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Kreuser hails county employees' efforts in 2021 State of the County address

KENOSHA — Kenosha County Executive Jim Kreuser delivered his 2021 State of the County Address to the County Board Tuesday evening, highlighting the remarkable work of the county's staff amid the challenges of the past year.

“Even after a year-plus of COVID, every day great things happen in Kenosha County,” Kreuser said. “If you haven't noticed, I'm kind of a cheerleader for Kenosha County — and it's easy when you have such a terrific team of employees who perform every day at a high level with professionalism and efficiency.”

Kreuser said staff across all county departments were nimble in adjusting to working remotely and providing services in innovative ways as the pandemic unfolded. With this, he said, came the coordination of complex logistical plans, including the ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Our quality employees from every division of Kenosha County make a big difference,” Kreuser said. “They have all pulled together to help accomplish what is our No. 1 top priority countywide: Getting vaccine shots in arms efficiently, safely and with great dispatch.”

To that end, Kreuser noted that Kenosha County Public Health's COVID-19 community vaccination clinics, widely praised for their efficient operations, have administered some 45,000 doses of the vaccine to date — a continuing effort that came together with involvement from nearly all county departments and divisions.

Among other staff accomplishments over the last year, Kreuser cited:

- Division of Aging, Disability and Behavioral Health Services staff filling in as Meals on Wheels Drivers and facilitating onsite distribution of meals to ensure that nutrition services remained available for people in need at the onset of the pandemic.
- The Division of Information Technology's work to deploy a remote workforce last March, followed by its assistance to law enforcement with the response to the late-

summer civil unrest and its development of applications and processes in support of the vaccination effort.

- The Division of Children and Family Services' continued success in promptly investigating allegations of child abuse and neglect, even with the challenges of the pandemic. Kreuser noted that the Child Protective Services Unit achieved a rate of 97 percent in completing initial assessments within 60 days and made timely initial face-to-face contacts on those cases at a rate of 93 percent, compared to respective statewide rates of 68 percent and 80 percent.
- Brookside Care Center and Willowbrook Assisted Living's orchestration of the management and delivery of services while juggling federal, state and local requirements throughout the pandemic.
- The Human Resources' team's efforts to transition employees to remote work while accommodating the needs of employees who could not work from home, as well as ongoing efforts to staff vaccination clinics with employees and volunteers while also coordinating the requisite training.
- The Emergency Operations Center's juggling of the countywide responses to COVID-19 and the civil unrest.
- The Division of Health's ongoing response to the pandemic, including the planning, implementation and constant re-evaluation of procedures as the situation requires.

"Our workforce has continued to perform with the same high quality and with the same strong commitment to the people of Kenosha County, despite the sometimes-overwhelming physical and emotional challenges," Kreuser said. "I sincerely thank them and applaud their efforts."

Kreuser noted that all of this work has occurred as the county continues to also focus on infrastructure improvements such as the expansion of Highway S that will come to completion later this year, and as it continues to attract new employers.

The county has also maintained its strong fiscal standing through the pandemic, Kreuser said, preserving a strong fund balance and garnering praise from the bond rating agencies Standard & Poors and Fitch Ratings.

"The financial state of Kenosha County is very strong," Kreuser said. "We are at AA+ and doing all the right things to attain a AAA rating. Fitch said our operating performance is rated AAA. S&P noted we have rapid amortization of debt, with 85.9 percent of debt scheduled to be retired in 10 years. Furthermore, the overall long-term obligation of Kenosha County is \$24 million less than when I took office in 2008."

In closing, Kreuser pledged that Kenosha County government will continue to work for its residents, businesses and organizations, while also continuing its commitment to diversity and equity for a better society for all.

“We will finish strong in dealing with this pandemic and I am confident in Kenosha County’s future, and this is all possible because of our employees of Kenosha County,” Kreuser told the County Board. “We still have a lot of work to do in 2021, and I look forward to working with each of you as we work through this stage of the pandemic — keeping the goal in mind of making Kenosha County an even better place to live, work, play and raise a family.”

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