Tri Kappa raises funds for Safe Haven Baby Box in Schererville

When the Tri Kappa Associate Chapter of Dyer, Schererville and St. John started raising funds to install a Safe Haven Baby Box in Schererville, the $15,000 cost seemed a possible although distant goal.

However the generous support of the community has already helped surpass that amount, said Colleen DeVries, chapter member and the person who first brought the idea to the organization. And now the Safe Haven Baby Box will definitely be installed at one of the town's Fire Stations in 2021.

A Safe Haven Baby Box provides an environment that permits a woman in crisis to safely, securely and anonymously surrender a baby if she is unable to care for her newborn. The Baby Box, which also has a battery back-up, is installed in an exterior wall of a designated fire station or hospital. The exterior door automatically locks when a newborn is placed inside the Baby Box. When the Safe Haven Baby Box is opened and a baby placed inside, Schererville firefighters will hear an alarm which signals them to go to the box's interior door inside the station and retrieve the infant. The baby is checked and taken to a hospital, then discharged to the Department of Child Services to be placed for adoption.

Chapter members who range in age from 65-80.

"The women that put their babies in these boxes are very desperate women, and they're in crisis," she said. "They're either too young to care for a child or they have no resources to care for a child. Rather than leaving the baby in the woods somewhere, or along the side of the road, or God forbid in a dumpster — we don't have any place where a woman can anonymously surrender a baby."

DeVries recalled how the idea for the Safe Haven Baby Box came to her.

"I had a heart attack earlier this year. It wasn't bad, but it was very sobering for me," she said. "Before that I had thought about bringing a Safe Haven Baby Box to Schererville. Now that feeling was even stronger, so I made a call to the president of our chapter. I formed a committee and all our membership supported it."

Many people from the Tri-Town area also embraced the project with donations. In addition, the UPS Store in Schererville printed the flyers the chapter used to promote the fundraising.

In September, members of the Tri Kappa Associate Chapter attended a Schererville Town Council meeting, DeVries said.
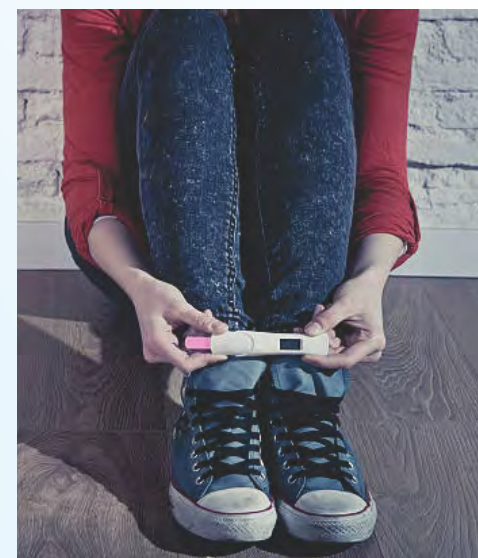
"The Town Council members were incredibly generous and made a $2,500 donation," she said.

DeVries said Schererville Fire Chief Robert Patterson also notified the chapter that companies have volunteered to get the space ready for the Baby Box and to do the wiring necessary.

"All of us are mothers, except for one or two, and we're also grandmothers," said DeVries about Tri-Kappa Associate

Indiana's Safe Haven Law allows people to take newborn babies to any hospital emergency room, police station or fire station without any questions asked and no risk of arrest or prosecution.

However, DeVries said, "Many women don't want to face surrendering their babies, which makes the Safe Haven Baby Box ideal because it allows anonymity with no penalty."

And although there are Safe Haven Baby Boxes in surrounding communities, DeVries said, "What if the young mother can't drive yet? What if the young mother has no resources to get to another community? What if she's kept this pregnancy a secret? How is she going to manage that?"

When the Safe Haven Baby Box is installed in a Schererville Fire Station, DeVries said, "This is a win-win for everyone!"

