designers to Ward 3. Thipi's will specialize as a premium florist.
3. Alderman Wayne Straza was appointed to the Governors Task Force for Jobs for Veterans. This task force was charged with looking into how they may serve those Veterans who are returning from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and are trying to find employment. The Task Force is attempting to transfer schooling into transferable credits to be used towards college degrees and licensing for professions these individuals have been trained for; such as a Nurse, EMT, IT Professional, CDL Truck Drivers, and the like. The Task Force is trying to help those coming home transition back into the work force after serving our country for some individuals up to three and four tours of service.

Two Unions, The Teamsters and the Service Employees International Union have signed on to assist in this endeavor through initiatives called Helmets for Hard Hats and Helmets for Health Care. In the last four years, the Unions have helped over 4000 Vets with job placement in the job market.

The Task Force has not only been working with the Unions, but with those in Washington who can make a difference as well as with the branches of the Military and the certifying Military Schools. With the return of the Veterans due to the de-escalation, there will be no less than 450,000 servicemen and women coming home.

4. Peck Avenue Ditch and the Triangle Area Floodplain/Floodway Update

As discussed at the first "Triangle Area Floodplain Public Information Meeting" held in November, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) has been studying various watersheds in Cook County as part of their Detailed Watershed Plan (DWP). The purpose of the DWP is to identify stormwater related problems and evaluate potential solutions. The City of Countryside has been working closely with the MWRD during this process including identifying the "Triangle Area" floodplain as an area to be considered in the early stages of the study. The City of Countryside asked that the study focus on the portion of the watershed upstream from the "Triangle Area" and south of Plainfield Road. It was recently discovered that stormwater from this portion of the watershed has been diverted into the Cook County storm sewer, which is located on the north side of the Plainfield Road right-of-way, thus significantly changing the flow rates utilized in the hydraulic modeling.

On May 20, 2010, MWRD presented their preliminary findings based on thorough hydrologic and hydraulic models that have been developed for the "Peck Avenue Ditch". The preliminary results indicate that the floodway could disappear for this area and that the floodplain will likely be significantly reduced. These results are preliminary, but the hydraulic modeling performed to date show some promising changes to this area.

The MWRD is planning the release of their studies to be at the end of this year. At that time, the City of Countryside will host a second "Triangle Area Floodplain Public Information Meeting" to present the official results of the study and to discuss the potential changing of the FEMA map for the "Peck Avenue Ditch". Once again, these results are preliminary but it appears the floodplain may be dramatically reduced.

Community Briefs

Lunch with the Mayor

The West Suburban Senior Services invites Countryside seniors to have lunch with Mayor Robert Conrad at its congregate lunch site at Salernos Restaurant, 9301 63rd Street in Hodgkins, October 27th, from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm. Participants can chat informally with the Mayor, and address local concerns and problems.

The congregate site serves lunch weekdays between 11:30 am and 12:30 pm to seniors age 60 and older for the suggested donation of \$2.00. For more information on the West Suburban Senior Services and its programs, please call 708-547-5600.

Public Works Department

Driveway Apron Snow Removal

Senior Citizens and disabled Countryside residents may sign up each year to have their driveway aprons plowed if more than 2-inches of snow falls. This removal will be done after all of the City streets are cleared. The City is not responsible for any driveway damage.

To receive this service, call the City Clerk's office at 354-7270.

2010 Fall Leaf Pick-Up Program

The City of Countryside will begin the fall leaf pick up program for City residents on October 11, and ending on December 3, 2010. This program will be implemented in the same manner as the brush pick up. Crews will be collecting leaves on a continuous cycle throughout the entire program period.

In order for this program to be successful, we ask all residents to observe the guidelines listed below. Please take note that it is very important that **leaves should not be raked into the street** as this can cause flooding during periods of heavy rainfall by blocking and plugging storm sewer inlets.

We ask all residents who plan on participating in the leaf collection program to rake the leaves onto the parkway. Please keep leaf piles clean of any other debris such as brush, branches, vines, garbage, etc.. Your cooperation is key to making this program work.

