

# CITYFOCUS

Highlighting issues important to Dubuque residents

SUMMER 2022



**DUBUQUE AT WORK**

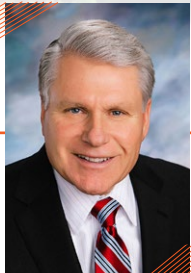
*for you!*

THE CITY OF  
**DUBUQUE**  
*Masterpiece on the Mississippi*



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Mike Van Milligen  
City Manager

## A Message from the City Manager

City of Dubuque employees work daily to provide the critical services and quality of life amenities that make Dubuque an equitable community of choice. As part of Public Service Recognition Week in early May, Mayor Brad Cavanagh signed a proclamation recognizing the week in Dubuque. As the proclamation states, “public employees take not only jobs, but oaths to serve their communities.” Each day, I see those oaths play out in the way City employees provide services to Dubuque residents.

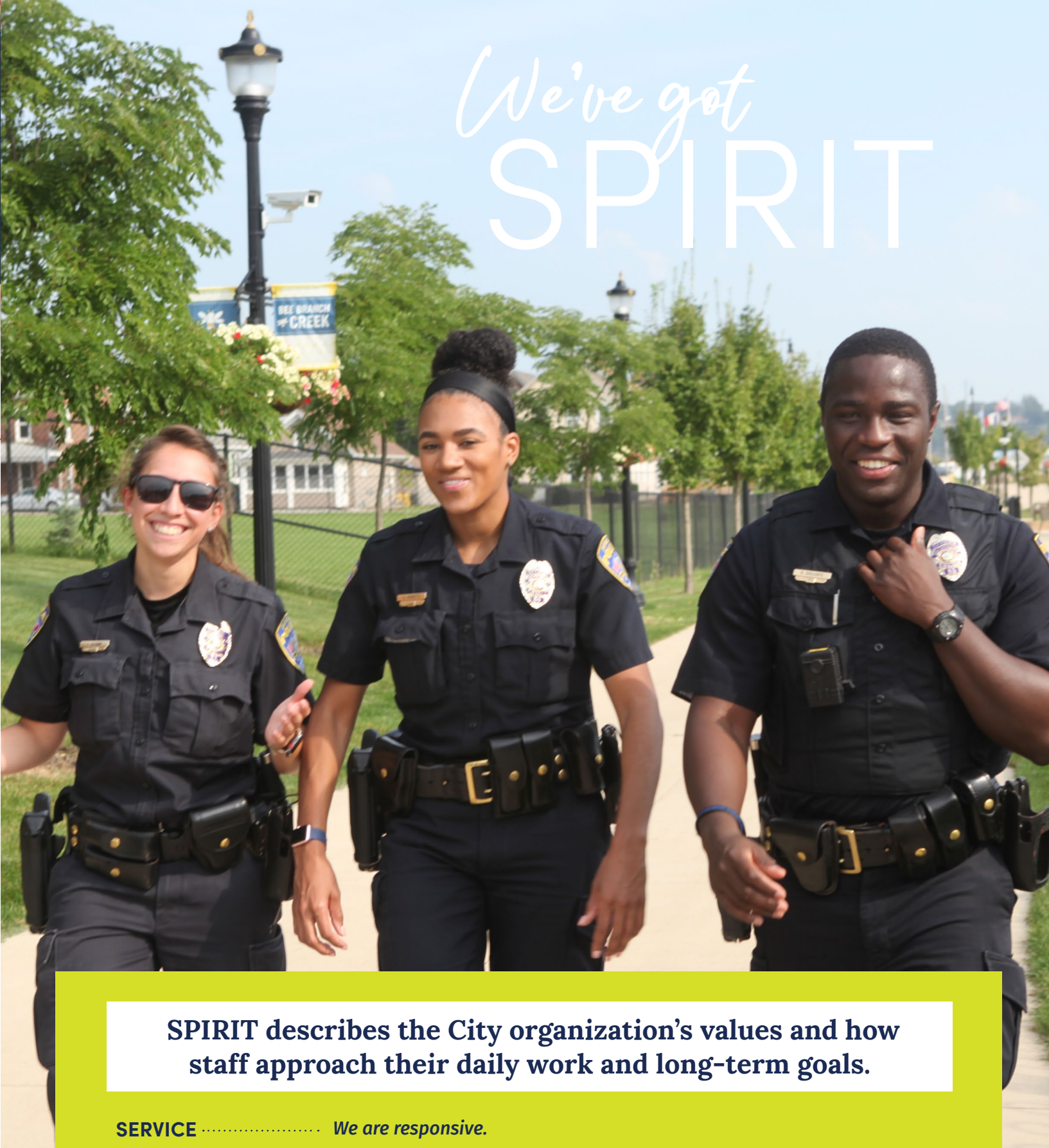
A few months ago, I participated in the new employee orientation for over 120 employees who have started work here since we were forced to put the orientation process on hold during the pandemic. One of the questions we asked of all the participants was, “What has been the best part of working for the City of Dubuque, so far?” I want to share you the answer I gave when I was asked that same question.

In my nearly 30 years with the City, I have experienced many “best” moments, but answering this question was, in fact, quite easy. In March 2020 the world shut down. Watching my city colleagues rise to the occasion to serve the residents of this community throughout the pandemic has been the most inspiring and “best” experience I have had to date.

When COVID-19 forced many of us to quickly rethink everything about the way we work, City employees found new ways to provide residents and businesses with critical services. Most of our frontline staff did not have the luxury of working from home and they showed up to work in days of uncertainty and fear to make sure that every home in Dubuque continued to have water and wastewater services; trash and recycling were still collected; streets were repaired; emergency services were still provided; homes and businesses were still inspected for life safety; our youth still had access to learning and recreational opportunities; public transportation continued to get people to the doctor, grocery store and work; human rights were protected; and so much more. Employees quickly implemented work from home setups to make sure that we continued to provide high-quality customer service in new, creative ways in every department. They did this while also addressing public health concerns, operating vaccine clinics and call centers, and saying “Yes!” to whatever challenges came their way.

Carolyn Calloway-Thomas said, “Empathy is the moral glue that holds civil society together.” Our employees work to provide that glue everyday.

*Michael Van Milligen*



**SPIRIT describes the City organization’s values and how staff approach their daily work and long-term goals.**

- SERVICE** ..... *We are responsive.*
- PEOPLE** ..... *We care and have compassion for those we serve and with whom we work.*
- INTEGRITY** ..... *We are honest and strive for excellence.*
- RESPONSIBILITY**..... *We are accountable.*
- INNOVATION**..... *We look for better ways.*
- TEAMWORK**..... *We encourage input for better results and celebrate successes.*



# A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Program assists a local veteran in finding his own space to call home.

**H**ome means something different to everyone. For Larry Carter Center, home is where he can sit in his recliner and relax with his cats. Home is where he can invite friends over to play a game of cards. For Larry, home is now Asbury Senior Apartments located in Dubuque.

Larry’s journey to finding home hasn’t been a simple one. He is a 70-year-old Navy veteran and participant in the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program, which is funded through the federal government, and assists homeless veterans in obtaining quality and safe housing. The program combines HUD’s Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) rental assistance for homeless Veterans with case management and clinical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The City of Dubuque is allotted 12 HUD-VASH vouchers to assist local veterans.

