

# LIFE IN THE PRAIRIE

## Celebrating summer at the Staring Lake Amphitheatre



NOVEMBER–DECEMBER 2011

## Council Member Profile

**Sherry Butcher Wickstrom** was elected in the November 2010 election to serve her fourth four-year term on the Eden Prairie City Council, having previously served from 1997 through 2008.

Council Member Butcher Wickstrom, who has lived in Eden Prairie for more than 30 years, served on the Heritage Preservation Commission from 1992 through 1996, including three years as chair, and has been an active member of the community for years.

“When I was a young mother living in Eden Prairie in the early 1980s, I got involved with a group of concerned residents who worked very hard to get the Flying Cloud Landfill closed,” said Butcher Wickstrom. “That experience taught me a lot about the impact grass roots groups can have on their community and the ways in which government decisions are made.”

Therefore, it was a natural decision when she decided to run for City Council in 1996 and become even more involved in local government.

Now, after serving on the Council for nearly 14 years, Butcher Wickstrom sees a bright future for the community she proudly serves.

“My hope for the future is for Eden Prairie to be an ever-improving, sustainable City that continues to be recognized for its vibrancy, healthy living and sense of place,” she said. “And my hope is to preserve our distinctiveness by maintaining our beautiful parks, trails and open spaces, and offering residents and businesses multiple avenues for recreation.”

To accomplish this, Butcher Wickstrom foresees a combination of prudent planning and strong financial management as the keys to success.

“This is the formula that has earned us the title of Best Place to Live in America, and is the blueprint that I believe we should continue to follow into the future,” she said.

Finally, Butcher Wickstrom encourages members of the Eden Prairie community to get involved in local government.

“We always need residents to serve on our City boards, commissions and task forces,” she said. “And we are fortunate to find so many talented and dedicated people who really help to move recommendations forward to the City Council.”

Butcher Wickstrom also encourages residents to consider candidacy for the Eden Prairie City Council, and she has some advice for those who are interested.

“Serving in public office is a remarkable experience,” she said. “Interested residents should attend Council meetings and workshops, ask questions of staff to understand processes and procedures of local government, and query current Council members to learn about the governmental functions of our City.”



Sherry Butcher Wickstrom

### Q and A with Council Member Sherry Butcher Wickstrom

#### Q. What do you want the Eden Prairie community to know?

A. That City government needs them! We need the voices, talents and perspectives of our residents because what they think matters to each one of us on the City Council, and we are here to listen and learn from them. I also believe that it is our responsibility to be engaged as citizens and to model the tenets of democracy to our children and grandchildren. Government is theirs, too and they need to know that they can make a difference in the world. It is always uplifting to see the Council Chambers fill up with Eden Prairie High School students from the government class or Cub Scouts working on their civic badges. They are our future leaders and I believe we need to inspire the vision for them to carry our democratic government forward.

#### Q. What is your favorite place in Eden Prairie?

A. There are many magical places in Eden Prairie. You can discover trails that lead to a hidden glen, a copse of trees or a scenic overlook on the Minnesota River, and you can stumble upon egrets and herons fishing in the wetlands. We are very fortunate to have access to diverse natural environments – prairie and big woods, lakes and creeks. I have many places that I love, but one of my favorites is the Jean Harris Memorial Bridge in Purgatory Creek Park. Surrounded by the sounds of the City, last week I walked through the park to the bridge and was standing looking over the water when several fish jumped straight in the air, right out of the water! Another of my favorite spots is to sit and relax under the grapevine planted by Earl More at the Smith Douglas More House, which is always alive with conversation, great music and is a place where our residents of all ages gather.

#### Q. What is something interesting, unique or little-known about you?

A. Most people don't know that I have a degree in anthropology and archeology from the University of Minnesota and as a graduate student I traveled around the state locating and identifying prehistoric and historic sites for the statewide archeological survey. That experience was helpful in eventually working as the curator of collections for the Science Museum of Minnesota.

## Plowing Through Winter

### Frequently Asked Questions About Snow Removal



#### Who plows the streets in Eden Prairie?

When it snows, Eden Prairie street maintenance crews clear 222 miles of City streets. Crews begin by clearing the major arterial streets and continue until all streets are clear. Major highways running through Eden Prairie are cleared by Minnesota Department of Transportation crews.