What's Happening in Town

DECEMBER 2020

21 Plan Commission Study Session 6 p.m.
24 Christmas Eve, Town Hall closed
25 Christmas Day, Town Hall closed
30 Special Waterworks Board, Redevelopment Commission, Utility Board, Town Council 6 p.m.
31 New Year's Eve, Town Hall closed

JANUARY 2021

1   New Year's Day, Town Hall closed
4   Plan Commission Meeting 6 p.m.
6   Park Board Meeting 6 p.m.
7   Board of Safety Study Session, 5:30 p.m.; Board of Safety, 7 p.m.
18 Martin Luther King Day, Town Hall closed
18 Plan Commission Study Session 6 p.m. (subject to change)

20 Waterworks Board, Redevelopment Commission, Utility Board, Town Council 7 p.m.
25 Board of Zoning Appeals Meeting 6 p.m.

FEBRUARY

1   Plan Commission Meeting 6 p.m.
3   Park Board Meeting 6 p.m.
4   Board of Safety Study Session, 5:30 p.m.; Board of Safety, 7 p.m.
10 Waterworks Board, Redevelopment Commission, Utility Board, Town Council 7 p.m.
15 Plan Commission Study Session 6 p.m.
22 Board of Zoning Appeals Meeting 6 p.m.

Library buildings may be closed, but safe activities for all ages continue

While in-person programming is again paused due to COVID-19, the Lake County Public Library still offers a variety of safe activities for all ages.

Parents and caregivers may pick up a different craft each week at the Dyer-Schererville Branch, 1001 W. Lincoln Highway in Schererville, said Chris Rettig, Branch Manager. Each craft bag contains pieces for preschoolers to assemble along with instructions for adults.

The library's web page at www.lcplin.org/kids also offers STEAM challenges, treasure hunts, and games created by Youth Education Services librarians. New story times and middle grade book samplings are posted several times a week on the library's YouTube channel.

"Check the library's website frequently as new online activities and events are added often," Rettig advised.

"Virtual visits with National Parks, zoos, and museums as well as presentations about bird-watching, historical events, and other interesting topics are available every month using Zoom," she said. "Our book club for adults and our teen gaming club have moved online, too, and new members are welcome to join any time."
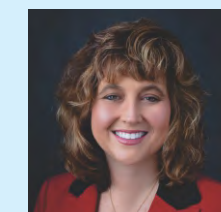
For more information about library activities and events, visit www.lcplin.org or call the Dyer-Schererville Branch at (219) 322-4731.
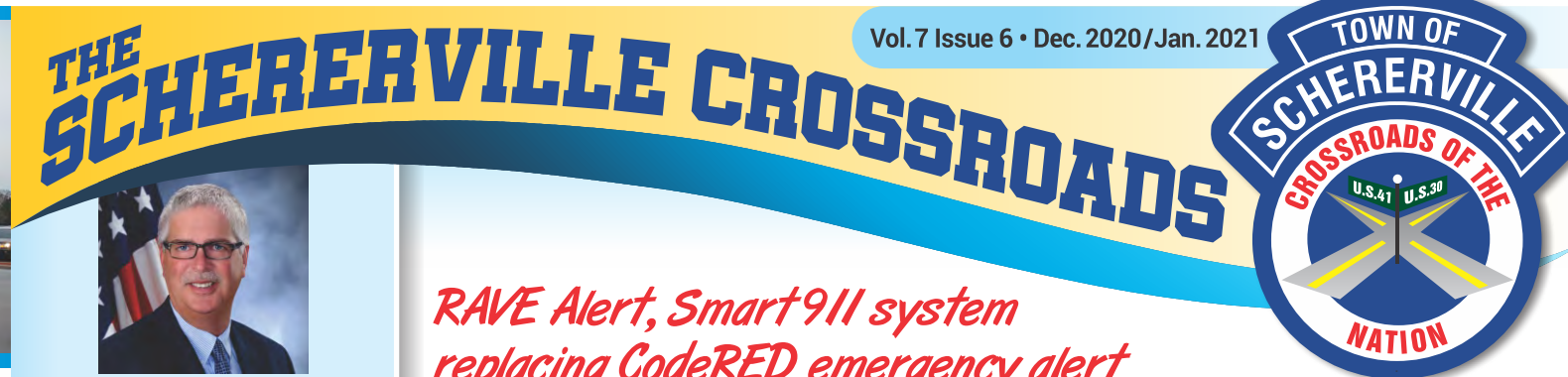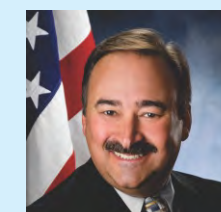
RAVE Alert, Smart911 system replacing CodeRED emergency alert