Sump Pump Inspections Required by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District

The City of Countryside will begin inspecting homes in your neighborhood for cross connected sump pumps as part of a program mandated by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District to eliminate inflow and infiltration of clear water in its sanitary system. Cross connected means sump pumps that are connected to the sanitary sewer lines. Inspectors will begin by going house to house, looking at connections in basements to insure that when sump pumps are in place, they are properly connected, and that those connections are made with rigid PVC-type pipe, and not connected to the sanitary system. You are not required to have a sump pump, but if you do, it must be properly connected. Letters will be mailed in advance to areas to be inspected. Those not home at the time of the call will be required to schedule appointments. The mailings will explain the procedure.

The Ward 2 sanitary system is managed by the Countryside Water Department and is responsible for the inspection of all aspects of the City's sanitary system. The "Triangle Area," sanitary system is managed by the LaGrange Highlands Sanitary District. The South Lyons Township Sanitary District is responsible for the remainder of the City, and is conducting the same inspections in those areas.

Water Department

The City of Countryside Water Department has been a reliable source of clean, safe water since its inception in 1964. The City of Countryside has always been pro-active in maintenance and improvements to the water system. The department has seen a lot of improvements over the years, from the water main replacements across the City to the daily support of residents and businesses. Countryside puts its customers first. In 2006, an 800 kilowatt back up generator was installed to guarantee power is available to run the system during emergencies, but the biggest improvement to date would be the renovation of the pumping system itself. In 2008, the project began and was designed to guarantee that the community would have a clean, dependable supply of water long into the future. Many of the older pumps have been replaced and all have been fitted with variable speed drives that control the flow and pressure in the system. The drives alleviate pressure fluctuations (water hammer) which is often the cause of main failures. With the improvements made to the pumping system and the City's dedication to the maintenance of its infrastructure, the residents of Countryside can depend on continued reliability for years to come.

Finance Department

The City of Countryside is a financially vibrant community which derives approximately 60% of its General Fund revenue from sales taxes. Other significant sources of revenue include State distributed per capita Income Tax, local municipal utility taxes on electricity and telecommunications usage, license and permit fees, and fee based revenue for recreational activities and other similar programs.

Something unique about the City of Countryside is that up until this past year, the City had not levied a general property tax on its residents and businesses to support operations or pay debt service. The reason for this is simple. When compared to other communities in the greater Chicago area, Countryside collects an extremely high per capita amount of revenue from the State distributed retailers' occupation sales tax (ROT). What does this mean? ROT is the 1% portion of the base State sales tax (excluding home-rule sales tax rates) which is distributed back to the municipality from which the sale originated. The table below illustrates how Countryside compares to surrounding and other well known communities, some of which were selected for comparison due to their vast retail shopping environments:

SALES TAX ANALYSIS			
Municipality	Calendar Year 2009 ROT**	Population	Per Capita Sales Tax
Hodgkins	3,668,105	2,134	1,719
McCook	222,485	254	876
Countryside	5,012,615	5,991	837
Vernon Hills	10,243,584	23,353	439
Niles	12,684,437	30,068	422
Lincolnwood	4,318,794	12,359	349
Schaumburg	25,045,066	75,936	330
Orland Park	16,387,273	59,339	276
Libertyville	5,501,271	20,742	265
Skokie	11,270,267	63,348	178
Oak Lawn	9,210,828	55,245	167
Naperville	23,086,612	144,560	160
Evanston	8,503,057	74,239	115
Lyons	995,009	10,255	97
LaGrange	1,181,004	15,608	76
Western Springs	755,820	12,493	60
Oak Park	3,127,656	52,524	60
Westchester	911,456	16,824	54
Indian Head Park	178,368	3,685	48
LaGrange Park	494,700	13,295	37
Brookfield	625,257	19,085	33
Riverside	253,386	8,895	28
Willow Springs	133,095	5,027	26

** This is the 1% portion of base sales tax remitted back to each municipality where the sale originated.

Unfortunately, as has been the case or the past two to three years, the national and many parts of the global economy have been in a state of turmoil and uncertainty. Economic uncertainty, coupled with high unemployment rates, have translated to decreased spending which has negatively impacted the taxes and fees available to local, State, and Federal government.

