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**COUNTY EXECUTIVE JONATHAN DELAGRAVE'S
2017 STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS**

(As prepared for delivery)

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Board of Supervisors, Youth in Governance representatives, distinguished guests, residents of Racine County;

Community. Family. Innovative. Friendly. Development. Opportunity. Growth.

These are just a few words used to describe our County in a recent mission statement survey. These are words that our community embodies, embraces, and inspires.

With that in mind, I'm happy to report that the State of Racine County is strong, dedicated, and moving forward.

Two weeks ago, over 70 representatives of County government, law enforcement, area municipalities, public health and hospitals, and the private sector traveled to FEMA's National Emergency Training Center to participate in a 4-day emergency management course. Our team united to meet the challenges of simulated tornado touchdowns in Burlington, Waterford, and Mount Pleasant. Law enforcement, fire departments, and first responders sprang into action. Phones rang constantly with situation updates and urgent requests for equipment and support. The media and social media lit up with on-site demands for information. The purchasing and finance team feverishly kept track of expenses. Emergency declarations were issued and local, state, and federal organizations faced the disaster shoulder-to-shoulder. The atmosphere was intense. Deaths were confirmed. Children were in danger.

Amidst the crisis, we learned some valuable lessons. We developed a new appreciation for the talent and depth of resources at our fingertips. We also found that communication is critical to successful partnerships, and that with clear communication, we are pretty darn good teammates.

Ultimately, we found these truths about Racine County:

We are strong.

We are dedicated.

We are community.

As County Supervisor Tom Roanhouse eloquently stated in the wrap-up session of the training, "when we speak with one voice, one message, we are unstoppable."

Two years ago, I outlined a vision centered around three priorities: economic growth and development of the I-94 corridor; a Racine Ready Workforce; and robust mental health services. I am proud to report on progress made and future accomplishments within our grasp.

At Racine County, we continue to focus on outcomes, where smart investments yield savings, unleash economic growth, and improve lives. Caledonia and Racine County celebrated the DeBack Farms Business Park, a 124 acre Class A business park. Norco Manufacturing, the park's first tenant, is well underway with construction of a 130,000 square foot manufacturing facility. An additional 74-acre site that can accommodate a one-million square foot facility awaits future business at the park.

Sturtevant welcomed the new headquarters of Grand Appliance, a company that will construct a new 140,000 square foot facility, resulting in both the transfer of 120 jobs and the addition of 30 jobs to Sturtevant. Racine successfully supported FISCHER USA with its expansion project that enables the Swiss-owned manufacturer to remain here in Racine. On a recent visit to the company to celebrate their 75th anniversary, I was very impressed with the dedication of FISHER USA's workforce, not only to the company, but to the City of Racine.

Mount Pleasant celebrated the announcement of InSinkErator's \$34 million office and research development project earlier this year, and we learned of an additional \$29 million investment in the company's City of Racine facility. Thank you to the County Board Chairman and the board as a whole for the leadership, foresight, and support that was critical to keep InSinkErator and its 1,200 employees in Racine County. A second office construction project in Mount Pleasant was announced that will house Johnson Insurance as the building's primary tenant. Meanwhile, Land & Lakes, an Illinois developer, built a 125,000 square foot spec building in 2015, and sold it to Zilber Development, who will add another 125,000 square feet to the building to accommodate a manufacturing tenant. As a result of this sale, Land & Lakes will begin construction on a second, larger spec building this summer.

On the west side of the County, Burlington's Ardagh Glass, the only glass plant in Wisconsin, celebrated a historic partnership with New Glarus Brewing, which guaranteed the security of over 200 jobs in Racine County and \$6 million of business kept in Wisconsin. Not to mention uninterrupted local production of one of the state's most treasured assets: Spotted Cow. The City of Burlington's strategic plan has yielded several new developments to the City's downtown. In addition, Big R, a regional, family-oriented farm and ranch store, will soon anchor and revitalize the long-vacant Fox River Plaza Shopping Center. In Union Grove, Coleman Tool will add 40,000 square feet to its facility and the community is in early discussions with land owners and developers to add a new business park in the community.

These are just a few of the many notable economic development projects that have been recently announced. These projects, in partnership with Racine County Economic Development Corporation (RCEDC), will result in nearly \$88 million in private investment including \$46 million in new construction. Thank you to Jenny Trick and her team for all their hard work and thank you to our municipal partners whose support and leadership help make these success stories possible!