“When you find a place for a small amount of rent, you usually get what you pay for, which is very old and poorly maintained housing,” said Larry. “I’m happy that people who have limited income can still live in a safe and nice place.”

Larry’s past has taken him all across the country. Originally born and raised in Des Moines, he said goodbye to the state when he joined the Navy in 1971 at the peak of the Vietnam War. As a young sailor, Larry trained and assisted pilots for take-off from naval aircraft carriers at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar in San Diego, CA.

“It was one loud place to be,” Larry said as he recounted his time with fighter squadron 126. His years of service have now left Larry to cope with conductive hearing loss and concussive tinnitus.

After the service, Larry became a truck driver. He trekked across the nation and served his country in this new fashion, delivering essential cargo. He loved the career and the years of adventure it brought, almost as much as he loved serving his country, but one thing mattered to him most, family.

After a life of traveling, he settled down to watch his children grow and reconnect with his siblings. Those connections meant the world to Larry. In fact, when his sister started to receive in-home hospice care in 2021, Larry moved in with her to help care for her and cherish the time that they had left together.

In September of 2021, Larry’s sister passed away and times became tough for him. He found himself living in his

Chrysler minivan with nowhere to go. “I had been a truck driver for many years so it’s very habitual to be living in a big 18-wheeler.” He knew this lifestyle wasn’t sustainable, however. “It was dangerous when it got cold in November,” said Larry as he recalled the nights he spent bundled in his backseat when winter began to set in.

HUD-VASH comes with additional supports through Dubuque County Office of Veterans Affairs and supportive services for veterans’ families through Hawkeye Area Community Action Program (HACAP), which has an office in Dubuque. The partnership between the VA, HACAP and the City of Dubuque Housing and Community Development Department is especially impactful for veterans like Larry. A social worker

at the VA was able to connect him with Hollie Ohnesorge, housing coordinator with the Housing and Community Development Department.

“It’s an amazing office,” said Larry when asked about his experience with Hollie. “They’ve bent over backwards to help me.”

Larry and Hollie formed a special bond since first meeting. “He’s such a great guy,” said Hollie with a smile on her face. “He has a ton of stories from his lifetime ranging from his childhood here in Iowa, his time in the

military, and then his time traveling the country. I could probably listen to him all day.”

By design, the program allows recipients to have a choice in their housing by expanding rental options to units that may have been too expensive without the subsidy. When working together to find Larry a suitable apartment, Luis, his VA worker and HACAP found Asbury Senior Apartments, owned by Stephen and Ken Resch.

*Did you know?*

**49%** of Dubuque’s Housing Choice Voucher participants are elderly and/or disabled







Larry plays a game of cards with Hollie Ohnesorge

The father son duo are the owners of a handful of apartment complexes in Dubuque and accept housing choice vouchers for their rental units. Stephen is extremely passionate about finding housing for veterans. “As a military veteran myself, I feel a special connection to my fellow veterans and a sense of duty to help meet the needs of this unique community - especially those who are homeless, under-employed or marginalized,” he said. “I want to take care of these heroes whose sacrifices and courage provided my generation of veterans greater opportunities and resources.”

Hollie was thrilled for Larry and decided to hand-deliver his paperwork. He proudly took her on a tour of the apartment. The newly remodeled apartment was clean and cozy and had everything Larry needed. He talked about how nice the kitchen was, and how it connected nicely to the open dining and living room area. Larry joked to Hollie that the large walk-in closet should be big enough to fit all of his things. Hollie asked Larry his thoughts to which he replied, “This is a very nice place to live and I couldn’t afford it otherwise,” referencing the assistance he receives from the HUD-VASH program.

Seeing residents excited about finding a sense of home is what drives Hollie’s work. “It’s so great to watch it all come together,” said Hollie “I think there is a lot of hesitation from landlords to accept housing choice vouchers because it’s not something they are familiar with. However, the process is simple and can lead to some great tenants, like Larry.”

Stephen and Ken have gotten to know Larry as a tenant at Asbury Senior Apartments. “He may seem a bit gruff at first glance, but once you get to know him, most will find Larry a likable guy,” Stephen jokes. “He has a unique sense of humor and a big heart. We are proud to have him as a resident!”

“We accept vouchers because we believe housing is a basic right and all people should have access to quality, affordable housing,” says Stephen. “Unfortunately, many landlords will not accept the voucher due to the stigma against low-income individuals - that they are a higher risk, less reliable, and more prone to damage and mistreat property. However, we found this to be just the opposite and, when combined with sound rental processes and procedures, results in a ‘win-win’ situation for everyone.”

Today, Larry’s apartment is finally starting to feel like home to him. Things are finally unpacked and placed where he wants them. He has plans to break his old television out of storage and says he’ll be able to afford cable and get to watch some of his favorite shows again with the money he’s been able to save from not spending all his income on rent.

As he walks through the halls of his apartment building, he greets his neighbors in the hallway and lets them know that he looks forward to seeing them at Monday night bingo held in the community space. They joke and



Larry with landlords Ken and Stephen Resch

**“I want to take care of these heroes whose sacrifices and courage provided my generation of veterans greater opportunities and resources.”**

**Stephen Resch**  
Larry’s Landlord &  
Founder of Patriot One Homes

laugh about who will get lucky and get a bingo, allowing them dibs on their favorite candy bar from the prize selection.

“Dubuque is a wonderful place,” he says to Hollie as the two sit down for a game of cards on her visit to Larry’s new apartment after his move in. He shares that he loves the community for the city parks, the outdoor concerts and festivals, and most of all, the Veterans Freedom Center and Memorial. He thanks Hollie for her help and lets her know how impactful the program has been on his life. He shares that he now finally feels at home.

Scan the code with your  
smartphone’s camera to learn  
more about the City’s Housing  
Choice Voucher Program.



### The City of Dubuque offers payment plans and utility fee reductions for income-qualified residents.

One afternoon, Utility Billing Account Clerk Hunter Smith received a call from a resident who expressed she was struggling financially to pay her utility bill. Hunter let her know about potential assistance options for which she may qualify. This customer worked long shifts and was not available for follow-up calls during the utility billing department’s regular hours, so Hunter got creative and took to email and continued to communicate with the resident over the next few days to enroll her in a payment plan.

A few days after she was enrolled, there was a letter in the department’s mail addressed to Hunter. It was a hand-written note from the resident he was able to help. She let him know how grateful she was that he took the time to review the options available to her and make sure she got enrolled. She said she was going through a difficult time, but people like Hunter made it easier.

Hunter still keeps the letter at his desk. It serves as a reminder that with every call or email he receives, he has the opportunity to make a positive impact.



## AmeriCorps member realizes impact of service

“At the beginning of the year, a fourth grader was having a great deal of trouble regulating his emotions and would have frequent outbursts in class, causing him to be removed. Sometimes, he would come into the instructional coach’s office. I would watch him as he had no emotional control. He would resort to toddler-like behavior as a way to cope with his frustration. I have been able to work with this student at various times of the day. We have a five-minute break together every afternoon and it’s been a real opportunity to gauge how he is doing. We’ve built a relationship of trust and mutual respect. He still struggles with overcoming frustration and other issues, but my hope is that he feels less alone in his struggles.