Soon the Town of Schererville will replace the CodeRED emergency alert system with RAVE Alert which is powered by Smart911. Schererville residents currently using the CodeRED system will need to enroll in Smart911 and RAVE Alert because the CodeRED information won't be transferred.

The Lake County Department of Homeland Security is offering this new alert system to all towns and cities in the county, and all Schererville residents can be part of this free service by signing up at https://schererville.org/smart911.

When you go to the website, you will be asked to check off those alerts you want to receive, said Dan Gin, Schererville IT Director. After you have signed up for RAVE, you can choose to add Smart911 or just opt to stop there and not enter anything else, he said.

For those who don't have Internet access, the Town will be offering in-person assistance with registration in the future. More information will be published in the next Crossroads newsletter.

Here's how this new system works.

The free Smart911 service allows individuals to create a Safety Profile for their households that provides any information they want those answering 9-1-1 calls and first responders to know in case of an emergency.

That information could include the following:
- People living in the household
- Phone numbers associated with your family
- Pets and service animals
- Medical conditions and allergies
- Medications and medical equipment
- Property details, layout and utility information
- Vehicle descriptions
- Emergency contacts

When you dial 9-1-1, that Safety Profile is immediately displayed on the call-taker's screen allowing the dispatcher to send the needed response teams to the right location with the right information. Fire crews can arrive at a house fire knowing how many people live in the house and the locations of the bedrooms. EMS responders will be advised of allergies or specific medical conditions, and police can have the photo of a missing child in seconds rather than minutes or hours.

Schererville residents can also opt-in to RAVE Alert which allows them to receive timely emergency alerts via email, text or voice messages on their cell phones. For example, you can receive information about severe weather and how Schererville plans to prepare and act. You can be notified of traffic incidents and road closures, and activities such as mosquito spraying so you will avoid that area. This system will also notify you about such emergencies as gas leaks, missing persons and ongoing police pursuits. In addition, you will be alerted during and after emergencies.

The RAVE Alert will work in much the same way that the CodeRED system currently does. All Schererville residents are encouraged to sign up for this new emergency notification system.

Sign up for Alerts and Always Be Informed

Powered by Smart911

Schererville Police joins Neighbors App to keep community safer, informed

Schererville residents can now receive real-time information about safety alerts thanks to *Neighbors*, a free app by Ring, which the Schererville Police Department has joined through the *Neighbors Public Safety Service*. It's not necessary to own a Ring device to participate.

The Neighbors App uses your address to create a radius around your home, said Schererville Police Chief Peter Sormaz. When posting or commenting on the *Neighbors App*, your real identity is **not** published, but the post is made public to other *Neighbors App* users. If anyone shares a post on the app about crime or safety alerts within that radius, you'll get a notification on your phone and tablet, the Chief said.

This app posts and shares important information in the following categories – crime, safety, unknown visitor, lost pet or neighborly moment, he explained. Once an alert is posted, you can comment with updates and inform your neighborhood when the incident has been resolved, the Chief said.

Schererville Police can use the *Neighbors Public Safety Service* to view and comment on shared public posts. Comments and posts from the Police Department are clearly identified by the name, rank and agency, Chief Sormaz said. The police can also create posts to inform the community about local crime and safety issues, he said.

