

Volunteer Center ends contract with Milwaukee firm

United Way to step in

By **Melanie Boyung**
mboyung@conley.net.com
262-224-4166

GRAFTON —Its office closed one year ago, and now the Volunteer Center of Ozaukee County will officially dissolve its services. The Board of Directors made the announcement this week.

Its service of matching volunteers to needs will live on, however, through the United Way of Northern Ozaukee.

"We're very interested in continuing volunteerism in Ozaukee County," VCOC Board of Directors President Joe Graf said.

"Most of our nonprofits don't have a lot of staff; we need to help build that (volunteer) infrastructure," UWNO Executive Director Barbara Bates-Nelson agreed.

In late 2016, the VCOC lost a major funding source when the United Way of Greater Milwaukee announced it would no longer provide VCOC the annual grant that made up a significant portion of its yearly budget. While the VCOC met initial fundraising goals in the last months of 2016, it was not able to maintain a sustainable funding source.

"The Board of Directors wishes to thank its dedicated staff, and the many kind and generous people who have supported the Volunteer Center in the past. The organization would not have lasted as long as it did without you," stated a press release from the VCOC and UWNO about the Volunteer Center closing.

At the beginning of 2017, the VCOC entered an arrangement with the Nonprofit Center of Milwaukee, in which that group would maintain the Volunteer Center here; it already managed Milwaukee's equivalent organization.

That contract ran out Dec. 31 and was not renewed, according to Graf.

"Things just could not go on as they were ... it really did not help us at all," Graf said.

According to the press release, the Board of Directors and Bates-Nelson have been meeting with Ozaukee County nonprofit groups for months, working to coordinate how the Volunteer Center's mission can live on, and a balance seems to have been found.

See **VOLUNTEER**, PAGE A6

Volunteer: Ozaukee Initiative launched

Continued from Page A1

"That program to match volunteers with opportunities will be maintained by United Way of Northern Ozaukee," Bates-Nelson said.

"We'll be just the volunteer matching, which we believe is the most critical component," she added.

The license for matching software used on www.volunteerozaukee.org has been transferred to the local United Way. Bates-Nelson said that the website will continue as it has, bringing dozens of nonprofits together with volunteers as it has done for years.

One of the results of all the nonprofits meeting was the Ozaukee Initiative; an online resource guide launched in September, according to the press release, providing an online directory of health and human service resources at www.ozaukeeinitiative.org. The site also links to volunteer opportunities.

The VCOC provided other services to the Ozaukee County community as well, holding volunteer training and Christmas gift and donation drives. Bates-Nelson said that over the past months, many individual nonprofits had been running drives for their own specific needs, as well as conducting their own training. It not only worked, but allowed different groups to tailor their training and donations to their particular needs.

"We didn't think training was an obstacle ... (and) people were already doing drives," Bates-Nelson said.

Bates-Nelson said that, over Christmas, Kapco picked up a lot of the slack in the community with toy drives and distribution that used to be handled by the VCOC. She also mentioned cooperative volunteer work being done among nonprofits and MATC. While the VCOC itself, founded in 1989, is gone, the community is coming together to ensure its purpose remains served.