

# Kent County Report

## Emergency Management Teams Up with *Northern Exposure* Exercise

Smoke, debris, crushed cars, and role players were part of a major exercise in Kent County on June 24 & 25. Kent County/Grand Rapids Emergency Management took part with more than 30 local, state and federal agencies for Exercise ***Northern Exposure***. The exercise included drills in several cities throughout Michigan, including Muskegon, Battle Creek and Gaylord, from June 23-27, 2015.

The exercise simulated an explosion of a “Dirty Bomb” (Improvised Nuclear Device) in Grand Rapids. The Department of Public Works, Health Department, Road Commission, Sheriff's Department, HAZ-MAT teams and Fire/Rescue personnel worked on a coordinated response. Michigan National Guard used Butterworth Yard Waste Facility in Grand Rapids and Crestwood Middle School in Kentwood to practice response efforts.

While the exercise allowed agencies to look at how they would respond to a large-scale disaster, the end goal was to make sure our first responders are prepared for any incident that might happen in Kent County.



**The Kent County Employee Recognition for Quality Service program identifies and recognizes employees who have provided outstanding quality customer service to the citizens of Kent County and/or our internal customers. If you know a Kent County employee who deserves this recognition, please complete a nomination form by clicking [here](#).**



*Left: Michigan National Guard at Butterworth Yard Waste for exercise on June 24. Middle: Media interviews Adjutant General of the Michigan National Guard, Major General Gregory J. Vadnais. Right: The Metropolitan Medical Response System prepares to “triage” role players acting injured in the exercise.*

## Kent County Pension “Fully Funded”

Kent County is in a very small but fiscally-sound group. Recent changes in the way pensions are calculated have put many municipalities in a tough position with unfunded liabilities. But here in Kent County, the pension was calculated at 100.4-percent funded at the end of 2014, according to the plan actuary.



Kent County has been able to achieve a fully funded status in its pension plan thanks to a combination of factors: a highly capable Pension Board that acts as a plan fiduciary, investment returns over the past few years that have met or exceeded the County Pension Board’s forecasts, and a funding policy that requires annual County contributions to fund the cost of benefits earned for each year of service and to reduce any unfunded actuarial liability. Perhaps the most important factor is a willingness of County employees to partner in making half of the required annual contributions to the plan up to a certain cap.

Today, Kent County is one of very few local government entities that offer a defined benefit pension plan to new hires and existing employees. Our ability to offer this benefit (and keep it affordable to the County) is a function of responsible funding policies/practices and employee commitment to act as an equal partner to ensure the continued strong financial health of the County’s pension plan.

Kent County has a long-standing practice and has recently formally adopted a “pay as you go” funding policy which ensures that every dollar of pension credit earned is fully paid for as it is earned. This philosophy helps the County to maintain a healthy pension plan.



## Kent County Audit Completed for 2015

The Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR or annual audit) for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2014 has been completed. Stephen Blann from Rehmann Robson presented the results of the audit to the Board of Commissioners at the June 25 meeting. This is the earliest the CAFR has been completed. Kudos to Fiscal Services staff, especially Francine Farrington, Sherah Richard, and Michelle Visser for their diligence in working with Rehmann Robson on this important report. The CAFR will be posted on our website at :

[www.accesskent.com/Departments/FiscalServices/documents.htm](http://www.accesskent.com/Departments/FiscalServices/documents.htm).

## Law Enforcement Runs in the Family

### Kent County Gets New Undersheriff

The Kent County Sheriff Department recently announced the new Undersheriff, Michelle LaJoye-Young. She steps in for Jon Hess, who retired June 1. Undersheriff Young received the unanimous recommendation of current KCSD Command Staff. It is an historic promotion: she is the first female undersheriff in Kent County.

