

Steve McDaniel, Director

February

- # The Foellinger Theatre staff met with Marketing to discuss upcoming shows and dates to make announcements. We have several shows that are in the works with David Lee Roth, and UB40 announced this month.
- # The Indiana Park and Recreation Association is looking at Fort Wayne to hold their annual conference. I met with the Executive Director of IPRA, along with a rep from the Grand Wayne and Visit Fort Wayne. The conference is scheduled for the first week of November for the conference.
- # Several of the staff met to discuss teen activities at the McMillen Center. Andre will be putting together a list of things that he and the staff feel will draw teens into our programs. Andre will also be working with local schools to gather input on ideas.
- # Division Heads met with the Mayor at a planning meeting to discuss Fort Wayne's future. It was a great day of collaboration, idea exchange, and communication. I look forward to what comes from that day.
- # I attended AWS's rebranding press conference, where they announced they will be named WindSwell moving forward.
- # Rhonda and I met with Internal Audit to discuss questions she had about her current audit of Administration.
- # We are continuing to work through the latest version of the agreement with the Zoological Society with the City Law Department. I am hoping to be able to share back with the Zoo the latest version.
- # Rob and I attended the Foellinger Foundation's Annual Meeting. It was a great opportunity to network as well as share their award presentations.
- # Chuck, Steve, and I met to discuss seasonal training needs as we move into the hiring season for our Seasonal employees. Steve will work with Tony to build on our processes to make sure that all employees are ready.
- # Snow and cold weather have hit the city with 8-10" of snow and sub-zero temperatures. Our team has done a great job clearing roads, parking lots, and trails throughout our parks. We are also modifying work as needed due to the cold temperatures with our staff.
- # We wrap up the month with our 15th year of Winterval. A ton of activities were available downtown, and there were a few select locations around Fort Wayne for those brave enough to get out and explore. I want to thank our sponsors and partner agencies who participated in the great event.

January

- # The golf team and I met with the Golf Committee to discuss the summary of 2025, as well as looking ahead into 2026 with fee recommendations, cart, and equipment recommendations. All of these were brought to the December Board meeting for approval.
- # We received a proposal from the Jennings Center Advisory Council looking at a way to support growth and education for those attending the center. The team and I are reviewing the proposal and going back and forth with questions, just so we make sure we understand roles and responsibilities. I am guessing this will take a little time to reach the final version.
- # Chuck, Patti, and I attended the 72nd Annual Wassail at the Jennings Center. The evening was filled with community, music, and dancing.
- # I gave an update to the Park Foundation at their December Board Meeting. The Foundation Board then discussed its future and how best to make a positive return to the department. I look forward to how this will change in the future.
- # I attended Allen County's press conference for the newest I Am Allen sculpture located in Salomon Farm. I will say this was one of the coldest press conferences I have ever been to. The sculpture is in the northeast corner of the park next to the Pufferbelly Trail that heads north/south.

- ✦ Steve, Chad, and I met with the mayor and members of the Inclusion Institute to discuss ways Parks and Recreation can improve accessibility in how we manage our parks through the built environment, programs, digital website, social media, and more. We have also agreed to meet with them on a quarterly basis to keep the dialogue going.
- ✦ This month, I was elected to be Treasurer of the Indiana Parks and Recreation Foundation’s board. I have been a board member for the last few years after I transitioned from the Indiana Parks and Recreation Association’s board.
- ✦ The staff and I attended the announcement of the groundbreaking of the Eddy held at Promenade Park. The Eddy is a mixed-use development northwest of the Wells Street Bridge and is not under construction.
- ✦ As the month ended, we wrapped up several events that were geared towards the holidays and families. These were at several parks across the city.
- ✦ I want to give a “shout out” to the entire Parks team for all their work over 2025. The staff’s dedication to our city showed every day in how well the parks and facilities looked. Our programs were creative, fun, and well attended by our citizens. I also want to thank all our volunteers who gave their time, passion, and expertise to our parks. I’ll say it again; we could not provide parks and programs as we do without your support. And lastly, I want to thank Mayor Tucker, City Council members, and our donors for continuing to support our department for another great year!