Requests for zoning permits continue to increase. In the first quarter of 2017, permits for private onsite wastewater treatment systems are up FOUR times from the same period in 2016. This means new homes are being built or existing homes are being modified and expanded. In the town of Dover, the first residential subdivision plat in ten years was recently approved.

And yet, there remain significant challenges and barriers to future economic growth. The importance of getting water and sewer out to I-94, as Caledonia has demonstrated, cannot be overstated. We need to step up our efforts to attract new companies and retain the legacy companies that have chosen to make Racine County home.

Yes, state leaders need to come together with a plan to fund and complete the I-94 project in Racine County. This highway is the lifeblood of the Milwaukee–Chicago corridor, and key to our future economic growth. But we will not wait on decisions to be made at the state or national level. We'll do the heavy lifting ourselves to maintain and advance the upward path. RCEDC is taking the lead on creating a plan to foster development within the I-94 corridor and broader Racine County, and we wholeheartedly support their efforts. Increasing our tax base and job opportunities with a smart, practical, and long-term economic development strategic plan is vital to our community.

The future success of our County also depends on an educated and work-ready labor force. As a community - from parents and educators to civic leaders and local employers — we are committed to building and empowering a fully capable and

employed workforce, one person at a time. By fostering collaboration and finding solutions with multiple area partners, Human Services Director Hope Otto and Workforce Solutions Manager Mark Mundl have truly embodied the Department's new name this past year.

With the launch of the GED initiative in January, and the hard work of the GED Outreach Coordinator, Katie Kasprzak, Gateway Technical College added three additional GED enrollment classes. From January through April of this year, 18 individuals obtained their GED at the Racine Gateway Testing Center, more than the Kenosha and Elkhorn campuses combined.

I am also proud of the partnership between Workforce Solutions, the Southeast Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, and Gateway Technical College, which led to the award of a shared \$4 million grant for the TechHire program. TechHire provides no cost opportunities for young adults to learn in-demand skills that lead to internships and employment in the local technology industry.

We have renewed emphasis on providing jobseekers with the tools and instruction needed for their job search by meeting them where they live and work. Workforce Solutions on the Road includes customized informational sessions tailored to individual needs, including a mobile resume lab, GED support, and personal employment assessments. For added skills, our partnership with Lakeshores Library System provides free, online, instructor-led Gale courses to all Racine County residents.

A vital partner to our vision of a fully capable and employed workforce is the Higher Expectations Initiative. Higher Expectations, in partnership with employers, community organizations, and school districts throughout the County, works to ensure that every student — regardless of race, zip code, age, or family income — can succeed.

For example, Higher Expectations helped to convene Ascension All Saints Reach-Out-and-Read initiative and United Way of Racine County's Imagination Library program. Together, these initiatives provide early literacy resources to families. As of today, United Way has more than 3000 kids enrolled in Imagination Library.

Once again, I believe we can do more. Now is the time to take bold steps toward real change in our community.

Remember those positive words used to describe Racine County from our mission statement survey? Unfortunately, a few other words were mentioned, too: Dirty. Divided. Crime. Unemployment.

It's time to address and confront those words with the same gusto we use to trumpet our success. In the spirit of our recent Emergency Management training, what are the

metaphorical tornadoes in our County that wreak havoc? What challenges can we forecast? How are we training and preparing ourselves to meet those challenges – and what partnerships can we forge to help mitigate the damage? How do we share what we've learned with area partners, and most importantly, the next generation?

To illustrate: I believe we have a silent, deadly tornado in our midst, and it's called: Adverse Childhood Experiences, known as ACES.

We know childhood experiences – good and bad – impact adult actions and choices. Childhood exposure to violence, crime, and abuse – whether in homes, schools, or communities – increases the odds that a child will experience and may ultimately perpetuate future trauma.

ACEs are common. And yet, childhood trauma experts remind us that “adverse childhood experiences are not destiny, and early trauma does not have to dictate a life story.” (Dr. Robert Anda).

During childhood, a child's health system has the opportunity to inform, intervene, and possibly prevent long-term medical and social complications. Our future prosperity depends on our ability to foster the health and well-being of the next generation.

Racine County is uniquely positioned to play a vital role in coordinating and educating the existing programs for children and adults in our community. HSD will partner with the Central Racine County Health Department and the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee in efforts to interrupt and disrupt this troubling cycle. Together, using an intentional and thoughtful process, we will create a community-wide, trauma-informed network of support for our children and families.

