

# 2016 BERRIEN COUNTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

*This list is not intended to reflect all of the accomplishments of the Elected Officials and Employees of Berrien County. Departments were asked to limit the number of responses. Some departments were unable to respond in time but may be added at a later date.*

**Department**

**2016 Accomplishment**

911	With two new staff members added to Dispatch Center compliment, a new initiative was launched to remove Shift Supervisors from specific area dispatch assignments, to oversee the entire Center at key times of the day. This will allow Supervisors to focus their attention on all activities in all areas of the county, implement key initiatives during high call volume & critical situations, and the time to implement new strategies to manage their personnel more effectively.
911	Went "live" with new reliable Next Generation 911 telephone systems at the County and Niles City 911 Centers in February, building-in new redundancy between the two centers, as well as laying groundwork for future internet protocol functionality.
911	Officially rolled out "Text-to-911" access to wireless subscribers in Berrien County at the beginning of September. Citizen's who cannot speak may now summon public-safety assistance over 911, using their short-message-text customer plans.
Animal Control	Re-located from Berrien Township to Benton Township location
Animal Control	Prepared a draft (replacement) ordinance #11
Bldg & Grounds	Reconstructing 3rd floor Courthouse in a 24 hour period after 7/11/2016
Bldg & Grounds	Animal Control move, to include: a) Installation of DSX System/ iPhone System; b) Installation of over 1300 ft. of Deer Fence around facility; c) Installation of all interior signage; d) Completed landscaping.
Bldg & Grounds	Public Defenders Office, to include: a) Moved MSU Nutrition to MSUE to make room for Public Defenders office; b) Remodeled MSUE to accommodate MSU Nutrition (Lobby area/New Teaching Kitchen); c) New roof at 100 Church; d) Reconstructed kitchen at 100 Church to a break room and interview room; e) Installed DSX System at 100 Church. Ran all necessary network/phone cables, along with all electrical requirements to 18 locations; f) Installed camera system at 100 Church; g) Prepared basement for records storage by installing shelving. T8 lighting upgrades and epoxy coating to floors; h) Remodeling old FOC area at South County to accommodate the Public Defender's office.
Bldg & Grounds	Completed parking lot pole light project: a) Replaced all lighting fixtures with new LED pole heads (39 Total); b) Painted all poles to match color; 5) Installation of Liebert System/Dehumidification System at 2100 Empire (911)
Bldg & Grounds	Completed remodel of 4th Floor of Administration Building
Bldg & Grounds	Assumed responsibility for exterior maintenance of Historic Square County Park
Clerk	Addition of a part-time Vital Records Clerk to assist with additional CPL responsibilities that had been done by the Prosecutor's Office in 2015.
Clerk	Addition of a Court Clerk.
Clerk	Created position for Assistant Circuit Court Clerk Manager.
Clerk	Created and sold the fourth ornament in the series featuring the County Administration Building.
Clerk Elections	Continue to work with the Secretary of State's Office and the Michigan Association of County Clerks on new election equipment.
Clerk Elections	Continue to work with the Secretary of State's Office and the Michigan Association of County Clerks on election legislation.
Clerk Elections	Conducted three major elections and one small election.
Clerk Elections	Conducted a successful recount of the Presidential Election.
Clerk Vital Rec	Purchased a second scanner, so that we can start scanning CPL applications with all the other documents filed in the Niles office into our County Fusion software program.