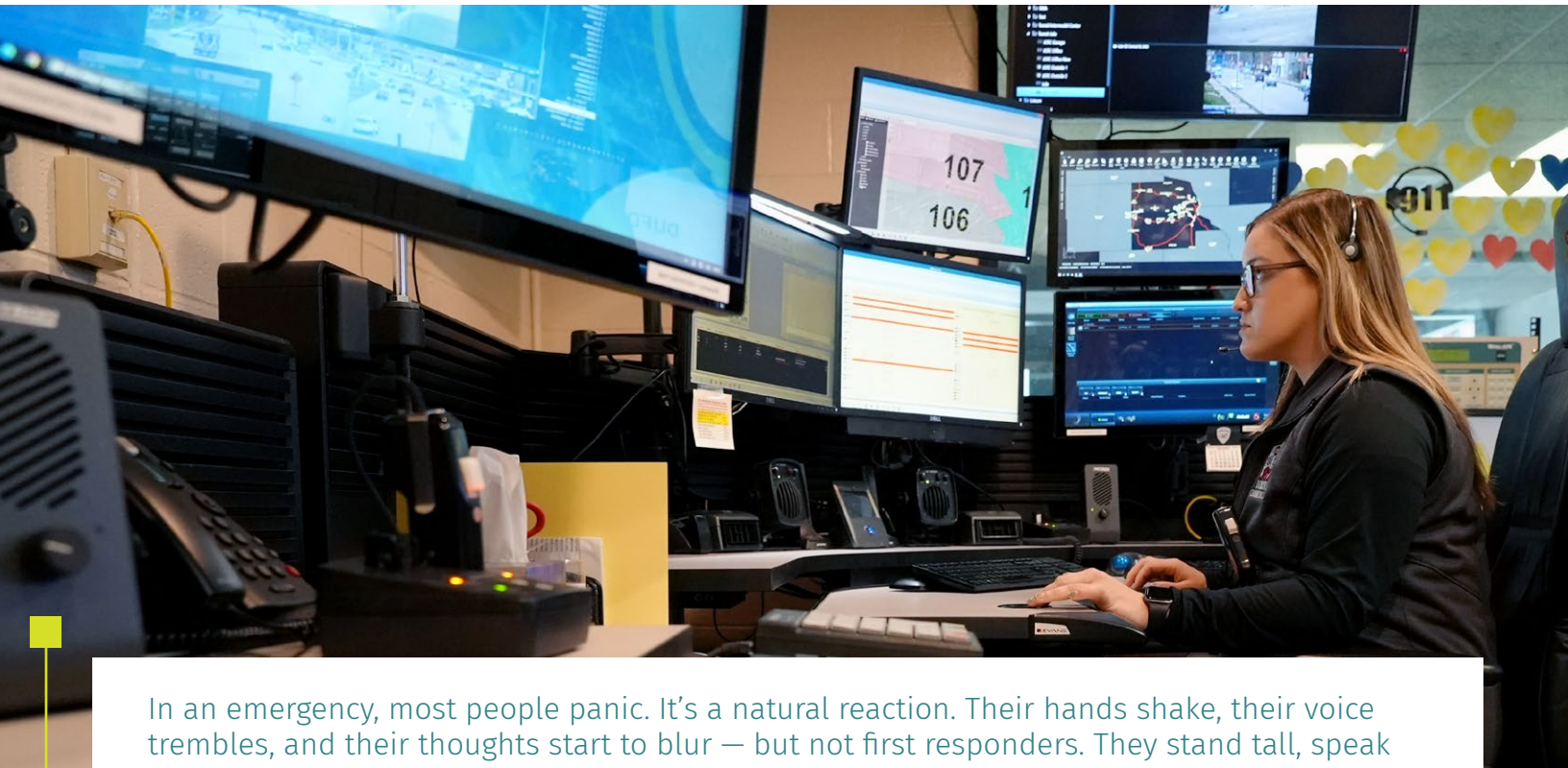
This relationship has been so impactful to me. After my first term with AmeriCorps, I decided to go back to school to become a mental health counselor. It’s students like this fourth grader that remind me of why I wanted to pursue this career path. I want to be able to provide emotional support for children and help them become more successful in school and in life after school.”

**Valerie Weiser**  
AmeriCorps Member



# HERE WHEN YOU NEED US

POLICE / FIRE / EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS



In an emergency, most people panic. It’s a natural reaction. Their hands shake, their voice trembles, and their thoughts start to blur — but not first responders. They stand tall, speak loudly, and act quickly. From the public safety dispatcher who first answers your call, to the police officer or firefighter who shows up on scene, all of Dubuque’s emergency personnel are brave individuals who give everything they’ve got to keep the community safe.

“The training received in the Dubuque 911 Communications Center is not only critical to our job but is ongoing daily. Learning opportunities present themselves regularly with the variety of calls for service we receive. Each dispatcher completes and maintains emergency fire, medical, and police certifications, state telecommunications training, and state certification through the Iowa and NCIC systems trainings. There are many other trainings on various topics that we complete on a monthly basis that are helpful to our daily operations. The consistent and repetitive nature of our trainings ensure the quality, timeliness, and effectiveness of our response is the best it can be. Nothing is more valuable to our callers in their time of need than our education and training as 911 dispatchers.”

**Amy Leibold**  
Public Safety Dispatcher

### Answering the Call

While the role of an emergency dispatcher is one of the most stressful jobs, those in the position are always calm and collected. The months of instruction, training, and practice reassures dispatchers that they will be able to handle any call they receive. All emergency dispatchers at the Dubuque County Communications Center are educated in medical practice, crisis intervention, de-escalation, and just about any scenario that warrants a call to 911.

Their training and experience allow them to quickly gather all the necessary information about the emergency, dispatch that information to the nearest



Officer Nate Lech and K-9 Nitro

appropriate unit, and assist the caller in the best way possible, all while staying on the line with them until help arrives. Keeping our community safe is a team effort, but those in the emergency communications profession are the first step in that effort.

### Seconds Matter

Seconds matter in an emergency and when the Dubuque Police Department is dispatched, they drop what they’re doing and respond, no matter the time or day. It’s the job of a police officer to serve and protect their community at any given moment, and they do

just that. Officers apply their bravery, knowledge, and skill in variety of emergencies daily.

Protecting the community isn’t just responding to emergencies, however. Many of the police department’s initiatives are preventative. For example, residents can request speed checks or extra attention in their neighborhood to curb crime or accidents before they happen. Much of the department’s preventative work surrounds education. School resource officers handle problems and conflicts on campuses throughout the Dubuque Community School District. Issues



Firefighter Elizabeth Healy

from theft to drug use can proactively be addressed by having resources and mentorship provided by an officer.

Much of the work of officers and other staff in the Dubuque Police Department often goes unnoticed. In fiscal year 2021, 55,791 calls for service were received, and staff took the time and care to either respond, follow up with, or resolve every single one.

### Saying ‘Yes’

If you saw “running into a burning building” in a job description, would you take on the role? The courageous individuals in the Dubuque Fire



Department have said “yes” to running into a burning building and battling the flames.

Through prevention and response, the department protects 60,000 residents over approximately 32 square miles. Firefighters are highly trained and skilled in fire science and how to handle fire emergencies when they arrive on a scene.