User privacy is protected, the Chief said.

"Public safety agencies such as the Police **do not** have access to user cameras, live streams or personal information when using NPSS. Through *Neighbors*, public safety users can only view videos and other information if it's been publicly posted on the app or specifically shared with the police in response to a request," Chief Sormaz said.

(image: We've Joined Neighbors. ring)
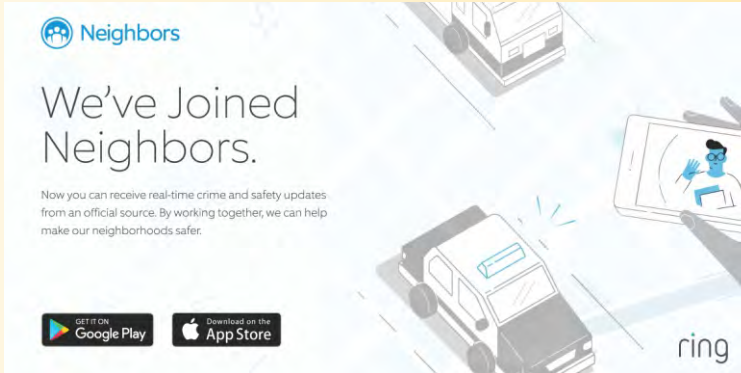
Residents are identified in *Neighbors* posts and comments only as "*Neighbor #*". The Police Department sees the same information as regular users and does not receive additional information about the post or the users posting or commenting, he said.

According to the *Neighbors* Community Guidelines, "Ring does not tolerate discrimination, threats or bullying, and we encourage users to treat their neighbors (and those visiting and passing through the neighborhood) with respect. We also provide guidance, encouraging users to carefully consider the behavior that made them suspicious of others and whether such suspicion is reasonable, and not post pictures or videos of people taken where they had a reasonable expectation of privacy without their knowledge or consent (for example, users should not post photos or videos of their neighbor's backyard)."

Users "also have the power to flag incorrect or inappropriate content on *Neighbors* directly in the app. Our team reviews flagged posts, and if the content violates one of our Community Guidelines, it will be removed from the content feed," the guidelines from Ring state.

The *Neighbors App* is free to join. Connect with the community by downloading *Neighbors for IOS* or *Neighbors for Android*.

Schererville Fire Department adds to ranks

Ryan Abens was sworn in as a full-time firefighter and emergency medical technician (EMT) by Schererville Clerk-Treasurer Mike Troxell at the November Board of Safety meeting.

A Munster resident originally from Chicago's northern suburbs, Abens served as a volunteer firefighter with the Munster Fire Department and began working part-time with the Schererville Fire Department in April, said Fire Chief Robert Patterson.

Abens wears Badge #54 and will begin paramedic training in January at Franciscan St. Anthony Health Center in Crown Point.

The Schererville Fire Department recently added to its ranks.

Booking your future events with the schererville parks & recreation

Whether you're planning a banquet, retirement party, bridal shower or corporate meeting in the future, the Schererville Community Center at 500 E. Joliet Street provides the ideal venue.

Located near the heart of the downtown area with the entrance off Scherwood Greens Drive, the Schererville Community Center has easy access to and from U.S. Route 30. The 12,500-square foot facility is designed for events from small workshops of 10 people to large gatherings of up to 285.

With the current COVID-19 pandemic and Governor Eric Holcomb's Executive Orders, those occupancy limits may be lower than outlined in the Schererville Parks & Recreation website, www.schererville.org/town-government/parks-and-recreation/community-center/.

Please call (219) 865-5530 for up-to-date COVID-19 restrictions.