Chuck Reddinger – Deputy Director of Recreational Services,

Salomon Farm Park, Neighborhood Outreach, Jennings Recreation Center, Weisser Park Youth Center, McMillen Park Community, Community Center (Downtown), Riverfront (Promenade Park), Athletic Fields and Courts, Aquatics (Northside Pools/McMillen Park Pools), Golf (Foster Park/McMillen Park/Shoaff Park), Outdoor Recreation, Special Events, Headwaters Park, & Travel Service

- On Sunday, November 24, 2025, Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation partnered with the Greater Fort Wayne National Panhellenic Council to host the Third Annual Unity Lighting at McKinnie Commons. The event featured live music, dance performances, and remarks from public officials. Approximately two hundred people attended, and the National Panhellenic Council coordinated a holiday giveaway that included frozen turkeys and Thanksgiving meal staples for community members.
- On Wednesday, December 18, 2025, Jennings Youth Center and Weisser Youth Center hosted holiday parties for enrolled youth. Children received individualized gifts that included shoes, clothing, coats, and toys, which were donated by City employees, community members, and local service organizations. More than one hundred fifteen children were served, reflecting strong community support for youth during the holiday season.
- In early December 2025, the Supervisor of Community Outreach assisted with holiday decorating at Jennings Youth Center in advance of its seasonal Wassail event. Winter decorations were repurposed from the Cooper Center, allowing for effective use of existing City resources.

✦ Jennings Recreation Center

- During the reporting period, Jennings Recreation Center maintained consistent youth participation, with an average daily attendance of twenty registered youth. This reflected no change from the previous month, indicating stable engagement during the holiday season.
- In late November 2025, the Allen County Public Library partnered with Jennings Recreation Center to provide a creative enrichment program for youth. Participants created holiday ornaments, explored color design concepts, and engaged in seasonal activities that supported creativity and positive social interaction.

- Throughout December 2025, Erin’s House facilitated group sessions focused on cooperative games and healthy coping strategies related to grief and loss. These sessions were particularly impactful during the holiday season, when youth may experience heightened emotional challenges.
- On Thursday, November 20, 2025, Jennings Recreation Center hosted a Holiday Meal that served sixty community members. The event provided a shared meal and fellowship opportunity for residents during the Thanksgiving season.
- On Sunday, December 7, 2025, Jennings Recreation Center held its Seventy-Second Annual Wassail. Approximately eighty people attended, demonstrating continued community interest and consistent attendance compared to similar seasonal events. Drum Fun participated. Mr. Kétu, Tavion Rhodes, and Malik King provided live percussion performances that contributed to the cultural and musical atmosphere of the event. The Top Tier Dance Program performed, highlighting youth talent and community involvement during this longstanding annual event.
- On Thursday, December 18, 2025, Jennings Recreation Center hosted a Holiday Party. Children received gifts, ensuring that every child in attendance was supported through community donations and volunteer assistance.

Community Center

- **Santa’s Workshop** took place on Friday, November 26th, from 4:30 PM to 7:30 PM. Attendance was approximately 1,150 people. We had 10 regular volunteers and 20 Homestead Key Club students assisting, and the American Legion Band played Christmas songs throughout the evening. Sponsors included Mike’s Affordable Appliance, At Home Healers, ASC, which sponsored the milk, and Park Place Senior Living, which sponsored the cookies. Santa’s Workshop coincided with the Night of Lights, the evening before Thanksgiving. It was a family-friendly event that offered free holiday crafts, milk and cookies, and Christmas shopping. “Buddy” the Elf made an appearance for photos, and the Downtown lighting took place at 6:10 PM with Ace, the son of Antonio Cannon from McMillen, performing the lighting ceremony. The evening was cold and very windy, which significantly impacted attendance, resulting in a decrease of nearly 39 percent compared to 2024. Despite the lower attendance, we sold 54 percent more gifts than in 2024, and a total of 80 children participated in shopping activities.
- **Holiday Dinner and Light Tour** was held on Monday, December 8th, at 5:30 PM. Eighty-two people registered, and 80 attended. We had 14 regular volunteers and 8 Homestead Key Club students signed up to assist. American Senior Communities was the Gold Sponsor for the event, and their team helped serve dinner and rode along on the buses. The Community Center provided a full-course meal and holiday entertainment. After dinner, participants boarded motor coach buses to tour the Fantasy of Lights and view the downtown light displays. Entertainment was provided by Ta’korei Moore, the 2023 winner of Josh’s Talent Show. We had to switch bus companies at the last minute because American Heritage filed for bankruptcy, and we ended up using Royal Excursions. The feedback on the drivers was very positive.
- The Volunteer Christmas Party took place on Wednesday, December 17th, from 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM. Thirty volunteers registered, and 29 attended. The Community Center served ham and cheese sliders, hors d’oeuvres, a veggie tray, cookies, and cupcakes. Activities included a Kahoot Christmas Trivia game and a gift exchange. The event was enjoyable and well-received by everyone who attended.

