

LIFE IN THE PRAIRIE

Local kids enjoy the fun and games at Sunbonnet Day 2009



Photo Credit: Robert Lawton

NOVEMBER 2009

Homeowners Can Save Money and Resources

If you could make one decision that would help protect the environment, save you money and even put a little extra cash in your pocket, would you do it?

Now is the time for Eden Prairie homeowners to learn more about the tax credits and rebates available from the federal government and local utility companies, and begin making energy-efficient improvements.

Federal Income Tax Credits

The federal tax credit for energy-efficient home improvements was extended and expanded by **The Energy Improvement and Extension Act of 2008** and **The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009**. The credit now applies to eligible equipment purchased between Jan. 1, 2009, and Dec. 31, 2010.

The credit is applicable for energy-efficiency improvements in the building envelope of existing homes and for the purchase of high-efficiency heating, cooling and water-heating equipment. Efficiency improvements or equipment must serve a dwelling in the United States that is owned and used by the taxpayer as a primary residence. The maximum amount of homeowner credit for all improvements combined is \$1,500 for equipment purchased during the two-year period of 2009 and 2010.

Building Envelope Improvements

Owners of existing homes receive a tax credit worth 30 percent of the cost of upgrading the efficiency of the building's envelope. Installation (labor) costs are not included. The following improvements are eligible for the tax credit:

- Insulation materials and systems designed to reduce a home's heat loss or gain
- Exterior doors and windows (including skylights)
- Pigmented metal roofs designed to reduce heat gain, and asphalt roofs with appropriate cooling granules

Heating, Cooling and Water-Heating Equipment

Taxpayers who purchase qualified residential energy-efficient products are eligible for a tax credit worth 30 percent of the system cost, including labor costs. The credit may also be applied to labor costs for assembly and original installation of eligible products. The following types of equipment are eligible:

- Electric heat pump water heaters
- Electric heat pumps
- Central air conditioners
- Natural gas, propane or oil water heaters
- Natural gas, propane or oil furnace or hot water boilers
- Advanced main air circulating fans
- Biomass stoves that use "plant-derived fuel available on a renewable or recurring basis, including agricultural crops and trees, wood and wood waste and residues (including wood pellets), plants (including aquatic plants), grasses, residues, and fibers"



Performance and quality standards for tax credit eligibility vary by technology, visit energystar.gov/taxcredits for detailed information on qualifying products.



Xcel Energy Rebates

Xcel Energy offers rebates to its Minnesota residential customers for the purchase of energy-efficient heating and cooling systems: water heaters, furnaces, boilers, heat pumps and air conditioners. Rebate amounts vary from \$30 to \$330 depending on equipment and efficiency.

Xcel Energy also offers the residential **Saver's Switch** program, offering residents a bill credit during the summer months in exchange for agreeing to have their air conditioning systems cycled on and off during peak energy demand periods.

In addition, residential customers may also qualify for the **Home Performance Rebate** program. In order to participate in this program, participants must be both natural gas and electric Minnesota residential customers. Customers receive a reduced priced energy audit, and then implement at least five energy-efficiency improvements—three mandatory and two optional. Rebates range from \$10 to \$330 depending on the improvements made.

More information, including specific equipment requirements, a list of registered contractors and application materials can be found at xcelenergy.com.

Saving Tax Dollars One Idea at a Time

In Eden Prairie, City staff members take pride in being good stewards of taxpayer dollars and, in these difficult economic times, City employees are stepping up to the plate with new and innovative ways to spend wisely, save money and protect the environment, while continuing to provide quality service to Eden Prairie residents and businesses.



Electronic Paycheck Stubs

Several months ago, a City of Eden Prairie employee suggested the City "go green" by eliminating bi-weekly printed paycheck stubs, an idea that was implemented in April 2009. This simple change will save more than 8,000 envelopes and 8,000 sheets of paper each year, an environmentally conscious choice that will also save tax dollars.

Artificial Greenery

Another employee suggestion initiated the City's recent choice to reduce the amount of live greenery maintained inside City facilities, and replace remaining greenery with artificial alternatives. This change provides the same welcoming ambiance, while reducing the cost of plant maintenance services.

Low-Maintenance Landscaping



When the possibility of saving water and maintenance costs associated with landscaping at City facilities was identified, City staff members developed a low-maintenance landscaping plan

which was recently implemented around the City Center. By allowing natural grasses to grow and utilizing rock landscaping in areas where grass was previously watered and maintained, the City is able to reduce maintenance expenses and water use.

Pandemic Preparedness

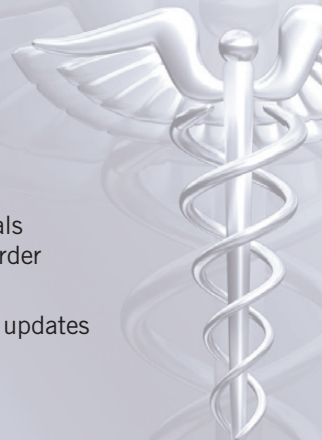
Fall has arrived, and with it has come the flu season. Unfortunately, this season is likely to bring some potentially unusual challenges with the H1N1 virus currently sweeping the globe.