#### Who handles snow removal on sidewalks and trails?

City ordinance requires businesses and homeowners on non-arterial streets to remove snow and ice from a 5-foot width of the public sidewalks or trails abutting or adjoining their property, with the exception of any trails running between or behind homes or private property. The purpose of this ordinance is to expand the network of sidewalks and trails available for public use in the winter months, and ensure the safety of pedestrians, especially children walking to and from school. Residents are also asked to assist emergency officials and postal carriers by removing snow around fire hydrants and mailboxes.

#### How quickly must snow be removed from residential sidewalks?

City ordinance requires residential sidewalks and trails to be cleared of snow and ice within 24 hours after the cessation of precipitation, and requires businesses to clear sidewalks and trails within 8 hours after the cessation of precipitation.

#### What is a snow emergency?

The City of Eden Prairie will issue a snow emergency any time the National Weather Service in Chanhassen, Minn. has determined a snow accumulation of 2 inches or more. During a snow emergency, parking is restricted on all Eden Prairie streets until the street has been plowed to the full width of the roadway.

#### Is it appropriate to pass a City snowplow while driving?

It is always safest to yield to a snowplow and give snowplow drivers plenty of room to do their jobs, they travel at lower-than-posted speeds, but they will make the road safer for you to travel on. Never drive into a snow cloud created by a plow and always allow at least five car lengths between your vehicle and a snowplow. A snow plow weighs 17 times more than a passenger vehicle and in a crash, passengers in a motor vehicle are almost always injured.

#### What can I teach my children about snowplow safety?

Children are always fascinated with snowplows; however, it is important to teach them about how large and powerful snowplows are, and how dangerous they can be. Teach them that it is extremely difficult for snowplow drivers to see children, and that it is sometimes difficult to hear a snowplow approaching. Teach children to move away from the street when a snowplow is approaching and never allow them to build snow forts or sledding mounds within 20 feet of the street.

## Saving Tax Dollars One Idea at a Time

In Eden Prairie, City staff take pride in being good stewards of taxpayer dollars and, as difficult economic times persist, City employees continue to seek new and innovative ways to spend wisely, spend less and protect the environment, while maintaining quality services to Eden Prairie residents and businesses.

The innovations listed here represent cost savings of \$250,000 and have created more efficient ways of doing business. These are just a sampling of the ways the City is making the best use of taxpayer dollars to maintain the highest quality services for the community.

#### Just in Time Inventories

The **Fleet Services Division**, which handles routine maintenance of all City vehicles, recently developed and implemented a new just-in-time part inventory process, which greatly reduces the quantity of stocked parts. In conjunction with an expanded maintenance schedule, which allows service intervals to go from 2,000 miles to 10,000 miles, this new maintenance program also greatly reduces material and labor expenses, while continuing to keep the City's squad cars, fire trucks and maintenance vehicles in top operating condition.

#### Electronic Transactions

After seeing a significant increase in online program registration, the **Parks and Recreation Department** opted to eliminate its touch-tone (telephone) registration system, while continuing to provide community members with three easy ways to register: online, in person or by mail.

#### Shared Resources

The **Fire Department** initiated a statewide Joint Powers Agreement, which allows individual departments to share state-of-the-art equipment, while continuing to provide high quality services to the community.

#### Electronic Communication

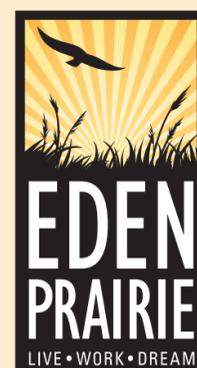
After seeing an increase in the usage and effectiveness of the City's electronic communication channels, the **Communications Division** opted to transition the *Life in the Prairie* monthly newsletter to a bi-monthly publication, cutting both printing and distribution expenses in half, while continuing to provide real-time news and information in an environmentally-friendly electronic format.

#### Volunteer Assistance

The **Community Development and Parks and Recreation Departments** have increased reliance upon volunteers to assist with large-scale community events and staff the **Housing and Community Services Division's** employment assistance center. The generosity of these volunteers has resulted in a savings of staffing expenses, while continuing to provide quality programming and services for the community.