Weisser Park Youth Center

- During the reporting period, Weisser Park Youth Center served a total of seven hundred thirty-two registered youth through its after-school program. In addition, four hundred thirty-seven snacks and three hundred seventy-nine Kids Café meals were provided, demonstrating consistent daily utilization of nutrition services.

- On Monday, December 8, 2025, Erin’s House facilitated a program session that included youth completing surveys related to their participation in the grief support program. The session concluded with group games and a pizza celebration to recognize youth engagement and completion of program activities.
- On Wednesday, December 10, 2025, the Allen County Public Library led a creative arts activity at Weisser Park Youth Center. Youth participants created small canvas paintings and were encouraged to explore individual creativity through guided art instruction.
- On Thursday, December 11, 2025, Turner Chapel AME Ubuntu Learning Lab conducted an educational program focused on Kwanzaa. Youth learned the history

Riverfront

- The Headwaters Ice Rink continued in December with a total of 8,382 skaters, with our highest date being December 27th, with 767 skaters at the ice rink. Our number one concession item being sold continues to be Hot Cocoa, with nearly 2,000 cups sold in December. Although the weather fluctuated between extreme cold and abnormal heat waves, the Ice Rink was able to stay open for normal hours with no closures or delays. The Headwaters Ice Rink hosted two Winter Markets during the month. The rescheduled market on December 6 featured three vendors—Lu Garden, Nefertiti Sweets, and Rowdy Rooster Artisan Meats—and coincided with 211 rink admissions between 4:00 and 7:00 p.m. The second market, held on December 20, included two vendors, Itty Bitty Berry and Toadstone Teas, and saw 273 admissions during the same timeframe.
- In December, we hosted a total of 11 program events, five of which were part of recurring series, offering a diverse mix of wellness, recreation, and seasonal programming.
- Play in the Park: Winter Nights debuted as a new recurring series in partnership with FortLan, a local non-profit dedicated to promoting non-violence through gaming. Held every Tuesday throughout December and January, each week features a different theme and a wide variety of interactive experiences, including Nintendo Switch games, laptop gaming, and VR activities, as well as traditional gaming. The first two sessions on December 2 and December 9 saw the highest attendance (20 and 14 participants, respectively). As expected, participation dipped as the holidays approached, and we anticipate attendance will rebound in January.
- Our recurring Zumba series, presented in partnership with the YMCA, took place on December 8 and welcomed 10 participants. Dance Promenade: Open Dance was held on December 13 with 28 attendees. The open-format structure allowed the instructor to adapt the class to participants’ interests and goals, creating a flexible and engaging experience. On December 14, we hosted two programs. Yoga, in partnership with Discover Yoga, drew 40 participants. Later that day, Holiday Cheer, presented with the American Legion Band, welcomed 80 attendees. This festive event also included a Santa meet-and-greet, holiday crafts, and refreshments provided by Eggster, serving hot chocolate, coffee, and mini pancakes.

-  **Salomon Farm Park** - A new television was purchased and donated to the Wolf Family Center at Salomon Farm Park by partner group The Gardeners of America Club. While there have been some initial connectivity issues, the updated technology is expected to resolve these concerns. Salomon Farm Park has partnered with The Gardeners of America Club for many years. The club meets monthly in the Wolf Family Center, and its members provide gardening classes as part of Salomon Farm Park’s programming operations. The television donation will have a meaningful impact on renters, clubs, programs, and other groups utilizing the space.