However, the role of the fire department is so much more than responding to fires. Dubuque Fire also provides emergency medical services, with a fleet of ambulances and trained paramedics. The Dubuque Fire Department ambulance service provides the following coverage 24 hours, 7 days a week:

- Basic and advanced life support
- Emergency transfers or non-emergency transfers
- Hospital discharges or inter-facility transfers
- Event standby

Staff are also professionally trained in search and rescue, extrication, and hazardous material response. No matter the emergency or event, they're here for you when you need them.

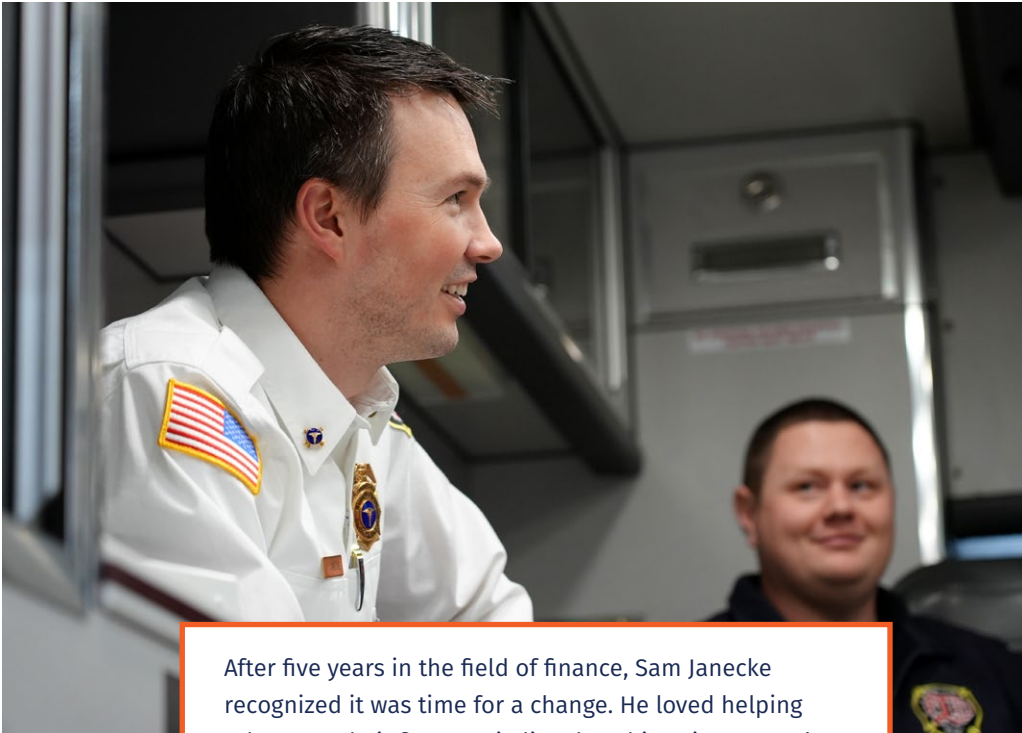
Scan the code below with your smartphone's camera to learn more about Sam's story.



**In your time of need the City of Dubuque's emergency personnel are here for you, no matter what.**

**“To go home at the end of the day and be able say that you made a difference in somebody's life when they were at their worst, and the City of Dubuque Fire Department was there to help, makes everything I do worth it.”**

**Sam Janecke**  
Dubuque Fire Department  
EMS Supervisor



After five years in the field of finance, Sam Janecke recognized it was time for a change. He loved helping others get their finances in line, but things just weren't adding up for him. He wanted to help people in a new way, one that was more hands on. Janecke began to look for a new role that would leave him even more fulfilled at the end of the day. He came across an advertisement for a paramedic position with the City of Dubuque and the rest is history.

“I just love the experience and the camaraderie,” said Janecke who now serves as the EMS supervisor for the City. “It was enough to make me take the plunge in changing careers, going back to school, and coming to work for the department.”

Sam immediately fell in love with role of providing ambulance services to Dubuque residents and has quickly climbed the ranks managing a team of his own that is dedicated to exceptional service.

**Water Distribution  
Water & Resource Recovery Center**

**At your  
service  
24/7**

When you turn on your faucet, you expect water to come out, and what you expect is what you get. However, you may not know everything that goes into getting water to your tap. The City of Dubuque's water distribution system is composed of 387 miles of water mains, many pumps actually pumping water uphill, with over 10,000 control valves and over 3,000 fire hydrants throughout the city — perfectly tuned and working together to supply homes in Dubuque with high quality water. Behind that network of infrastructure is a team working to make sure you have clean and safe drinking water every day.

Dubuque's water comes from a series of wells that pull from underground natural aquifers. The City's water department operates and maintains those wells that direct water to the City's treatment plant. City staff treat over 8 million gallons of water daily: filtering it, softening it, and removing impurities. Once ready for consumption, water is sent into the miles of water mains throughout our city, and ultimately ends up at your tap.

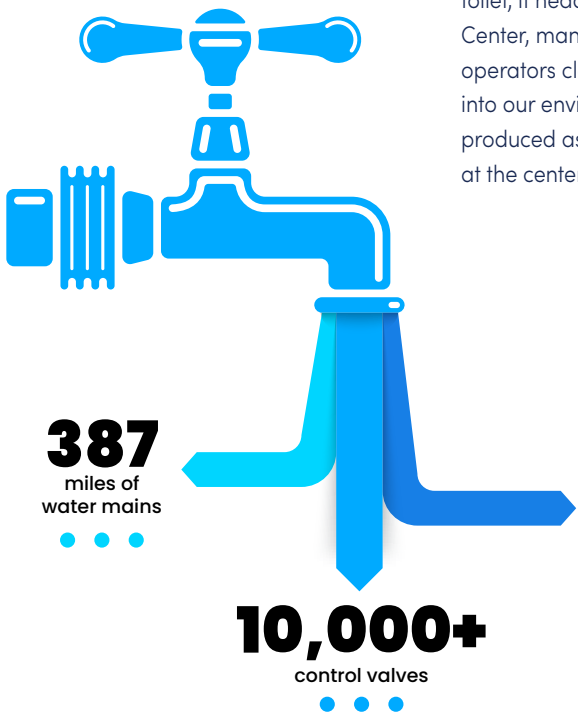
There are, however, the rare instances where things don't go as planned. Water main breaks can happen at any time, more commonly in colder temperatures due to the shifting ground and related stress on underground pipes, and someone must respond. Water serviceworkers respond to these disruptions when they occur, including in the dead of night or the dead of winter, so that when you turn on your faucet, water comes out.



Water Department  
workers in the field



Water & Resource  
Recovery Center Lab



After water runs down your drain or you flush your toilet, it heads to the City's Water Resource & Recovery Center, many times being pumped uphill, where plant operators clean wastewater for it to be released back into our environment. Fertilizer and natural gas are also produced as byproducts through the treatment process at the center.



# KEEPING OUR CITY RUNNING

Garbage, recycling, and yard waste/food scraps collection may not seem like a glamorous job, but somebody must do it.