#### Technology-Enhanced Reporting

The **Police Department** recently completed the implementation of an all-in-one mobile reporting and records system which has reduced up to 50 percent of the time officers spend generating routine field reports, as well as eliminated duplicative processes involved with records management, which greatly reduces staff time and allows for more efficient processing.



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# Live Well Eden Prairie!

## Prevent Cabin Fever This Winter



This winter, let Eden Prairie's Parks and Recreation programs help you prevent cabin fever with 10 cost-effective winter activities for \$10 or less!

- 1. Adult Open Gym** – \$5.50 at the Community Center
- 2. Star Watch Astronomy** – \$7 at the Observatory
- 3. Adult Open Hockey** – \$6 at the Community Center
- 4. Sledding** – Free at Staring Lake Park
- 5. Family Snowshoeing** – \$10 at the Outdoor Center
- 6. Indoor Play Structure** – \$5 at the Community Center
- 7. Ice Fishing Lessons** – \$10 at the Outdoor Center
- 8. Adult Racquetball League** – \$10 at the Community Center
- 9. Cross-Country Ski** – Free groomed trails at Staring Lake Park
- 10. Indoor Pickleball** – \$5 at the Community Center

Winter program registration begins **Nov. 29**. Visit [edenprairie.org/parksbrochure](http://edenprairie.org/parksbrochure) or pick up a winter program guide today for more information about Eden Prairie Parks and Recreation programs.

## Our Environment

Celebrate America Recycles Day!

Since 1997, communities across the country have come together on Nov. 15 to celebrate **America Recycles Day (ARD)**.

Sponsored by **Keep America Beautiful**, the nation's largest volunteer-based community action and education organization, ARD is the only nationally recognized day dedicated to the promotion of recycling programs in the United States.

The **Recycling Association of Minnesota** is the state organizer for ARD. For an online toolkit and more information about ARD activities in Minnesota, visit [recycleminnesota.org](http://recycleminnesota.org).

For more information about America Recycles Day visit [americarecyclesday.org](http://americarecyclesday.org).

# Around Eden Prairie

A Page from the Blog of City Manager Rick Getschow

## Market Value Homestead Credit Changes

Oct. 13, 2011

This past summer, in a move to address a \$5-billion shortfall and balance the state's budget, the Minnesota legislature repealed the market value homestead credit program and replaced it with a new homestead market exclusion program.

So what is the difference and why should we care?

The older credit program was funded by the state (and then ultimately cities), while the new exclusion program will be funded by the residential and commercial property owners who do not qualify for the exclusion. Previously, homeowners with residential properties valued below \$413,800 received a sliding scale credit on their tax statement that was supposed to be funded by the state. However, during previous budget shortfalls, the state did not always reimburse cities for the credit and it was up to us as municipalities to cover it for the homeowner.

Now this new exclusion program comes along and the game is changed. In this new program, instead of a credit being issued to homeowners with residential properties valued below \$413,800, a portion of that value is actually excluded from taxation. The program is then funded not by the state or the city, but from taxation on other higher-valued residential properties and all commercial/industrial properties in the City.

What does this ultimately mean for Eden Prairie? It means that we will receive the full tax levy that we have certified to the county and will not have to worry about the state not funding the program. But it also means is that 2 percent of our City's taxable value will be excluded from taxation. Based on some of the reading that I have done, the impacts will vary from city to city.

Some of our neighbors with a higher percentage of residential property valued below \$413,800 and less overall commercial property will see the biggest impacts. That means the impact will be less in Eden Prairie because we possess a larger percentage of higher-valued homes and a strong diverse mix of commercial and industrial property. However, I am still expecting owners of those residential and commercial properties, who are now funding this new program, to be asking questions once they receive their 2012 property tax statements that go out later this month.

That is understandable, and we'll be ready to answer their questions when they do.

See more of Rick Getschow's blog entries, by visiting [edenprairieweblogs.org](http://edenprairieweblogs.org).

## Did You Know?

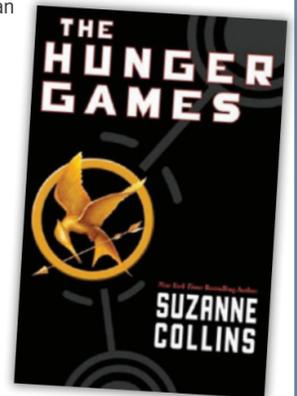
Did you know more than 2,000 Eden Prairie residents participate in a citywide reading program each year?