Clerk Vital Rec	Began selling County Park passes in the Niles Office to better serve our South County customers
Clerk Vital Rec	Applied for access to the Michigan Centralized Birth Certification System (MiCBCS).
Community Dev	Brownfield Authority - Approved 3 new brownfield plans totaling \$20M in new investment and 55 new jobs. Began the demolition of the Mercy Center (anticipated completion is Dec 31, 2016)
Community Dev	Land Bank Authority - Completed 92 demolitions; sold 60 properties for \$25,021
Community Dev	Board of Public Works – Initiated a new water distribution project in the Village of Michiana for \$1.7M (anticipated completion is August 2017)
Community Dev	Harbor Authority – Secured \$750K for 2017 dredging. Disbanded the Authority and began transferring harbor maintenance responsibilities to St. Joseph (process will be ongoing through 2017-18)
Community Dev	Economic Development Partnership – Approved ED coordination agreement with Cornerstone, Kinexus and SMEGA. Instituted monthly economic development coordination meetings. Approved agreement Michiana Partnership Initiative for regional economic development marketing.
Community Dev	Revolving Loan Fund – Received preliminary approval from MEDC for two new loans totally \$800k (anticipated underwriting and loan closing is June 2017).
Community Dev	Transportation – Hired Evan Smith. Approved service contracts with St. Joseph Senior Center and Buchanan Senior Center. Implemented joint training with Niles Dial-A-Ride, Buchanan Dial-A-Ride, Cass County Transportation and Dowagiac Dial-A-Ride. Began preparing county-wide service plan study with SWMPC, Berrien County Manufacturers Council and Lakeland Regional Health Systems.
Equalization	Offered a GIS class for local assessors to obtain their continuing education credits C - Coordinated agreements with local units to obtain copies of their assessing databases. This allowed us to be more efficient when pricing our appraisal studies T - Updated all employee workstations with dual monitors T - Updated Arcmap license to floating licenses. This allows for multiple appraisers to use the program at the same time rather than one at a time.
Equalization	Audited all assessment rolls throughout the County. This lead to finding well over 10 million dollars of incorrectly reported or omitted property.
Equalization	Revamped both the Equalization Report and Apportionment Report to be more explanatory and easy to understand.
Equalization	Implemented new land value grids that are easier to find information on and easier to follow.
Equalization	Revamped the way Economic Condition Factors are developed. This changed the time to conduct this analysis from upwards of 3 days to a few hours. This will also cut down on the possibility of human error as the report is now mostly computer generated.
Finance	Received an "unqualified" audit for 2015
Finance	Maintained County's "AA" credit rating
Finance	Implemented single firm audit of five senior centers.
GIS/Land Description	Acquired 1' LiDar data for the entire County. This is a BIG DEAL!!!
GIS/Land Description	We created a GIS map database and spreadsheet list for the Land Bank and also for the Treasurer's office of all the properties which were contiguous to their current inventories so they could send out mass mailings.
GIS/Land Description	Created and/or updated layers:-MDOT-BC Road Commission Properties-Berrien County Properties-Land Bank Properties-Brownfield Properties-Treasurer's Office Tax Auction Properties
GIS/Land Description	Assisted in part 911 with the NewWorld update. The new server caused significant issues with the ArcSDE database that required our assistance to troubleshoot. With limited assistance from NewWorld's technical support team we were able to create, improve, and update data, maps, and spatial work flows for use by 911 dispatchers.
GIS/Land Description	Set up Equalization with new mapping software, data, and spatial tools.
Health Dept.	With grant funding from the Michigan Public Health Institute, BCHD completed a two-day strategic planning session with key staff and developed an updated department vision, mission statement, core values and three major goal areas to focus on from 2016-2020. Staff have continued the work of refining the plan, creating strategies to meet the goals, and engaging staff at all levels in aligning all program work plans to the department strategic plan.