## A whopping 17,500 tons.

That's how much garbage, recycling, and yard waste/food scraps was collected in the city of Dubuque during fiscal year 2021. Dubuque's 21 sanitation drivers are responsible for circling the city collecting the tons of waste produced by residents. It isn't a glamorous job, but it's vital work done by dedicated employees to keep our city clean and functioning.

City staff put in the extra work to assure that collections are handled properly, to protect our environment. Ann Skemp, a City of Dubuque Public Works employee, works at the Dubuque Metropolitan Solid Waste Agency landfill where she sorts electronic items to be recycled and manages the proper disposal of household hazardous waste.

"The amount of trash that comes into a landfill in a day is just staggering. If you can keep things from going in the trash as much as possible, and be recycled into something useful, I think that's really important," says Ann. "Sometimes recycling something isn't convenient. It takes making an appointment and then either lugging something to the curb or loading up your vehicle, but we really appreciate that people do recycle and take care of things the right way."

Curious as to what a day on the job looks like for Ann? Scan the code to check it out!



Household hazardous waste disposal

## Hitting the Streets

Other public works professionals also hit the streets daily to keep our city running. And by "hit the streets," we mean literally. Crews of street utility workers and equipment operators repair and maintain Dubuque roadways, fixing potholes and performing miles of asphalt overlay. Each summer during the construction season, major improvements are made to allow for smooth cruising throughout Dubuque.

Even in the winter, work on our city's roads continues, with crews transitioning to snow and ice removal efforts. During a winter weather event, the City deploys a fleet of up to 20 snowplows and salt-trucks staffed by "snowfighters" who work around the clock in treacherous conditions. Their job is to clear the roadways for safe travel, making their way to all the streets in the city.

The job of the City's public works department doesn't stop there. They also perform storm sewer and sanitary sewer maintenance, riverfront and floodwall operations, oversee street and traffic signs and lighting, and so much more.



Asphalt paving



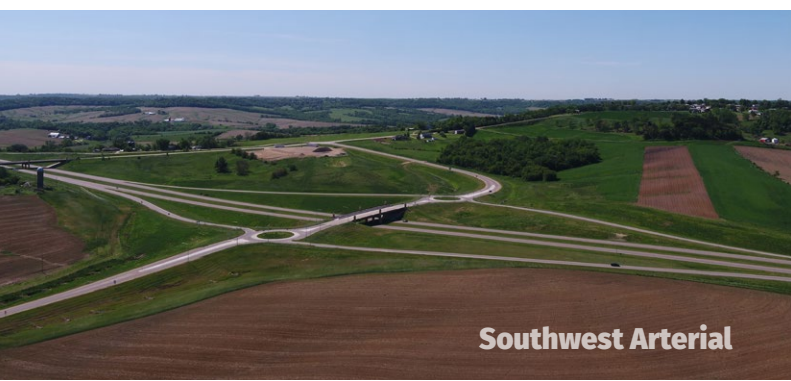
Snow plowing

## Working on Dubuque

While public works hits the streets, there is a whole other team dedicated to planning streets. The City's engineering department designs and develops Dubuque's infrastructure including public streets, bridges, sewers, and sidewalks. They keep our city moving by planning major construction projects.

Take the Southwest Arterial (U.S. 52) for example, which is a 6.1-mile, four-lane, divided freeway that reroutes traffic passing through our city and connects the nearby industrial centers. Plans for the project started in 1987 with the completion of the first environmental assessment of the area, with countless hours of work by city staff over the years leading to its completion in 2020. The project now has the potential to generate \$1.67 billion in economic output, \$653 million in labor income, and \$1.02 billion in value added over the next 10 years.

Engineers work on projects such as the Southwest Arterial to make travel within our city and use of its land efficient. They also manage the city's rights-of-way, which includes maintaining accessible sidewalks, integrating new traffic signal technology that results in shorter commutes, and designing innovative storm water management systems that are sustainable.



Southwest Arterial

## It Starts with a Plan

The work of the public works and engineering departments gets us closer to the goal of being the best city possible. But what does that look like? With the input of thousands of residents, the City of Dubuque Planning Services Department developed a vision for our city, and it's outlined in the Imagine Dubuque: 2037 Comprehensive plan.

They, along with other City staff, partners, and residents, work to carry out the comprehensive plan to meet out city's growing needs. They think strategically about infrastructure, childcare needs, recreation, and so many more aspects of life, our community can meet those needs.

Our city plans so our city can work for you.



# A VIBRANT COMMUNITY



Art on the River on the Mississippi Riverwalk

Dubuque is vibrant by nature. The city's rolling hills, limestone bluffs, and winding river are breathtaking and beautiful. However, not all of Dubuque's vibrancy is a natural gift. Parks, the arts, cultural events and activities, and so much more contribute to the quality of life in Dubuque. These offerings are strategically planned by City of Dubuque employees who come to work and make Dubuque a better place to live.

If you were to ask a Dubuque resident what their favorite part about living in Dubuque is, chances are city parks would be on their short list. With over 1,200 acres of parkland and over 300 facilities, there's plenty to see and do in our city. From a bike ride through the Bee Branch Creek Greenway, to a stay at Miller Riverview Park and Campground, residents love the outdoor spaces that are cared for by the staff in the City of Dubuque's park division. They keep trails clear for runs and rides, our greenspaces lively with pops of color from flora, and assure that kids in every neighborhood have a place to play.

Staff always ensure there are places to go and things to do in Dubuque. Lifeguards patrol the pool so kids can splash and adults can water walk. Instructors teach children a new sport along with skills like cooperation and sportsmanship. Site supervisors string up the nets for volleyball leagues. City staff help keep residents active and engaged in their community.

Activities don't just take place at city parks however, they happen all over town, including the Carnegie-Stout Public Library. The library offers opportunities for exploration, innovation, and education for all ages. Librarians get creative in offering educational programs, material recommendations, technology assistance, and many more resources. At the library, you'll find a helpful smile and the answer to your question.

Teens can easily get bored and claim that they can't find anything "fun" to do but at the Multicultural Family Center's (MFC) Teen Nights, there's plenty of fun to be had. Staff at the MFC create a safe and inclusive space for teens to be themselves. Teen Nights are a part of the MFC's educational and empowerment programs, but there is so much more that takes place at the center. Staff also work to plan a number of other social and cultural events, with support of the MFC Board of Directors, that bring our community together and allow residents to feel connected.

Some say beauty is in the eye of the beholder but there's no denying that our city is gorgeous. In addition to our majestic Mississippi River and picturesque bluffs, the abundant access to the arts adds expression and inspiration to life in Dubuque. The arts are everywhere. They're in public art on the riverwalk and on the sides of 40+ buildings. They're at

a downtown bar hosting a live band, at an international film festival, and on the stages of some of Iowa's oldest cultural institutions. The arts enhance our city, and City of Dubuque Arts & Cultural Affairs Coordinator Jenni Petersen-Brant is looking to bring more of it to Dubuque.