As mentioned earlier, the City of Countryside has a heavy reliance on its sale tax base as a major source of revenue since it has not historically levied a property tax. As such, when the economy took a turn for the worse, the impact was detrimental to City of Countryside's main source of revenue, sales tax, and alternative revenues were therefore needed. For the first

time beginning with the 2009 tax year, the City found it necessary to levy a property tax.

In order to make sure that municipalities have adequate funds to pay for general obligation debt service, the County automatically levies the amount which a municipality requires to make its annual debt service payments. In the past, the City had sufficient funds on hand from other revenue sources (i.e. sales tax) that permitted it to instruct the County to cancel the annual debt service levy amount that the County automatically assesses on the City's behalf. Unfortunately, due to a decrease in the City's revenues during the economic downturn, it no longer became possible for the City to abate, or cancel, the entire annual debt service amount. The City Council approved abating only two of the three debt service levies which allowed the City to adopt a fiscal year budget with a small annual deficit of less than \$100,000. Reserve funds currently available will be utilized to cover this deficit.

Due to wise planning, the City is faring well with its overall financial health even during these *(Continued on next page)*

Finance Department *(Continued from previous page)*

difficult economic times. One key indicator often used to measure a municipality's financial strength is its unreserved fund balance. As the name implies, unreserved fund balance is not restricted or reserved for a particular purpose and is usually available to the government for general operating or capital expenditures. Although the City as of the date of this article had not completed its annual audit for the fiscal year ended April 30, 2010, it is estimated that the General/Corporate Fund unreserved fund balance for this year ended with approximately \$10 million.

While there is no State law or rule on the amount an Illinois municipality may retain in reserves, the Government Finance Officers Association, a national and well respected organization consisting of municipal members from around the country, recommends as a guideline that a general purpose government, regardless of size, maintain unrestricted fund balance in its General Fund of no less than two months of general operating expenditures. Based on this guideline, the City of Countryside is above the minimum recommended amount for its unrestricted reserves and believes that this level of reserves is necessary to remain financially strong, economically competitive with surrounding communities, and maintain its high bond rating for any possible future borrowings at competitive interest rates.

When compared to other communities in both overall taxes & fees and the level of service that the City provides its residents and businesses, Countryside remains one of the most competitive in terms of the taxes and fees it charges its residents as well as the quality of the services it provides.

To conclude, while most financial experts seem to think the worst is now behind us, it is impossible to know for sure. The City has taken the necessary steps to remain financially healthy for future growth opportunities while continuing to provide the high service levels to which its residents are accustomed. The City of Countryside is, and shall remain, an excellent choice to reside and conduct business.

Countryside Employee News

Countryside Employee Recognized

Karen Melone of the City Clerk's Office is a 12 year member of the American Legion Auxiliary. Her eligibility is through her father, Robert E. Lechner a WWII Navy Veteran. Karen is the newly elected 11th District President. She has also served two terms as the DuPage County President of the Legion Auxiliary. Karen is also a member of the Kane County Salon #63 eight and forty, Egyptian Past Presidents Club, the Patriots, and a recipient of the President of the United States Volunteer Service Award.



CPR Certifications Expanding

The City of Countryside is fortunate to have an experienced CPR trainer on its staff. Sergeant Anthony Boyd of the Countryside Police Department served as a flight medic for the air force reserve from 1989 – 2009. Sergeant Boyd did one tour of duty in and three tours of duty in Iraq. Prior to his retirement from the military in April, 2009, Sergeant Boyd's served as the Chief Medic for his unit, the 932nd Aero-Medical Evacuation Squadron. Sergeant Boyd has been sharing his knowledge by teaching CPR in the Air Force Reserve and the Countryside Police Department for the past ten years. He has recently expanded his teaching to all City of Countryside employees. Certification of all employees should be achieved this year. Thank you Sergeant Boyd.



