

Today's weather



HIGH: 57  
LOW: 39

Sunrise: 7:33  
Sunset: 6:56

# THE GAZETTE

For home delivery,  
call (330) 725-4166

*Serving Medina County Since 1832*

TUESDAY, October 10, 2023

\$2.00

## Issue 15 to fund human services

Sara Crawford  
The Gazette

Medina County residents will vote on a 1-mill, five-year renewal levy in November for county human services, listed as Issue 15.

If passed, the levy would raise \$5,446,000 annually to benefit the three Medina County Human Service agencies, which include:

- Medina County Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Board
- Medina County Office for Older Adults
- Medina County Job and Family Services Child Protective Division.

Residents would pay approximately \$25 for every \$100,000 in home valuation. The levy is a straight renewal, meaning that it will not raise residents' taxes if it passes.

The Human Services levy was first passed in November 2019 and has since provided all three agencies with the ability to adapt to unforeseen changes, like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Medina County Office for Older Adults Director Laura Toth said that with the levy's passage in 2019, the funding came at the perfect time, with 2020 being the first year of full funding.

"Office for Older Adults has utilized levy funding over the past four years to increase the

### ISSUE 15

**What it is:** A 1-mill renewal levy

**Duration:** Five years

**How much would it raise:** \$5,446,000 annually.

**Purpose:** To make appropriations for health, human and social services provided by the Medina County ADAMH Board, Office for Older Adults and Medina County Job and Family Services' Children Protective Division.

**Cost to homeowner/taxpayer:** The owner of a \$100,000 home would pay \$25 a year.

number of meals provided to seniors in Medina County," Toth said. "Both the number of recipients and the number of meals."

Toth said that in 2020, the number of home-delivered meals increased from 38,000 meals total to 67,000 meals. Since then, the number of meals has slightly dropped, but not to pre-COVID levels, Toth said.

With the help of levy dollars, Adult Protective Services transitioned from being a part of Medina County Job and Family Services to the MCOOA in September 2021.

See **ISSUE 15**, A6



# ISSUE 15

From A1

With the change, Toth said, it allows APS to do what it does while also seamlessly being backed up by the OOA and its provided services.

The other notable benefactor of the levy was OOA's recent acquisition of the Soprema Senior Center Cafe in March.

"The goal for that operation would be cost-neutral, but that probably will not happen for several years," Toth said. "So, we've used local levy dollars in order to be able to fund that

operation."

Within the last few years, Toth said that MCOOA has experienced a lot of growth throughout the department, leading to proper budgeting to maintain all the services provided with the help of levy funds.

"As the population continues to age in Medina County, really everywhere, we'll just continue to meet the increasing need," Toth said. "... There are more people that we want to reach and make sure that they have the services available to maintain residence in their homes and in their communities

where they want to."

If the levy did not pass, MCOOA would have to cut down on the programming offered and more senior residents would have to be placed on waiting lists for different services that OOA provides.

Medina County ADAMH Board Director Phillip Titterington said that over the past few years, mental health and behavioral health needs have continued to increase since the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We're not seeing the need go down," Titterington said. "If anything, we're seeing it go up.

*"Our services we cannot not do. If the phone rings and someone says a child is being neglected or abused or is in crisis, we have to go."*

**Debbie Kiley, director of Medina County Job and Family Services Child Protective Division**

I think that's a national trend, especially with mental health and behavioral health services."

Titterington said that all the ADAMH Board's contracted services typically average about 5,600 individuals on a monthly basis.

In addition to mental health and behavioral health services, Titterington said that a big focus of the Medina County ADAMH Board is on recovery support through organizations like Hope Recovery Community and Cathy's House.

Titterington said that through recovery support, there are several recovery houses throughout the county, there are peer supporters within the Medina County Jail to provide services to those who need them and more.

If the levy doesn't pass, Titterington said they would have to look at different aspects of the department and how they'd be able to provide the support that is needed.

"Even though the cost of services has increased, and the needs increased, we're vowing or committing to the taxpayers that we're going to do what we continue to do in spite of all of this," Titterington said.

For Medina County Job and Family Services, the levy benefits a portion of the department, funding only the Child Protective Services Division.

"We've seen an increase (in cases) since 2019, but the real spike was in 2021," MCJFS Executive Director Debbie Kiley said. "That hit over 150 children in care, and it's basically stayed there."

Kiley said that the hope was that it was just a blip on the radar, but the department continues to see that trend, with about 150 children currently in MCJFS' care.

"Now that we have doubled those numbers, this levy is incredibly crucial to help fund those efforts not only to investigate those reports but provide

for care of those children," Kiley said.

Of the approximate 150 kids in care, Kiley said about 62 are in local foster care placement, 20 are in residential facilities and the rest are in foster care placements that are licensed by private providers.

Last month, Kiley said that the department spent over \$280,000 just for the kids who are placed in treatment centers due to the daily costs.

Kiley said that the department is on track to spend about \$3.8 million in caring for children in 2023.

With the levy's passage, Kiley said that the money will go to continue to support caring for children within the county.

"Our services we cannot not do," Kiley said. "If the phone rings and someone says a child is being neglected or abused or is in crisis, we have to go."

Contact reporter Sara Crawford at (330) 721-4063 or [scrawford@medina-gazette.com](mailto:scrawford@medina-gazette.com).