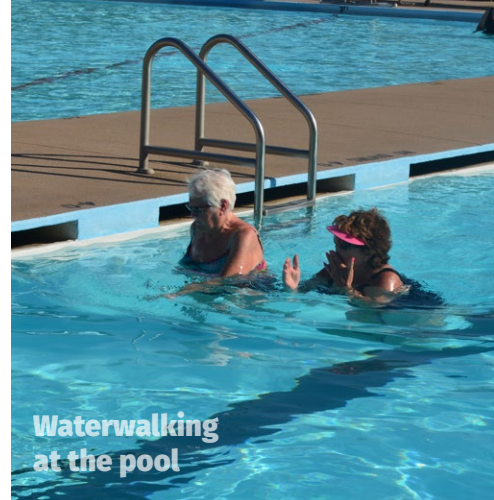
"Having an active and accessible arts and culture scene is an essential tool in growing an equitable community," states Petersen-Brant. "We know that the arts are an economic driver, attracting tourism dollars and playing a key role in recruiting and retaining workforce in Dubuque. But a vibrant arts and culture sector is also about creating a community where diversity is celebrated and everyone feels like they belong. Our work at the City aims to provide the resources and connections that inspire residents to be expressive, tell their stories, and bring their creativity forward to collectively cultivate a community that thrives together."

Want an inside peek at Art on the River? Scan the QR code to watch a video including artist interviews!



"Having an active and accessible arts and culture scene is an essential tool in growing an equitable community"

Jenni Petersen-Brant, Arts & Cultural Affairs Coordinator



Waterwalking at the pool



Maker Space at the Carnegie-Stout Public Library



Bee Branch Creek Greenway



# Behind the Scenes

You have probably seen public works employees paving city streets, or a police officer directing traffic, but so much of the work needed to keep our city running happens behind the scenes. Many employees work in City Hall or other offices unnoticed, putting in the work to make Dubuque great.

**A** sizable workforce is needed to keep our city running. The City's human resources department works to recruit, hire, train and retain employees across all departments. They're team players, lending a hand to make sure all 750+ City employees have the needed resources to succeed in their jobs. One major resource needed by city staff is technology. The City of Dubuque's Information Services Department supplies city employees with technology from computers, software, phones, and more to work efficiently and effectively.

City departments need adequate funding to operate. Dubuque's multi-million-dollar budget is administered by the City's budget and finance department staff who crunch numbers behind the scenes to make sure the City's operating and capital budgets add up and assure funding is available for all City initiatives and projects that make our city what it is. These projects and initiatives are determined by the Dubuque City Council and carried out by the city manager. The city manager directs staff to successfully implement and effectively manage city council priorities, policies, and programs.

Critical "backstage" administrative work is also completed by the city clerk's office. While state laws and city codes can sometimes be lengthy and dull, they're needed to keep our city safe, organized, and running. Staff archive documents, issue licenses, and regulate meetings to keep our city functioning. Laws and regulations matter a great deal to the city attorney and their team. They prepare ordinances, prosecute violators, and ensure compliance under the law – allowing for safety and order.

Our city's safety is further protected through food licensing and safety inspections by the City of

Dubuque Health Department. When you eat out at a local restaurant you probably don't think of all the precautions and checks taken to make sure your food was prepared safely. Environmental sanitarians work hand-in-hand with community partners to keep our city healthy, but their work doesn't stop there. Animal control, extreme heat/cold precautions, pandemic response, and other public health measures help them keep our city clean, healthy, and safe.

Being safe at home is also important. The inspection and construction services staff in the Housing and Community Development Department assures that homes and buildings across Dubuque are safe and up to code. Staff issue building permits, conduct inspections, and record compliance for all aspects of building infrastructure.

You may not have known just how much work goes on behind the scenes to make Dubuque the city that it is, but now you do, and you can thank the staff in the public information office for that. They communicate and increase public awareness about the activities, programs, and services provided by the City of Dubuque through social media, the City's website, the public access channel, and other mediums like this magazine.

Work of the City of Dubuque takes place out on city streets and behind the scenes. No matter where, our team is working to accomplish goals and get the job done.



## ENSURING A BETTER FUTURE FOR ALL.

The City of Dubuque takes on a unique role in addressing poverty in our community with the addition of the Office of Shared Prosperity and Neighborhood Support.

Taking on poverty and bringing about shared prosperity is no easy task, but it's a goal that the City of Dubuque's newly formed Office of Shared Prosperity and Neighborhood Support hopes to accomplish. They have their eyes set on addressing, reducing, and ultimately, preventing poverty in our community.

What exactly is poverty, and how does it present itself in Dubuque? In its simplest terms, poverty is an economic state in which an individual's or family's income can't cover the basic needs of everyday life. They struggle to pay for housing, food, utilities, childcare, and transportation. Poverty can be situational, due to a life event such as a death of a breadwinner, job loss, or recession. Some face generational poverty when at least two generations have been born into poverty and there is no wealth to share or hand down.

Essentially, poverty is caused by a lack of resources. People experiencing poverty lack a job that pays a living wage, lack affordable and safe housing, lack affordable and quality childcare, and lack accessible transportation. Oftentimes, people in poverty also lack the ability to easily access the help available to overcome these barriers.

"We have a large network of people working to solve individual problems in Dubuque," says Anderson Sainci, Director of the City's Office of Shared Prosperity and Neighborhood Support. "People are out there making sure our community has housing. Others are working to make sure our community is fed. It's good work, but what really needs to happen is we all need to come together to provide those experiencing poverty a way to meet all their needs holistically."

This collective action approach is how the office is structuring its work.

- Working with existing non-profits and service providers to promote partnerships in aiding those experiencing poverty.
- Implementing more equitable policies and practices in services throughout the city.
- Providing support to organizations to become more accessible and connected to the people they aim to support.