Health Dept.	Updated and refined recruiting, hiring, and orientation procedures were put into place during 2016 as the Health Department hired 10 new staff members throughout the year, including in key positions of Epidemiologist and Clinical Health Services Supervisor.
Health Dept.	Health Officer, Mike Mortimore, announced retirement (effective December 30th) after 38 years with the Health Department. The search for a successor was completed and Nicki Britten (formerly Deputy Health Officer) will take his place effective January 1, 2017.
Health Dept.	Began implementation for new electronic Environmental Health software (Inspect2GO) that will make inspections, data capturing, and reporting more efficient.
Health Dept.	Completed the site review for the tri-annual Michigan Local Health Department accreditation of nearly all program areas and services for the Health Department with 98% of indicators passed and over 20 special recognitions.
Health Dept.	BCHD staff held several successful community events serving residents outside of normal operations, including a Breastfeeding on the Bluff, Back-to-School Wellness Fair, multiple immunization clinics at the Herbie Clinic in Benton Harbor, on-site influenza clinics at senior living facilities, additional evening and weekend WIC clinics, and more!
Health Dept.	Many programs saw positive outcomes from their efforts, including a 10% increase in the rate of HIV tests performed within Family Planning clinics, a nearly 50% reduction in the percentage of immunization waivers requested in Berrien County, and several staff who achieved additional educational/professional certifications to better serve clients, including two staff who obtained their International Board Certification as Lactation Consultants.
Health Dept.	The Benton Harbor Farmers Market saw one of its most successful years in the recent past, with a 75% increase the total revenue for the farmers at the market and increases in the amount of engagement from customers.
Health Dept.	Completed the data analysis for the latest Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (data collected in 2014) and participated in the completion of a Community Health Needs Assessment with partner organization, Lakeland HealthCare; both assessments will have a profound impact on future strategies, policy solutions, and collaborative efforts to address health issues in Berrien County.
Health Dept.	Implemented the Rapid Assessment for Adolescent Preventive Services (RAAPS) survey tool in Reproductive Health clinics at Benton Harbor, Niles, and Three Oaks to assess mental health needs and other risk factors impacting client health.
Health Dept.	Significantly increased revenue from billing for clinical services during 2016; BCHD saw nearly 33% increase in billing reimbursements captured from private and public insurance payers.
HR	Constantly reviewing MUNIS to make sure it is as accurate and flows as best it can, i.e. MUNIS clean up - created class codes for temporary positions where there are also full time positions. Makes payroll entry much easier and eliminates some common errors.
HR	Filled the Personnel/Legal Assistant position vacant due to Dianne's retirement with long term employee Linda Carroll.
HR	Processed 30 retirements during CY2016; completed hundreds of pension estimates
HR	Researched, developed and worked toward implementing the pension change for survivors for employees killed in the line of duty.
I/S	Implemented Intrado at Dispatch
I/S	Implemented a Regional Jury Management System—sharing our resources with 3 neighboring counties
I/S	Worked on MiCourt conversion
I/S	Continued to support departments still on the Mainframe
I/S	Added two new facilities (Public Defender's Office and Animal Control)
I/S	Replaced 3 servers
I/S	Decommissioned several Domain Controllers
I/S	Replaced SIG email appliance
I/S	Replaced all FOC PC's and DHHS PC's
I/S	Completed the Zimbra (email) upgrade
I/S	Added and/or improved Public Wi-Fi for 3 Parks
I/S	Added security cameras for the Road Commission
I/S	In the process of upgrading our PRI's (main truck lines) to digital
I/S	Implemented cell boosters at the Juv Center
I/S	Replaced 22 network printers
I/S	Replaced out-of-support switches on the 3rd & 4th floors
I/S	Created an Employee Portal which will be implemented at the start of 2017