For this reason, the City is reviewing and testing its plans for the continuation of essential operations, analyzing how a massive outbreak could impact Eden Prairie and anticipating the challenges this flu outbreak may bring.

The hope is H1N1 will be minimal and short-lived. However, City emergency preparedness officials will stay alert to potential changes and ready to implement continuation of operations plans in order to maintain essential services.

For information about the H1N1 influenza virus, visit flu.gov. To register and receive important updates from the City of Eden Prairie by e-mail, visit edenprairie.org and click on **CITY NEWS**.

Stay healthy and stay informed.



CITY DOCS NEWS TV



- Subscribe to receive e-mails on the topics of your choice
- Access public documents online
- Watch City Council and Planning Commission meetings live and on-demand
- View streaming videos or watch the City's cable channel EPTV 16 live

Visit edenprairie.org and check it out today!

Spotlight on City Staff

When snow falls, the Eden Prairie **Street Maintenance Division** is responsible for clearing 222 miles of streets using 16 dump trucks, a grader and 29 pickup trucks. This process begins with plowing major streets and continues until all arterial streets are clear. The City also relies on residents and business owners to assist with clearing snow from sidewalks and trails adjacent to their property, in order to expand the network of sidewalks and trails available for public use in the winter months and ensure the safety of pedestrians utilizing them. Snow removal is no small task, but the Street Maintenance Division, led by manager **Tom Tesch**, is geared up and ready for plowing through the winter of 2009.

Meet the Street Maintenance Division Manager!

Name: Tom Tesch
Year you joined the City: 1975
Current position: Street Division Manager

Brief description of what you do: I oversee maintenance operations including snowplowing, signs, signals, overlays, sealcoat, sweeping, CD sirens, patching and roadside mowing.

What would you like residents to know? We have excellent staff, in the operation areas, working together to provide a high level of service to the public.

What do you like best about working for the City? The high level of support we have received from the City Council, City Manager and Public Works Director to give us the resources and equipment we need to provide quality services to the citizens of Eden Prairie.

What is your favorite place in Eden Prairie, and why? On the bluffs overlooking the river bottoms is quite the sight.

What is something interesting, unique or little-known about you? That I have two granddaughters, I'm a retired Maple Grove firefighter with 20 years of service and for the last six years I've done mission work in Honduras and Mexico.



Tom Tesch, Street Division Manager



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Live Well Eden Prairie!

Expand Your Horizons This Winter

Winston Churchill once said, "Difficulties mastered are opportunities won." This winter, Eden Prairie Parks and Recreation programs offer you a multitude of opportunities to master a new skill, practice a favorite hobby and expand your personal horizons.

As you set out to live well this winter, consider a membership at the **Eden Prairie Community Center**. An affordable monthly membership provides you with unlimited access to fitness center facilities, open swim, open skate and open gym, as well as racquetball and wallyball courts. Plus, members receive discounted rates on personal training services, specialty group fitness classes and select programs. For more information, stop by the Community Center (16700 Valley View Road), call **952-949-8470** or visit edenprairie.org.



Whether you have your sights set on a new athletic goal, trying something new, or getting involved in the community, let Eden Prairie Parks and Recreation help you expand your horizons this winter. With limitless opportunities, it's a great time of year to Live Well in Eden Prairie.

For more information about Eden Prairie Parks and Recreation programs and registration, visit edenprairie.org/parksbrochure.



Photo Credit: Robert Lawton

For those with artistic aspirations, consider a membership at the **Eden Prairie Art Center**. An annual membership at this brand new facility provides you and your family with discounted rates on class registrations, select art supplies and Art Center birthday parties. Plus, members receive invitations to special events, exclusive studio access and more. An Art Center membership is a great opportunity to support the arts in Eden Prairie. For more information, contact Lindsey Danhauser at **952-949-8304** or Ldanhauser@edenprairie.org.



Photo Credit: Robert Lawton

Our Environment

Electronics and Data Security Recycling

The United States currently dumps between 300 million and 400 million electronic items per year, which amount to approximately 70 percent of the toxic waste in our nation's landfills.

Flat panel computer monitors and laptop screens often contain small amounts of mercury in the bulbs used to light them. Cathode ray tubes in older computer monitors typically contain anywhere from four to seven pounds of lead. For this reason, Minnesota law now requires consumers to recycle all video display devices.



On **Saturday, Nov. 14** from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., **renovodata services** will provide a one-day collection and recycling event at the **Eden Prairie Education Center** (8040 Mitchell Road). This event is a great opportunity to safely dispose of video display devices and electronic devices which hold private data.

Items accepted at this collection include: computers (including monitor, keyboard and mouse), printers, laptops, computer hard drives, personal data devices or cell phones, and flash drives. The recycling fee for most items is \$10 each.