✚ **Lindenwood Nature Preserve** - Lindenwood Nature Preserve participated in the 15th Annual Winterval festivities on Saturday, January 24, 2026. The program included a guided hike through the woods followed by time to warm up by a fire. The event ran from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. and drew 5 participants, a decrease of 77 from the previous year. The lower attendance is believed to be weather-related, as temperatures were in the single digits with negative wind chills.

✚ **Sweet Breeze Canal Boat** - Sweet Breeze Operations welcomed a new staff member in January. Paris Stream-Dau has assumed the role of Assistant Supervisor of Outdoor Recreation and Boating. In this position, she will assist Eden Lamb, Manager of Salomon Farm Park, Outdoor Recreation, and Boating, with oversight of Lindenwood Nature Preserve and Sweet Breeze operations. Paris previously served as the Naturalist at Lindenwood Nature Preserve for one year before transitioning into this role. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Science and Sociology with a minor in Psychology, is an Indiana Master Naturalist, and has completed the Purdue Extension Master Gardener Program, where she continues to volunteer as an intern. Paris has developed several memorable programs at Lindenwood, including the Haunted Forest, and will be a valuable asset to the Outdoor Recreation and Sweet Breeze teams.

✚ **Riverfront**

- In the month of January, Riverfront had 12 programs - 8 at Promenade and 4 at Headwaters Ice Rink.
- Promenade hosted a new program this month, Pilates, which adds to our Second Sunday activities. Pilates, partnered with Pure Movement Studio, had a successful first turnout of 43 people. Yoga, partnered with Discover Yoga, had 85 participants! The pavilion was packed with people looking to get active in the cold. Play in the Park had minimal turnout for trivia night, and VR night was rescheduled due to technical issues. The program for the 27th has been rescheduled due to extremely low temperatures, which will hopefully encourage more people to come out.
- Winter Cozy, held on January 24th, was plagued with some historically cold weather - however, we still had an overall turnout of about 200 people! We made the call to end the night around 8:30 pm, due to incoming weather and it starting to snow. Summit City Flow had an amazing performance, as did Austin Bridges and the ice sculptors!
- The Headwaters Ice Rink kicked off January, closed on New Year's Day, but followed up with a strong weekend of over 1,000 skaters to kick off January. Since that opening weekend weather has been a struggle with extreme cold conditions and snow, keeping people from getting to the rink. We had to officially close the rink on the 25th and 28th due to extreme cold conditions. We finished off January with just over 4,000 skaters. Practice Makes Perfect with the Fort Wayne Ice Skating Club continued to be a successful program, with 4 sessions selling 34 tickets. We had to reschedule the program on the 24th to February 7th due to the extremely low temperatures.

✚ **Weisser Park Youth Center**

- Weisser Park Youth Center served five hundred six registered youth through its after-school program. In addition, twenty-four breakfasts, three hundred thirty snacks, and two hundred ninety-nine Kids Café meals were provided, reflecting continued demand for nutrition support during the winter break period.
- Throughout the reporting period, youth participated in a variety of recreational and creative activities, including fuse bead crafts, keychains, holiday gift boxes, and snowman suncatchers. Group games such as parachute activities and Jenga competitions supported teamwork and social interaction.

- During a STEM activity session in late December 2025, youth completed the Baggie and Pencil Magic Experiment. The activity demonstrated polymer science concepts by showing how a sealed bag filled with water can stretch and grip a pencil without leaking.
- In a Finding Your Roots educational session held during the reporting period, youth learned about the ancient African empires of Benin, Ghana, and Mali. The session focused on trade, governance, and cultural contributions, providing historical context and enrichment.
- During a math enrichment session, youth participated in a Math BINGO competition that required solving equations to match numbers on their cards. The activity reinforced math skills in an interactive group setting.
- One Turner Chapel AME Ubuntu Learning Lab session was held during the reporting period and focused on ancient Egypt. Youth learned about pyramids, hieroglyphics, and the roles of kings and queens in early Egyptian civilization.
- One Erin's House session took place during the reporting period and focused on personal safety and emotional resilience. Youth created visual shields identifying positive influences and strategies that help protect them from negative experiences.
- One Allen County Public Library outreach session was held during the reporting period. Youth created snowflake crafts and participated in hands-on sculpting activities using Play-Doh.
- On Wednesday, January 7, 2026, members of the Summit City Distillers hockey team visited Weisser Park Youth Center. Players assisted youth with hockey skills, officiated a friendly game, and provided popcorn and tickets to an upcoming game, creating a memorable community engagement experience.