**Eden Prairie Reads** is a program designed to promote reading, encourage discussion and strive for a new level of connection throughout the Eden Prairie community.

The 2012 Eden Prairie Reads book selection is **The Hunger Games** by **Suzanne Collins**. This book was chosen for its broad appeal to teens and adults alike – and it is also scheduled to be released as a movie in March 2012.

Pick up a copy today! Read it and discuss it with your book club, your organization, or friends in the community. Then watch for details about Eden Prairie Reads events related to the book, which will take place in the spring of 2012.

For more information about Eden Prairie Reads events and volunteer opportunities visit [epreads.org](http://epreads.org).



# Staying Safe in Eden Prairie

## Tips for Communicating Before, During and After Disasters

When disaster strikes, you want to be able to communicate by both receiving and distributing information to others. You may need to call 911 for assistance, locate friends or family, or let loved ones know that you are okay. During disasters, communications networks could be damaged, lose power or become congested. This fact sheet provides two important sets of tips. The first will help you prepare your home and mobile devices for a disaster. The second may help you communicate more effectively during and immediately after a disaster.



### Before a Disaster: How to Prepare Your Home and Mobile Device

- Maintain a list of emergency phone numbers in your cell phone and in or near your home phone.
- Keep charged batteries and car-phone chargers available for back-up power for your cell phone.
- If you have a traditional landline (non-broadband or VOIP) phone, keep at least one non-cordless phone in your home because it will work even if you lose power.
- Prepare a family contact list. This should include at least one out-of-town contact that may be better able to reach family members in an emergency.
- Program "In Case of Emergency" (ICE) contacts into your cell phone so emergency personnel can contact those people for you if you are unable to use your phone. Let your ICE contacts know that they are programmed into your phone, and inform them of any medical issues or other special needs you may have.
- If you are evacuated and have call-forwarding on your home phone, forward your home phone number to your cell phone number.
- If you do not have a cell phone, keep a prepaid phone card to use if needed during or after a disaster.
- Have a battery-powered radio or television available (with spare batteries).
- Subscribe to text alert services from local and/or state governments to receive alerts in the event of a disaster. Parents should sign up for their school district emergency alert system.

### During and After a Disaster: How to Reach Friends, Loved Ones and Emergency Services

- If you have a life-threatening emergency, call 911. Remember that you cannot currently text 911. If you are not experiencing an emergency, do not call 911.
- For non-emergency communications, use text messaging, email or social media instead of making voice calls on your cell phone to avoid tying up voice networks. Data-based services like texts and emails are less likely to experience network congestion. You can also use social media to let family and friends know you are okay. In addition to Facebook and Twitter, you can use resources such as the American Red Cross's Safe and Well program at [redcross.org/safeandwell](http://redcross.org/safeandwell).
- Keep all phone calls brief. If you need to use a phone, try to convey only vital information to emergency personnel and/or family.
- If you are unsuccessful in completing a call using your cell phone, wait 10 seconds before redialing to help reduce network congestion.



Prepared by the Federal Communications Commission and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

**SUBSCRIBE TODAY!**

The City of Eden Prairie CodeRED community notification system is designed to keep you informed in an emergency. Visit [edenprairie.org](http://edenprairie.org) and enter your current contact information today.

**CODE RED**

# Mark Your Calendar

### City Council Meetings\*

Tuesdays, Nov. 15; Dec. 6, 20

\*Meetings begin at 7 p.m. in the Council Chambers at the City Center.

### Family Bingo Night

Friday, Nov. 4  
6–8 p.m.

Bring the whole family for bingo and prizes! \$5 admission; pizza, snacks and beverages available for purchase.

### Holiday Lunch at the Senior Center

Thursday, Dec. 8  
11:30 a.m.

Celebrate with friends and enjoy a holiday meal; \$10 pre-registration is required.

### Community Band Holiday Concert

Sunday, Dec. 18  
2 p.m.

Celebrate the season with a free performance at the **Eden Prairie High School Auditorium** and *Share the Warmth* by bringing a non-perishable food item or warm article of clothing donation for PROP.

For more information about City of Eden Prairie events, meetings or Parks and Recreation programs, visit [edenprairie.org](http://edenprairie.org) or call the City Center at 952-949-8300.