In order to safely remove personal information, renovodata services will have an on-site mobile data shredder, for secure data removal and certified data destruction.

For more information, visit renovods.com.

Did You Know?

Did you know that Minnesota state law requires carbon monoxide (CO) detectors in all homes? Carbon Monoxide is odorless and colorless, and the symptoms of CO poisoning can be difficult to distinguish from the common cold or flu. If left undetected, high levels of carbon monoxide in the home can lead to severe illness or even death.



Although all tested and approved CO detectors are sufficient for detecting carbon monoxide, there are some key elements to look for when buying one. Some detectors are more sensitive to carbon monoxide than others, meaning they will detect lower levels of the toxin than other less sensitive units.

CO Detector Tips:

- Always choose a CO detector that has been tested and approved.
- If you want a detector that monitors low levels of carbon monoxide, look for one that has a memory.
- If you are not diligent about checking and replacing batteries, a battery-operated CO detector is not right for you. Although they allow for more flexible placement, a plug-in version may be best.
- Never plug a CO detector into an outlet that is controlled by a switch.
- Test your CO detector once a week by pushing the device's test/reset button.
- Replace your CO detector every five years, unless the manufacturer recommends sooner.

Finally, be sure that all members of your household know that if the alarm sounds on a CO detector, they should evacuate the home immediately and call 911 for assistance. Always leave it to the professionals to determine the source of the carbon monoxide.

For more information about carbon monoxide, visit the Minnesota Department of Health Web site at health.state.mn.us.

Around Eden Prairie

A Page from the Blog of City Manager Scott Neal

The City has 260 or so fulltime employees and, depending on the time of year, another 200-300 part-time employees. But we're not completely an employee driven organization. We have lots of volunteers. One in particular that fits into the unofficial Super Volunteer category is a guy named Robert Lawton.

Robert began his professional life as an electrical engineer in Britain. But after spending a few years as an engineer, he decided that he would pull up stakes and come to America to pursue his true love – photography.

Robert approached us earlier this spring to offer his services as a volunteer photographer. He wanted to improve his skills, increase the size of his portfolio and give something back to the community. We could accommodate him on all three, so we agreed and put him to work.

Since April, Robert has completed over twenty photo assignments for the City. Everything from the 4th of July to the dedication of the new Miller Park Playground to Eden Prairie Night to Unite. He has worked with our Communications Division staff to produce images for our *Life in the Prairie* newsletter, presentations that I give for employee groups, Parks

& Recreation promotional materials, the City's website and even for our new Facebook page.

Robert is a great guy. He is quiet and hard working. He's willing to attend almost any event at almost any time in order to add to our photo archive. He was able to achieve a lifelong dream of riding in a Fire Truck at Eden Prairie Night to Unite this year in August. Except that he didn't just go for a quick spin. He rode the truck for three hours that night taking photos of Night to Unite activities and neighborhood parties. We'll use his work for promotional materials for next year's Night to Unite event.

Eden Prairie is full of people like Robert Lawton. We don't get all of them to volunteer for the City. Some volunteer for PROP. Some for their church. Some for the Schools. Others for their youth sports associations. We're very fortunate to have Robert stepped forward to share his skilled eyes and cameras with us.

Thanks Robert!

See more of **Scott Neal's** blog entries by visiting edenprairie.org.

Mark Your Calendar

City Council Meetings*

Tuesdays, Oct. 20 and Nov. 17

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

Apple Cider-ing

Sunday, Oct. 18

1-3 p.m.

Outdoor Center

Take a lesson in old-fashioned apple cider making, learn about the history of apples and enjoy a sweet sample of cider. Cost is \$6 per family. Registration is requested.

Fall Festival Luncheon

Thursday, Oct. 29

11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

Senior Center

Gather with friends and enjoy a hearty fall meal including beef stew, coleslaw, cornbread, apple crisp and beverages while enjoying the sounds of Tim Patrick, a Sinatra-style singer. Cost is \$10 per person. Registration required.

The Great Pumpkin Event

Friday, Oct. 30

7-9 p.m.

Outdoor Center

Learn the history and origins of Halloween, then pick a pumpkin from the patch to carve and take home. Top the night off with a stroll on the nature trail. Cost is \$7 per child, parents and guardians admitted free. Registration required.

Spooky Saturday

Saturday, Oct. 31

2-4 p.m.

Community Center

Crazy costume contests, spooky skating, arts and crafts, ooey-gooey treats and more! Cost is \$5 per child. Free admission for parents and guardians.

Halloween on the Mall

Saturday, Oct. 31

6-8 p.m.

Eden Prairie Center

Bring the kids for a night of trick-or-treating and fun at Eden Prairie Center.

Fall Frolic

Saturday, Nov. 7

9 a.m.

Round Lake Park

Register for this **5K Family Fun Run/Walk** at midwestevents.com or the **Community Center**. All proceeds from the event benefit "Girls on the Run," a healthy workout program serving area girls.