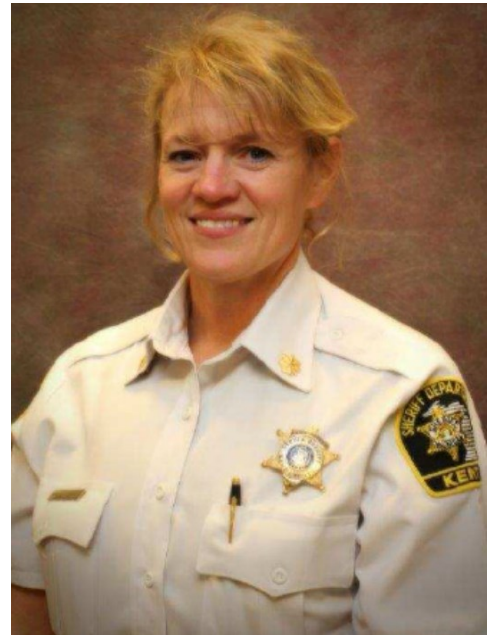
Undersheriff Young chose her career path when she was a young child. “My father was a Sheriff in Shiawassee County, and I always admired him and what he did to help keep the community safe,” Undersheriff Young said. “We are a lot alike, personality-wise, and I could see myself being good at the work.”

Undersheriff Young has been with the Kent County Sheriff Department for more than 25 years. She is excited about her new role. “My favorite part of the job is facilitating our staff in growing in their competency, becoming stronger in their leadership,” she said. “I have always really liked the variety of work and the fact that you meet so many different people with so many different perspectives.”

Law enforcement is always

evolving to meet the needs of the community. The Sheriff Department is always looking at ways to be accessible and transparent to residents. Undersheriff Young expects there will always be challenges. “Today the biggest challenge is ensuring that our community relationships remain strong and that we continue to develop in law enforcement with our changing community needs while still maintaining the security within the community we all expect for our families,” she said.

Undersheriff Young served in the Army National Guard and Reserves, attended Grand Rapids Community College Police Academy, and obtained her Bachelor’s Degree in Criminal Justice from Michigan State University. She went on to receive her Master’s Degree in Public Administration from Western Michigan University and graduated from Northwestern University School of Police Staff and Command. Her message to young adults interested in law enforcement or corrections? “I would encourage young people to truly consider this career path,” Undersheriff Young said. “They need to



understand that—at its core - this is a job can be very fulfilling. You can truly help people in these roles.”

Undersheriff Young emphasizes that working in law enforcement is a team effort. “It’s a career of great responsibility where literally you are placing other’s needs ahead of your own,” she said. “Make sure if you are entering the career that you understand there will be good times and bad. Be prepared for both.”

Undersheriff Young represents the Sheriff’s Office and Kent County on a variety of committees locally, statewide, and nationally. She has two sons: Ethan and DeLane.



## South Clinic to Get Chairs 11 & 12

The South Clinic opened in September 2014 with eight dental chairs. In January the Health Department and Michigan Community Dental Clinics secured funding for two more dental chairs, thanks to Delta Dental Foundation. Generous contributions from Spectrum Healthier Communities Foundation, Health Net of West Michigan and Michigan Community Dental Clinics will cover costs for two more chairs. This brings the total up to 12 chairs for clients, meaning more clients will have access to dental check-ups!



## County Staff “Rock the Block” in Grand Rapids

Kent County was well-represented at LINC’s “Rock the Block” event on June 13, 2015. Staff from the Department of Public Works, Human Resources (HR), and the Health Department provided information on various programs and job opportunities.



*Upper right: Guy Miller and Cassie Kobler, Kent County Health Connect.*

*Lower left, clockwise: Darius Quinn (HR), Darian Quinn, Stephanie Hernandez (HR), Daryl Delabbio (County Administrator), and Tracie Eckhardt (HR).*

*Lower right: Amanda Leija and Monica Little, Health Department.*

## Kent County Board of Commissioners & Administrator’s Office

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[www.accessKent.com](http://www.accessKent.com)

## Kent County Mission Statement

The mission of Kent County government is to be an effective and efficient steward in delivering quality services for our diverse community. Our priority is to provide mandated services, which may be enhanced and supplemented by additional services to improve the quality of life for all our citizens within the constraints of sound fiscal policy.