I/S	Hired a Social Media Specialist and significantly expanded and improved our community outreach via social media
I/S	Discontinued WizardMail
I/S	Added AV equipment to Conference Room
Parks	Silver Beach - added 50 recycle bins, diverting 184 cubic yards or approximately 12% of the waste generated at the beach from landfills into recycled products. Program showcases the County's commitment to resource conservation and our role as a recycling leader in the region.
Parks	Madeline Bertrand – Hosted 2 regional Cross Country Running Events as we entered into a first time "partnership" with the Niles Community Schools; MB is currently listed as Niles Community Schools "Home Course." Both events received with great success and the park was exposed to over 1,000 "new" visitors during those events.
Parks	Love Creek – Continued expansion of hiking, biking, ski trails on the 24 acres of newly acquired (acquired in fall 2015) "Simpson Property."
Parks	Rocky Gap – Completed a \$600,000 "facelift/remodel" that included a barrier free ramp to the beachfront, a shade shelter, picnic areas, vault restrooms, a spectacular "overlook" deck and landscaping. A \$300,000 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant was acquired to support 50% of the funding for the project.
Parks	Watervliet County Park – Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board recommended a \$296,000 grant for Phase 1 of Watervliet County Park. Phase 1 will be a "Trail Head" for the "Paw Paw River Water Trail" and include parking area, ADA kayak launch, pedestrian bridge to an island, hard surface walking trails, decks for fishing/wildlife viewing and landscaping. Construction planned to begin in spring, 2018 and completed in fall, 2018.
Printing	Increased quantity and type of grant based projects and clients ,local municipalities as well as (approved) non-profit clients for design and editing. In 2016, this increased revenue by at least \$1500
Printing	Closely monitored paper usage and inventory. Ordering yearly supply based closely on past usage, as well as ordering more "on-demand" on certain items (such as NCR), as the costs do not reduce greatly by volume, and the need varies greatly each year. This allowed us to cut paper budget by \$10,000 for 2017
Printing	Continually research and upgrade new software to help increase productivity, speed and quality.
Public Defender	Conducted six month review of the Berrien County Indigent Defense System, reported results, and recommended changes to Board of Commissioners
Public Defender	Established Public Defenders Office to include recruitment and training of staff and contract attorneys.
Records	Assembly of 4 additional rows of "open" shelving in warehouse. This resulted in expanded storage for court files, transcripts and foreclosure files and faster retrieval times for records searches.
Records	Second staff member assigned to scanning of Circuit Court files, doubling the amount of files being archived and reducing paper trail.
Records	Removal of law library books and transfer to other County buildings resulting in increased storage capacity in the archival room for permanent records. These records are now in a better temperature and humidity controlled environment.
ROD	In addition of course to recording over 32,500 documents as of December 1, 2016 and overseeing 1,230 40-year searches and 507 updated searches for the Treasurer as Foreclosing Governmental Unit -- not to mention assistance in searching, finding and printing documents for our constituents
ROD	Coordinated with Maintenance department for additional protection for the books at the Empire Building. The new "roofing" over the shelves will provide additional protection should we ever have a roof issue at this location.
ROD	Reproduced over 1,200 rolls of acetate film that had developed vinegar syndrome, replacing it with silver polyester film which is estimated to last about 500 years.
ROD	Indexed and Verified into the computerized land records management system the remaining 16 Miscellaneous Books thereby making all documents recorded in the Miscellaneous books accessible via computer to the general public.
ROD	Remaining documents recorded in the Deed books have been scanned and imported into our land records system. Two hundred ten Deed books (210) have been indexed and verified, another 221 Deed books to go.
ROD	Scanned historical Finance records as they provided.
ROD	Scanned historical Drain documents, including easements, profiles, and other documents. Worked with Drain Commissioner on setting up fields to index these very specific documents.
ROD	Initiated remote, independent-contractor for indexing of historical Register of Deeds documents, thereby making these documents more readily accessible as you are able to conduct a search on computer and not manually working through the index books.