McMillen Park Community Center

- On Thursday, December 18, 2025, the McMillen Christmas Toy Giveaway was held as an annual youth event. Youth and families participated in holiday activities and gift distribution, and the event demonstrated strong community engagement and positive family participation.
- During the reporting period, youth programming remained stable despite disruptions caused by school schedules and winter weather. Participation patterns reflected seasonal changes rather than program decline.
- Kids Café meal service declined by twenty seven percent in December and forty one percent in January compared to November. The decrease was attributed to holiday schedules and changes in meal service times, indicating that attendance patterns were influenced by seasonal factors rather than reduced demand.
- Snack distribution increased by thirty-four percent in December and decreased by eleven percent in January. These fluctuations were consistent with holiday attendance patterns and shifts in youth participation.
- Breakfast participation remained consistent across the reporting period. Attendance patterns suggested that most youth did not attend the program during the breakfast service timeframe.
- Youth attendance increased by twenty-seven percent from November to December and January. The increase was associated with youth being out of school, indicating higher daytime program utilization during school breaks.
- Kids Korner participation increased from eighty patrons in November and December to one hundred thirty-five patrons in January. This represented an approximate sixty-nine percent increase, reflecting heightened youth engagement following the holiday season.

- Facility rentals increased from five in November and December to eight in January. This represented a sixty percent increase and indicated growing community use of the facility.
- Cardio Fit was not offered in December due to the holiday season and resumed in January with consistent participation of thirty individuals.
- Pickleball participation increased from two hundred twenty participants in November to two hundred twenty-two in December and three hundred twenty-six in January. The forty seven percent increase in January suggested renewed community engagement following the holiday season and the return of school schedules.

Jennings Recreation Center

- During the reporting period, the Allen County Public Library facilitated a creative enrichment session in which youth developed vision boards focused on goal setting and personal growth.
- During the reporting period, Erin’s House conducted a social and emotional learning activity in which youth created symbolic shields representing positive coping strategies and emotional resilience.
- During the reporting period, Drum Fun expanded participation as additional youth joined the drumming program.

Deputy Rhonda Berg - Director of Finance & Theatre, Budgets, Finance, Payroll & Commercial Vouchers, Trust Fund Donations, Registrations, Rentals, Tickets, Customer Service, Accounts Payable, and Receivable.

Payroll and Accounts Payable

- The Parks and Recreation Department paid 225 employees (144 full-time and 81 regular part-time and seasonal) for the payroll ending January 24th and paid on January 30th, 2026.
- We currently have the following permanent full-time positions open, posted, interviewing, or in the process of being hired, as of January 31st, 2026:
 - Manager – Neighborhood Programs (Fund 121)
 - Program Facility Coordinator – Jennings (Fund 121)
 - Program Facility Coordinator – McMillen (Fund 121)
 - Relief Person – Grounds (Fund 121)
 - Heavy Equipment Operator (Fund 121) (Open Working Leader – Heavy Equip Op replaced with reg. Operator position per Mike Gore)
 - Fleet Mechanic – Golf (Fund 439)
 - Gardener – Riverfront (Fund 451)
- 36 total P-Card statements were processed for January for charges made at the end of November to almost the end of December.
- There were 155 invoices processed for EOY 2025, and 213 for the beginning of 2026. There was a total of 368 invoices processed during the month of January from 1/1 to 1/31.
- Postings for 2026 seasonal positions are now live on the new iSolved platform.
- 568 total W-2s have been processed and distributed or mailed out.