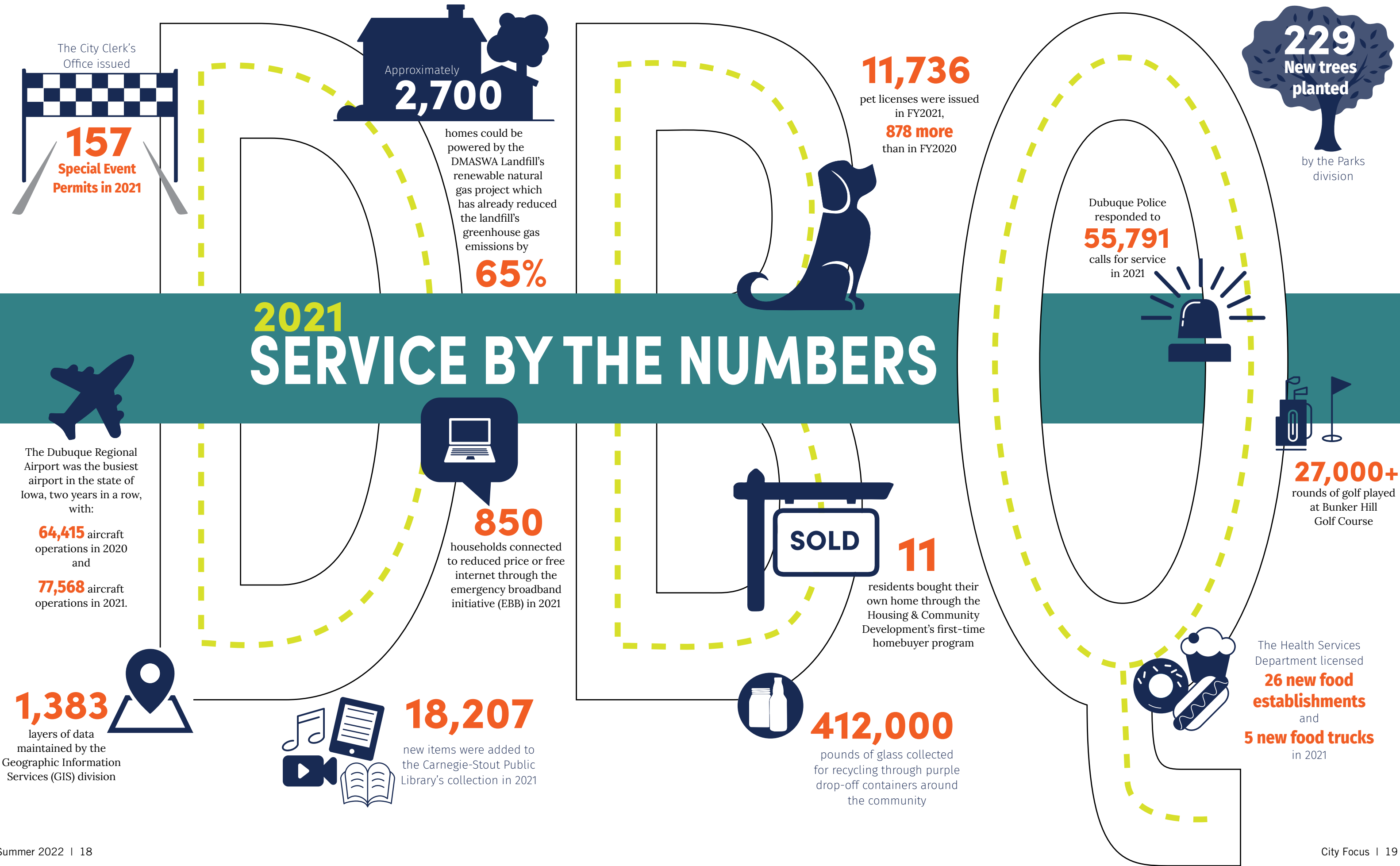
Tackling poverty is a complex challenge that will require a multidimensional approach. It's a challenge worth taking on because our community is worth it. Your city government is here for you, working on innovative solutions to meet our city's biggest needs.

**In 2018, the Dubuque City Council identified the design and implementation of an Equitable Poverty Prevention Plan as a top priority.**

Learn more about Dubuque's Equitable Poverty Reduction and Prevention Plan by scanning the code.









# Service & Compassion

## *all in a day's work*



Mark Welbes assists a Jule rider

## Jule paratransit driver shows compassion and dedication to the passengers he serves.

Editor's Note: Just before the printing of this publication, the passenger featured in the story passed away. The story of the relationship between the Jule employee and his passenger is an inspiring one, so with the permission of the passenger's family, we opted to include it in this issue.

The streets of Dubuque have changed since Mark Welbes first roamed them. He remembers growing up in the 1980s in a city that had double-digit unemployment, an exodus of residents, struggling downtown businesses, and disconnected neighborhoods. "When I graduated high school there was this joke going around that the last one in Dubuque better turn off the lights," says Mark.

That joke irritated Mark and his friends, however. Sure, the city was experiencing some major challenges, but it had so much potential. Leaders in both the city's private and public sectors saw this potential too, and began a grassroots effort to address downtown redevelopment and industrial expansion. Their investments combined with citizen support allowed Dubuque to overcome the hurdles once in its way.

Now when Mark drives the streets of the city, he notices the changes that have been made over the decades. He sees new apartment complexes and homes springing up year after year and new families moving to the area. He feels new vibrancy and life in the Millwork District that once felt like a ghost town to him. Mark

takes pride knowing that this city has so much more to offer its residents than it did before.

One of those offerings is the Jule, Dubuque's public transportation system, for which Mark is a bus driver. His assigned route is on the Jule's minibus service, which is a door-to-door transportation service for elderly and disabled passengers who are unable to use the fixed-route bus system. Mark and his fellow drivers on the minibus route pick passengers up at their home and safely transport them to their medical appointments, errands, and other essential trips.

"We're blessed in this city to have the service that we have. A lot of other cities don't have the type of care we give our passengers; they come from other areas, and they tell us that."

Most of the passengers on Mark's route were once independent but now, Mark and other drivers help make sure they're able to get where they need to go – just with some help. Mark assists passengers with mobility issues board the bus using the lift equipped on all Jule minibuses. Once on board, he makes sure passengers are securely seated and the radio is tuned to their favorite station. The trip is just half of the job, however.

Mark has come to learn that the other half is being there for his passengers. For the passenger that is exhausted from the dialysis treatment they just received, he situates them on the bus gently, making sure they're comfortable and can rest on the ride home. For the elderly passenger who lives alone and is craving conversation, he listens attentively, allowing them to confide in him. Mark knows that he is more than just a driver for his passengers, he is also a friend.

One passenger that Mark has become great friends with

is Theodore Lightcap. The pair knew each other from when Mark worked at the Moose Lodge years ago, and Ted would come in for a drink. They would talk, joke, and enjoy each other's company. They do the same now years later, just inside the Jule's minibus on their way to Ted's appointments instead.

Every day Mark starts his route with picking up Ted at home. He drives him to his appointment while the two usually catch up on the major sporting game that took place the night before. When they arrive, Mark lowers the lift and wheels Ted into the lobby. He lets Ted know that he'll be back for him when he's done, and Ted jokes that he

better be. It's relationships like this that have driven Mark in his work for more than 8 years.

Mark is on a first name basis with all of his passengers. In fact, he most likely knows the names of their spouse, kids, and pets too. "Like most jobs, there's a lot of work to it – don't get me wrong, but I get to interact with people all day and that's the part I love," says Mark.

Driving a Jule minibus, Mark makes hundreds of trips a week with his passengers; some to the doctor's office and some to the grocery store; some across town and some just a few blocks away. Each trip can be different, but with Mark behind the wheel, the experience is always the same. The dedication and compassion he shows his passengers continues to keep the community connected, in more ways than one.

**I get to interact with people all day and that's the part I love.**

Mark Welbes





# adam LANGBECKER

Dubuque Jet Center Fixed-Based Operations Supervisor

I see the Dubuque Regional Airport and Jet Center as the first and last impression of Dubuque for a lot of people. From pilots making a stop and grabbing a burger downtown, to CEOs of a new business looking to open its doors here, we tend to be the people that greet them and the ones who wish them a safe send off. I take a lot of pride in that. Our team works together every day to make visits enjoyable by keeping operations running smoothly. Plus, the City supports us in our work offering exceptional benefits and great work/life balance. Coming to work at the City of Dubuque was an easy decision.



As the City's sustainability coordinator, I'm responsible for delivering on the sustainability and resiliency priorities set by the mayor and city council. We've committed to reduce greenhouse gas emission by 50% by the year 2030, and I work with City departments, residents, businesses, and community partners to achieve that goal as part of the Community Climate Action and Resiliency Plan. My work is at the intersection of equity, mitigation, and adaptation strategies to strengthen our community's resiliency through climate action. I hear from residents about everyday issues they face and identify climate-friendly actions we can take to solve them. For example, after hosting a series of community conversations it became evident that many residents struggle to pay high energy bills, especially our households with low-to-moderate income. Through the Renew DBQ Solar Project we were able to establish help so these families can access solar technology – addressing their energy burden and helping to meet the City's greenhouse gas reduction goals.