The rooms at the Schererville Community Center include the following:

- **Room A** – A multipurpose room equipped with sink, refrigerator, microwave, countertop and access to covered patio. Occupancy limit is 55. The hourly fee Monday through Thursday for Schererville residents is $40 and $60 for non-residents. On Friday through Sunday, there's a four-hour minimum of $200 for residents ($40 for each additional hour) and $300 for non-residents ($60 for each additional hour).
- **Room B** – A multipurpose room with access to covered patio. Occupancy limit is 103. The fee Monday through Thursday is $40 per hour for Schererville residents and $60 per hour for non-residents. On Friday through Sunday, there's a four-hour minimum of $200 for residents ($40 for each additional hour) and $300 for non-residents ($60 for each additional hour).
- **Room C** – A multipurpose room with access to covered patio. Includes adjacent full kitchen with stovetop, two ovens, microwave, sink, ice machine and refrigerator. If requested, the kitchen can be partitioned off from the rest of the room. Occupancy limit is 101. The fee Monday through Thursday is $65 per hour for Schererville residents and $100 per hour for non-residents. On Friday through Sunday, there's a four-hour minimum

of $320 for residents ($65 for each additional hour) and $480 for non-residents ($100 for each additional hour).

- **Full Community Room** – This room provides all the amenities of Rooms A, B and C, including the kitchen. Occupancy limit is 285. The two-hour minimum fee on Monday through Thursday is $250 for Schererville residents ($125 for each additional hour) and $380 for non-residents ($190 for each additional hour). On Friday through Sunday, there's a four-hour minimum fee of $600 for residents ($125 for each additional hour) and $900 for non-residents ($190 for each additional hour).

Additional rental items include dance floor, $100 (minimum of one week's notice required); microphone, $25, and projector, $100 (located in Room B only).

Each rental will have access to the room rented up to 30 minutes before and after the rental. The renters may bring food in from the place of their choosing as long as it's not cooked on site.

There's a non-refundable reservation fee of $100 or the full amount due (including security deposit and rental fee), whichever is less, required to reserve any room.

The full balance (including security deposit and rental fee) is due 90 days prior to the scheduled event and is NON-REFUNDABLE. If the balance due isn't deposited 90 days prior to the event, the Reservation Fee will be forfeited and the room made available to others without notice to the holder of the reservation.

Payments can only be made in the form of a check. Reservations must be made in person with government-issued picture ID at the Schererville Park Department Office, located at the Schererville Community Center.

A security deposit equivalent to $50 for each hour reserved is required with final payment, and will be returned to the user upon satisfactory return of the facility, according to the written policy of the Schererville Parks & Recreation Department. For more information, call (219) 865-5530.

How to apply for your 2021 pets' licenses, avoid late fees

Schererville residents can begin applying for their pets' 2021 licenses on Monday, January 4, 2021, at the Schererville Police Department, 25 E. Joliet Street. Every person entering the police department's lobby must wear a mask. Social distancing stickers are placed six feet apart on the lobby floor and no more than four individuals can be in the police lobby at any time. Office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Please bring proof of your pet's current shot records and proof of spaying or neutering. The Town doesn't keep vaccination/neutering records from year to year. You must bring these papers with you each year. All dogs and cats must be licensed by March 31 of each year according to Town Ordinance.

Town Ordinance #1549 also limits residents to owning and licensing 5 dogs and/or cats.

Fees for each pet are as follows:
Spayed or neutered dogs and cats $ 5.00
Non-spayed or non-neutered dogs $ 20.00
Non-spayed or non-neutered cats $ 10.00

If you don't license your dog or cat by March 31, you will be charged a late fee of $10 for each pet. *Failure to license your dog or cat could result in fines of $25 to $2,500, according to Town Ordinance #1549.*

Snow removal involves team effort from everyone

Keeping our streets plowed and salted during snowfall events requires a team effort that includes the Public Works Department, residents and businesses. The Public Works Department is responsible for snow removal on approximately 115 miles of streets throughout Schererville. This doesn't include U.S. 30 or U.S. 41, which are maintained by the Indiana Department of Transportation State Highway Department.