ROD	Initiated electronic recording of documents as of December 1, 2016, approximately 20% of all documents recorded are submitted electronically.
ROD	Passage of "predictable fee" legislation that basically makes all documents, regardless of number of pages, \$30.00 to record – rejecting for incorrect fees was one of the top reasons documents were rejected from being recorded. The advent of the Michigan predictable fees should make recording documents go more smoothly.
Sheriff Emergency Mgt	The Berrien County Emergency Preparedness Guide was revised in 2016 using an eight month collaborative effort between the Local Emergency Planning Committee, American Electric Power, Lake Michigan College, and Berrien County Emergency Management. This publication will be released to the public in the first quarter of 2017.
Sheriff Emergency Mgt	Facilitated over 15 organized discussions during 2016 relating to emergency planning in preparation to a response to an active violence situation. These efforts lead to over 1,000 participants increasing their knowledge on how to best respond to an active violence situation.
Sheriff Emergency Mgt	Successful demonstration of response to Palisades Nuclear Power Plant during the 2016 FEMA REP Graded Exercise.
Sheriff Emergency Mgt	Completed over 184 chemical facility emergency assessments and plans along with over 55 school safety drills.
Sheriff Enforcement	All Berrien County Sheriff's Office Road Patrol Deputies and Detectives will have new secure holsters, weapon lights and plate carrier vests thanks to the generosity of the community through a grant with the Berrien Community Foundation.
Sheriff Enforcement	The Berrien County Sheriff's Office increased patrol activities and officer presence on the summer weekends at Silver Beach County Park. This resulted in 20 misdemeanor arrests, 1 felony arrest, 50 citations for violation of County Ordinance #8 and 54 calls for service. While performing the patrols deputies received comments from patrons of the park that they appreciated the officers being there and that it made them feel safer after the incident where shots were fired earlier in the summer.
Sheriff Enforcement	The Berrien County Sheriff's Office patrol deputies were issued Naloxone Hydrochloride (Narcan) in each of their patrol vehicles. Since this was issued our deputies successfully administered Narcan 14 times to individuals who had overdosed on Opioids, which resulted in the 14 individuals having a "second chance" to turn their lives around and deal with their addictions.
Sheriff Enforcement	All members of the Berrien County Dive Team successfully completed the International Association of Dive Rescue Specialist (IADRS) Watermanship Test. This test includes a 500 yard time swim, a 15 minute water tread, a 800 yard snorkel swim and a 100 yard Inert Rescue Tow. This test evaluates the stamina and comfort of each of our divers in the water. The diver must successfully complete all stations and achieve a passing overall score. This is the first time that the Berrien County Sheriff's Office has completed this training and certification.
Sheriff Jail	After many years of delay, the renovation of the receiving area of the jail began and many, many hours have gone into the planning of the project. The renovation will increase the capacity for pre-arraignment inmates to 59 males and 29 females with a padded cell in both areas. The project also includes a medical triage area for inmate assessments.
Sheriff Jail	Along with the renovation project, the board of commissioners approved an upgrade to the security system in the entire facility. This upgrade will allow full integration of the jail building in one system as opposed to having a new digital system in receiving and the outdated analog system everywhere else. This upgrade will also add intercoms in each cell for use in an inmate emergency.
Sheriff Jail	Two (2) additional Deputies were added to the St. Joseph Courthouse and one (1) to the Niles Courthouse. These are positions that had been lost years ago and were reinstated this year. These additional Deputies will ensure that officers are at both courthouses during all hours of operation. The reacquisition of these positions demonstrates the county's dedication and commitment to the safety of officers, employees and the public.
Trial Court	Trial Court: In the wake of the tragedy on July 11, 2016, worked closely with Sheriff Bailey, County Administrator Wolf, and the County Commissioners to address immediate and long term security related issues.
Trial Court	Welcomed a newly appointed Probate Judge on 1-4-2016, Hon. Brian Berger.
Trial Court	Criminal Division: Drug Treatment Court had its 50th graduate this year and is now up to number 58

Trial Court	Family Division: Current success of the 3-WINS (Work Inspires and Nurtures Success) restitution program - this program was started to enable juvenile offenders to accept accountability for their offenses by performing community service hours for area non-profits. The hours worked by the youth would be converted into a dollar equivalent and funds would then be drawn down from a restitution account and paid to the victims of their crimes : Since June 2014 when the first youth was referred to the program, · # of youth who have participated in 3-WINS = 28 · # of community service hours completed by these youth = 446.5 · Amount of restitution paid to victims = \$4643.63 · # of victims who received payment = 38
Trial Court	Selected as an Implementation Site by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Judges. This is a 3 year project intended to help the Court implement best practices in neglect/abuse cases in juvenile court. The Berrien County Trial Court was one of 5 sites selected nationwide.
Trial Court	Collaborated with Berrien County schools to decrease truancy
Trial Court	Hosted a delegation from the Ministry of Social and Family Development from the Republic of Singapore
Trial Court	Worked with Berrien County Maintenance staff to schedule and resurface the floors throughout the Juvenile Center facility with a long-lasting, low maintenance polymer to extend the life of the facility
Trial Court	FOC: June of 2016 implemented a new tether option for child support enforcement for persons with outstand child support arrears. As of December 1, 2016, this effort has brought in \$11,250 at a cost of \$2900 for tether rentals.