# ginaBELL

Sustainable Community Coordinator

# What drives you in your work?

# jillCONNORS

Economic Development Director

I think we all grow up wanting to "save the world" in our own little way. Before this job, I never imagined how many ways I could positively affect our community. The City of Dubuque's Economic Development Department works to ensure that you have a good job to go to, a way to get there, a place to park downtown, fun things to do on the weekend, affordable childcare, quality housing to live in, and so many other things that make living in Dubuque great. It seems I spend my days in lots of meetings, but often I look around the table and think "If our residents only knew how many people are in a room together trying to make their lives better, they'd be proud." We don't get all these complex things figured out easily; however, I love working to make this a better community for everyone.



My work helps uncover how local government can better serve all residents of Dubuque. I look at conditions around race, gender, age, ability, and other protected classes to make sure everyone in our city has fair and equal access to services and basic human rights. I work to understand the root causes and existing policies that may get in the way for all Dubuquers to thrive. From there, I work with other city departments, community partners, and residents to research and implement policies, trainings, strategies, and workflows to foster a more equitable Dubuque for all.

# collins EBOH

Office of Equity & Human Rights Interim Director





# Where Our Work is Headed



Fire department pump training

When businesses closed and consumers remained at home due to the COVID-19 pandemic, economic hardship followed. In order to avoid significant cuts to programs and services, the City implemented a hiring freeze for most vacant positions in March of 2020. The hiring freeze was then extended to new positions added in FY2021, allowing the City to cover revenue shortfalls without layoffs and without negatively impacting residents.

City staff have worked through the lean conditions created by these vacant positions for almost two years. Even far before the hiring freeze, the City as an organization was operating very efficiently. A 2018 staffing level comparison of nine of the largest cities in Iowa revealed that Dubuque had the fifth lowest staffing level. Then, in 2020 when jobs became vacant and unfilled due to the hiring freeze, things became

problematic. Yet, City employees worked through these lean conditions and were able to maintain services without disruptions.

With most of the economic impact of the pandemic behind us, the City has now lifted the hiring freeze and plans to hire additional staff to meet the needs of our community. In the next year, the City aims to fill all vacant positions and hire an equivalent of an additional 23 full-time employees.

**By fully staffing and fully supplying resources to critical departments within the City of Dubuque, employees are able to provide municipal services that keep you safe, our community clean, and Dubuque a great place to live.**

**Seven new firefighters will join the City in FY2023, allowing for a third full-time ambulance in the city, helping to reduce response times throughout the city. The City's information services department will add three staff members that will improve cybersecurity for the City and continue work to expand broadband to all of Dubuque. The 9-1-1 Center will have more full-time employees, as will other departments**

By being adequately staffed, the City can better serve residents and stakeholders. The City is committed to making sure departments have all the resources they need to serve the community, whether that be staff or equipment. In 2020, the City of Dubuque Safety Committee was formed to keep employees safe during the pandemic. Mitigation procedures were put in place and personal protective equipment was supplied by the committee. Since then, the safety committee has found other areas that make City of Dubuque employees safer at work. One of those areas is the move toward using automated tipper carts for curbside trash collection.

A sanitation driver makes about 600 stops for curbside collections a day, five days a week in all conditions. Over a 30-year career, an employee exits their vehicle over 4.6 million times. With each collection, they must lift large trash containers that can weigh up to 40 pounds. This manual collection system poses a major risk of injury to City staff. By moving to an automated mechanism for collections, we can keep staff safe, become more efficient in collections, help to keep Dubuque clean, and make recycling and trash disposal more convenient for residents.



Automated curbside collection

**Supplying all Dubuque Police Department officers with a taser is another project to increase safety and produce better outcomes for residents. Studies have found that a police department that uses tasers as their primary resource in a scenario that warrants the use of force reduces harm to officers by 50 to 60% - not to mention increased safety for the suspect.**



National Night Out





Help create an equitable community of choice

# BENEFITS to PUBLIC SERVICE

WITH THE CITY OF DUBUQUE

## Retiree Benefits

After a lifetime of service, the City of Dubuque believes public servants should enjoy an exceptionally secure and rewarding retirement. That's why the City's public service pensions such as IPERS (Iowa Public Employees' Retirement System) and MFPRSI (Municipal Fire & Police Retirement System of Iowa), dispense generous payouts to retirees. While you serve the community, the City contributes a substantial portion to your pension to acknowledge your work and dedication.

## Paid Parental Leave

The City of Dubuque values the importance of family. That's why all parents in qualifying positions receive up to **12 weeks of full pay** while on parental leave. Birth or adoption, mother or father, our parental leave is inclusive, because to us, family is family. Even after your 12 weeks of leave are utilized, the City offers an ample amount of paid time off, flexible work arrangements and scheduling, and other benefits for you to maintain a healthy work/life balance.

The City of Dubuque is proud to be a family-friendly employer. Learn more about what it's like to be a City employee by scanning the code.



When you start your career at the City of Dubuque, you're joining a team of dedicated individuals serving the residents, businesses, and visitors of our community every day. City employees show up to work ready to make a difference that starts in their own backyard. Here, your work matters and better the lives of individuals – including your family, friends, and neighbors.

Our team is passionate about what we do, and we've made a culture out of it. We all share the common goal of making Dubuque the best place to live and that drives our work.

We work as a team to accomplish that goal by being input-oriented and creative in the search for solutions. City staff are some of the most passionate professionals in our community.

With over 750 employees in virtually all lines of work, the City of Dubuque may have the perfect career fit for you. From fire to finance, or parking to public works, our departments offer a variety of work that you can make a career of and find fulfilling.

In the latest all-employee survey, **95%** of City of Dubuque employees agreed with the statement: **"I have at least one coworker that I trust and enjoy working with."**

Ready to find your fit? Check out our current job opportunities and let's get to work.

LEARN MORE & APPLY  
[www.CityOfDubuque.org/Jobs](http://www.CityOfDubuque.org/Jobs)

Do you know of a student who is interested in exploring public service as a career? An internship with the City – in fields ranging from engineering to urban planning, media production to geographic information systems, arts and culture to human rights – is a great opportunity for hands-on learning!

"My time with the City's Office of Equity and Human Rights has been incredibly rewarding. In my role I've had the opportunity to assist in revitalizing City policies to make them more equitable, and ultimately, more impactful on the community. This office has not only allowed me to grow as a professional but has given me valuable opportunities in public policy research."



Bryan Moose  
Intern

Photo courtesy of Trent Hanselmann/  
Loras College Marketing

## But wait, there's more...

- With one of the best health insurance plans in the tri-state area, City employees only pay 15% of the premiums for top-tier coverage. The City covers 85%.
- All employees qualify for an employee assistance plan which includes free counseling and coaching services to employees and members of their household.
- The City offers tuition reimbursement to invest in the potential of employees and support growth and career development within the organization.
- Public service loan forgiveness is available through the federal government to employees who have made 120 qualifying payments to their federal student loans.
- Most importantly, making a difference in people's lives.