Let me be frank. I'm a practical man and a practical county executive. I will not commit hard-earned tax dollars to another government program with a feel-good title and questionable results. Let's not, however, simply agree that a problem touching us all exists and then fail to act.

These problems didn't come upon us overnight and solving them requires patience, strategic planning, and the determination to wisely invest our dollars and energy. Let's act to put our kids on a path for true success.

At the same time, my personal passion is to address the behavioral and mental health issues in our community today. Our Behavioral Health Services (BHS), under the steady leadership of Michelle Goggins, is on the forefront of the battle against opioid addiction in our County. BHS provided substance use services to over 650 people in 2016, including the use of the medication Vivitrol to support recovery from addiction. BHS is currently partnering with the Racine County Jail to identify and link those substance

users who are at high-risk for Opioid overdose to BHS for needed services. In general, substance use counseling appointments are available through BHS on the same or next day, far surpassing industry norms.

Meanwhile, BHS provided mental health services to over 1,600 people in 2016. Strong partnerships with Sheriff Christopher Schmaling's team have furthered the reach and increased the effectiveness of efforts to accept and empower those in need of mental health services. Sheriff Schmaling is not only on the board of Racine County NAMI, he has ensured that his staff is highly trained in crisis intervention. This training and awareness has led to the crisis system successfully diverting 74% of emergency contacts to appropriate outpatient services. The Crisis Stabilization program, SAIL, served over 800 people, reducing unnecessary hospital stays and associated costs. The crisis system responded to nearly 13,000 crisis hotline calls. These efforts resulted in less than 150 people being placed on involuntary hospitalizations in 2016. This is a remarkable 265% reduction in Chapter 51 emergency detention and hospitalizations compared to 2012. The mental health system has made significant gains in changing access and service models, and has ultimately increased voluntary engagement of individuals in counseling programs that improve their recovery and overall wellness.

We can also agree: Child Protective Services workers have a heartbreaking job. Under the cool-headed leadership of Kerry Milkie, and because of our ongoing partnership with the County and City of Racine's metro drug units, a record number of children in Racine County entered the foster care system in 2016. With the addition of a Licensing and Recruitment Supervisor, we hope to have a record number of new foster homes licensed by the end of the year.

Even with increased volumes of children coming into care, the Child Protective Services Unit exceeds the state average of timely contacts with children and their families at 83.2%; exceeds the federal requirement of monthly contacts for children in out-of-home care at 98.82%; and exceeds the state average of final legal permanency for children within 15-22 months at 80.7%. We won't rest until all of our children have a safe and stable home so they too can realize full potential and contribute to and enjoy the benefits of our community.

The FEMA training also highlighted an issue of vital importance that I am proud to say Racine County successfully accomplished this past year. FEMA instructors told harrowing stories from Katrina and other disasters where the lack of standardized radio equipment jeopardized the lives of rescue workers. In the spirit of cooperation and public safety, Racine County agreed to facilitate the purchase of upgraded and standardized radio equipment, enabling fire departments of all sizes throughout the County to avoid those communications issues FEMA cautioned against. Thank you to

Director Jackie Bratz and all the Racine County Fire and Rescue Chiefs for their ingenuity and teamwork with this venture.

Racine County leads the way in so many beneficial and innovative collaborations. We host an award-winning technology that consistently garners public compliments on its usefulness and relevancy: our ARC-GIS mapping tool. Information that once lived in Excel spreadsheets is now visible, interactive, and mobile-friendly. Thank you to Register of Deeds, Tyson Fettes, and Director of Public Works and Development Services, Julie Anderson, for their efforts to bring this upgrade to Racine County, and thank you to our resident GIS expert, Kim Christman.

This tool has proven valuable to not only the traditional users such as realtors, surveyors, and title companies, GIS is expanding its appeal to visitors and residents. For example:

- As demonstrated during our Emergency Training, in the event of a real crisis we can constantly update the GIS map of the disaster incident, staging areas, shelters, and relevant data to effectively inform the public of needed services.
- Racine County Lottery Credit Finder allows the public to easily determine if they receive the lottery credit on their tax parcel.
- The Sales Comp Finder makes searching for and locating residential property sales comparables easy. Access to this information facilitates better real estate decisions.
- The Human Services Department is exploring ways to combine data from various state systems into one easy to use GIS application. This application will allow HSD to look at customers more holistically and evaluate the extent to which we are making a difference in the lives of customers.
- The Recreation Gallery maps bike trails, dog parks, farmers markets, and will soon add the Family Resource Directory and the Farm Fresh Atlas.