Countryside Business Association

On Saturday, September 25th, the Countryside Business Association sponsored the City of Countryside's 50th Anniversary Party in the Park. Despite the cold weather, the event was a huge success.

Thank you sponsors:

Westfield Ford
Autobarn
Vulcan Materials
Infinity Signs and Graphics
Merging Technologies
William Tell Holiday Inn
Numark Credit Union
Non-Stop Entertainment
Hunt Printing and Graphics
Continental Motors
Flying High Sports and Rec. Center

Thank you business vendors:

Busy Brushers/Busy Builders
Complete Rehabilitation
Flagg Creek Golf Course
Helping Hand
Inland Bank
State Bank of Countryside
Tarot Gifts and Readings

Thank you food vendors:

Cosmic Café
Kenny's Tavern
Ledo's Pizza
Little Joes
Burke Beverage

Thank you to the CBA Event Planning Committee.

The CBA will be hosting the Countryside's Children's Christmas Party on December 4th at the William Tell Holiday Inn. As always, the Children's Christmas Party will be held the first Saturday in December. New this year, there will be a light breakfast with Santa and Mrs. Claus. The event will be held from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Keep your eyes out for the new billboards on I-55 advertising shopcountryside.net. These new billboards will also list key businesses in Countryside. shopcountryside.net will feature businesses, offer advertising opportunities to its members, and list a calendar of upcoming CBA events.

If you are interested in joining the CBA or would like more information on the CBA, please email Lauren Narducci at lauren.narducci@hhcenter.org for membership information.



Dennis Fitzmaurice (center), was the winner for the scooter raffle. Also pictured from left; CBA members Carm Scarpace, Vice President Russ Nicoletti, and Mayor Conrad



Although a cold day, Countryside children enjoyed all the rides and activities offered at the 50th Anniversary Party in the Park



Congressman Daniel Lipinski Presents Mayor Conrad and Elected Officials of the City of Countryside with a Congressional Record in Honor of the City's 50th Anniversary



Mayor Robert A. Conrad
 City Clerk Sharon Sweeney
 Treasurer Steven Jasinski
 Alderman Sean McDermott
 Alderman Karen Michalczyk
 Alderman Robert Pondelicek
 Alderman Michael Smetana
 Alderman Wayne Straza
 Alderman John Von Drasek

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5550 East Avenue
 Countryside, IL 60525-3689

Countryside Calendar

October

5	Plan/ZBA Commission	7:30 pm
5	Senior Citizens Club	6:30 pm
13	City Council	7:30 pm
19	Senior Citizens Club	6:30 pm
20	Flagg Creek Administrative Board	6:30 pm
27	City Council	7:30 pm

November

2	Plan/ZBA Commission	7:30 pm
2	Senior Citizens Club	6:30 pm
10	City Council	7:30 pm
16	Senior Citizens Club	6:30 pm
17	Flagg Creek Administrative Board	6:30 pm

December

7	Plan/ZBA Commission	7:30 pm
7	Senior Citizens Club	6:30 pm
8	City Council	7:30 pm
15	Flagg Creek Administrative Board	6:30 pm
21	Senior Citizens Club	6:30 pm

Phone Numbers to Know



Clerk's Office 708-354-7270	Police Non-Emergency 708-352-2171
Recreation 708-485-2595	Public Works 708-354-3390
Community Development 708-354-1860	Water Billing 708-485-2465

Websites to Know



City of Countryside www.countryside-il.org	Shopping/Business Information www.gocountryside.net
Cook County Clerk www.voterinfo.net	Flagg Creek Golf Course www.flaggcreekgolfcourse.org
Pleasantview Fire Protection www.plvw.org	West Suburban Chamber www.westsuburbanchamber.org