Main roadways are plowed and salted first. These streets are usually pre-treated with a brine solution before a winter storm hits. This helps keep the snow from packing and freezing to the pavement. When plows are dispatched to begin plowing, they spread road salt behind each truck using a spinner. *Drivers need to keep a minimum distance of 50 feet from the plow to avoid having the salt strike their vehicles.*

After the main roadways are completed, the plows begin on the secondary tier streets, usually the main entrances into subdivisions.

The Public Works Department finishes by completing the third tier streets within the subdivisions – streets that service the residents of that street and their visitors. The Public Works Department always attempts to keep these streets open, making one or two passes up and down them during a snowfall event. However, pushing the snow back to the curb line is usually not completed until the snow has stopped falling and the main streets and secondary streets have been completed.

Plow trucks must clear snow on streets to the curb line, and that sometimes causes snow to be plowed into cleared driveways entrances. The streets must be clear to the curb line to provide access for emergency vehicles, to provide mailbox access for postal carriers and to expose storm water inlets in case of a rapid thaw.

Cul-de-sacs present several challenges for the Public Works Department. They are wider than most streets which allow them to hold more snow. They also have more driveways. This leaves less area for the snow to be pushed to the side when clearing the road.

To help with snow removal efforts, we ask residents and businesses to **NOT** shovel snow from driveways into the street. The snow should be pushed to the sides of the driveway. Shoveling snow into the street causes ice patches, creating a hazard for drivers, and increases the amount of snow that may come back into your driveway during street plowing.

Please help keep fire hydrants clear of snow. This will assist the Fire Department if an emergency arises. Public Works employees are usually not available to do this until after the snow has been plowed from all streets.

As in the past, salt will continue to be spread on the main roadways. On the second and third tier streets, salt will only be applied to the intersections, curves and hills. All drivers should use caution when using the roadways under adverse conditions.

Town Ordinance 791 prohibits parking on the street when there is a snowfall of 2 inches or greater. That Ordinance reads, "No person shall park any vehicle on any street within the corporate limits of the town whenever there is two (2") inches or more of snow thereon, until said snow is removed. Any vehicle which is parked on said street when depth of snow exceeds two (2") may be towed away."

Your cooperation is always greatly appreciated.

Burr Street construction sees major progress as weather cooperates

Burr Street has been undergoing reconstruction and widening from U.S. 30 to 500 feet north of 78th Avenue, and major progress has been made, said Jeff Huet, Director of Public Works for the Town of Schererville.

"Surface asphalt was completed on November 12," Huet said. "This was the biggest item remaining on the schedule this year, and we were concerned that we would not be able to complete it in 2020 as our weather window was closing."

In addition, the remaining concrete work at 78th Avenue and in several other small areas was finished, he said, and thermo-plastic striping of the road was also applied in November.

"Restoration of the excavated areas for which the Town is responsible has been completed for 2020. However, this will be an ongoing item that will not be 100% completed until spring," Huet said. "NIPSCO gas line relocation required excavation. However, the restoration of those excavations has been very limited thus far. The bulk of the remaining restoration will be NIPSCO's responsibility. This will likely be completed in the spring."

Robinson Engineering of Merrillville designed Phase I of this project. The Town applied for and received a Community Crossing Matching Grant from the Indiana Department of Transportation to fund this road improvement project. The 50/50 grant provides funding for half of the cost with the Town of Schererville funding the other half.

Phase I of the Burr Street construction consisted of water main replacement and tie-ins, paving, storm sewer replacement, adding curbs and the installation of an eight-foot wide multi-use path on the east side of Burr Street.

Griffith-based Gatlin Plumbing & Heating was the lowest responsible and responsive bidder for the entire project. The water main replacement was bid as a separate item which came in at $420,420.00, and was funded solely by the Town.

Design and construction of Phase II is anticipated to begin sometime in 2021 if the Town receives another INDOT grant.

Phase II will mirror Phase I in construction and continue all the way north to the Erie-Lackawanna Trail.