I'm proud of the outreach and collaboration of all County Departments and owe a debt of gratitude to the remarkable public servants who join in our mission. Our IT Department, under the leadership of John Barrett, continues public outreach and has forged new partnerships with the Village of Sturtevant and the Village of Waterford.

Over the past year, Karen Galbraith, our Human Resources Director, and our Finance Director, Alex Tillmann, have worked hard to achieve two large initiatives: (1) the Joint Employee Health Clinic with RUSD and the City of Racine, and (2) the launch and implementation of new financial and payroll software, Tyler Munis. The Finance Department was again recognized with a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting, the 8th year in a row. And, Director Tillmann has personally invested in the community with the birth of her first child last week!

As a County, our financial position is strong and will remain so due to conservative budgeting and healthy reserves. Moody's reaffirmed our double A 1 (Aa1) bond rating, the second highest given. Only five other counties in the state rate higher. Our sound bond rating means we pay a lower interest rate on money borrowed for capital projects, saving our taxpayers money. Our fund balance is extremely healthy, with reserves at a consistent rate of 20-25% of annual budgeted expenditures for the last 10 years.

And yet, we can do better. As we learned in our FEMA training, we need a plan for future sustainability. Currently, like many counties, our obligations to retirement health exceed 20% of our budget, and are projected to increase at least \$280,000 every year. We will need to take proactive steps to manage our "other postemployment benefit" (OPEB) liabilities and to make these large costs more affordable for future generations.

In the 2018 budget, I will propose to create a sustainable OPEB trust policy to set investment funds aside until these returns can offset increasing annual costs. This will provide long-term savings to taxpayers, enhance intergenerational taxpayer equity, and will mark a big step toward providing future generations the means to handle OPEB liabilities. If we complete the sale of Ridgewood Care Center, I will recommend funding this OPEB trust with a portion of the proceeds.

Sheriff Schmaling also has his eye on the future with his work to secure a contract to house state inmates in the Racine County Jail. The projected revenue source would help offset future costs to operate and maintain our Sheriff's Office.

In Burlington, we are committed to replacing the Western Racine County Service Center. While we continue to diligently consider a variety of options, I am absolutely committed to a strong, proactive, and visible presence on the west side of the County.

You can also expect to hear more about forward-thinking initiatives such as a comprehensive County facility and space use master plan; and exciting upgrades at Pritchard Park to meet the recreational needs of the community and to drive economic growth and development.

The beautiful Lakefront continues to shine as a jewel in the crown of our community assets. Reefpoint Marina has signed over 60 new boaters for the 2017 season, and is

continuing to attract both new boaters and media attention. Our Marina was chosen to hold the Antique and Classic Boat Society (ACBS) 42nd Annual Meeting and International Boat Show on September 6th – 9th! As many as 250 beautifully restored vintage and classic watercrafts will be judged and awarded within their respective categories. This truly is an event that should not be missed, and will bring thousands of spectators and tourists to the Racine area.

Innovation, excellence, and customer service are bedrock principles of county government, and I am indebted to our strong and dedicated Racine County employees. Our emergency training showed us how critical it is to have a “deep bench.” To that end, over 45 department heads and senior staff will participate in a year-long leadership and succession-planning training. I thank my Chief of Staff, M.T. Boyle, for her tenacity and foresight to pursue this critical investment.

Thank you to the County Board, members of my team, and constitutional officers, those already mentioned and those – Jon Lehman (Corporation Counsel), Liam Doherty (Ridgewood Administrator), Sam Christensen (Clerk of Courts), Wendy Christensen (Clerk of Courts), Jane Nikolai (County Treasurer), and Tricia Hanson (District Attorney) – whose tremendous contributions weren’t singled out in this speech but undoubtedly are making a true difference in Racine County.

As I bring these remarks to a close, allow me to introduce our new Racine County Mission Statement:

Racine County cultivates innovative, sustainable, and valued opportunities
for community and economic growth.

I’m proud of what we’ve accomplished, and I’m proud of our mission. To the people of Racine County, this is your community. This is your home. This, too, is your mission. We stand together and the responsibility to empower our businesses, families, and neighbors – young and old – rests upon all of us.

Thank you. Good night and God Bless you and all of Racine County.

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