Customer Service and Finance

- Email has been sent notifying customers that their 2025 Dog Park membership has expired and that the 2026 passes are for sale. This has increased the number of dog park customers coming into the office.
- The first concert announced for the 2026 season at Foellinger Theatre went on sale, so the front office staff is getting reacquainted with Ticketmaster

- Joyce, Joniece, and Maddie have been working on record retention of files/boxes at the Main Office and at Lawton.
- Kim has been working on getting the Spring Fun Times information entered into RecTrac.
- Joana has become the main point of contact for Garden Plot rentals. All rentals are requested by completing a contract on the website that is then emailed to Joana and Joyce to process in RecTrac and to take payment.
- Maddie has been handling the campground contracts since the Johnny Appleseed Campground is closed for the winter.
- Rhonda spent the month of January completing the end of year reports for 2025.
- The administrative department is going through an audit with the internal audit. This is the first time Rhonda has been the point person on an audit. It has gone smoothly and should be completed in early February.
- Rhonda attended the January 2026 meeting of SEAP (Southeast Area Partnership).

✚ **Foellinger Theatre Report - Overview**

- January focused heavily on **2026 season preparation**, including staffing structure improvements, early show development, promoter outreach, internal documentation, and operational planning. Significant progress was made on building a more organized foundation for the Foellinger season through finalized job descriptions, SOP drafting, and strategic planning work.
- **Staffing / HR Development**
 - Finalized all new job descriptions for Foellinger Theatre seasonal staff roles to support improved clarity, accountability, and onboarding.
 - Began outlining seasonal staffing needs and operational expectations based on projected 2026 event volume, goals, and venue priorities.
 - Continued planning for improved team structure and readiness heading into spring training and the season opening.
 - Drafted a scope of service and budget for a social media marketer for the theatre.
- **2026 Season Planning & Show Development**
 - Began drafting the show budget and show offers for multiple 2026 season opportunities.
 - Continued reaching out to promoters and agents to expand booking options and secure competitive routing opportunities.
 - Drafted early planning notes for **2026 season programming strategy**, including pacing, genre balance, and operational feasibility.
 - Launched two 2026 season show announcements and facilitated their on-sales.
- **Strategic Planning** - Started drafting a Foellinger Theatre Strategic Plan for the 2026 season and beyond, focusing on:
 - Venue improvements and long-term growth
 - Operational efficiency and staff development
 - Audience experience and retention
 - Revenue sustainability and event mix planning
- **Operations & Documentation**
 - Began **drafting and organizing SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures)** for Foellinger Theatre operations, including event readiness and consistent workflows.
 - Continued documenting operational needs and identifying areas where standardization will reduce confusion and improve event execution.
- **Ticketing / Box Office / Ticketmaster**
 - Continued building 2026 season events in **Ticketmaster** as show planning develops.
 - Completed additional **training in Box Office and Ticketmaster workflows**, with focus on:
 - ✓ Event builds and scaling templates
 - ✓ Holds, comps, and ticket types
 - ✓ Platinum and VIP package ticket builds
 - ✓ Operational ticketing accuracy and readiness
- **Facility & Venue Improvements (2026 Readiness)**
 - Worked closely with the **Parks Department Project Coordinators** to review, prioritize, and plan improvements that support the 2026 season.

- Continued identifying operational pain points and improvement opportunities based on prior season observations.

Additional Work / Ongoing Items

- Continued cross-department communication and coordination to support long-term Foellinger success.
- Continued evaluating event workflow improvements, staffing efficiencies, and guest experience upgrades.
- Plans to activate the lawn space and enhance programmatic opportunities.
- General planning, scheduling, and administrative support tied to 2026 operational readiness.

Next Steps / February Priorities

- Continue promoter outreach and finalize additional 2026 booking conversations.
- Continue drafting and refining 2026 strategic plan for implementation planning.
- Complete priority SOP drafts and prepare for staff training integration.
- Continue Ticketmaster builds and box office readiness development.
- Advance facility improvement planning and align with season timelines

+ Payroll and Accounts Payable

- The Parks and Recreation Department paid 228 employees (144 full-time and 84 regular part-time and seasonal) for the payroll ending December 27th, and paid on January 2nd, 2026.
- We currently have the following permanent full-time positions open, posted, interviewing, or in the process of being hired, as of December 31st, 2025:
 - Assistant Golf Superintendent (Fund 121)
 - Manager – Neighborhood Programs (Fund 121)
 - Program Facility Coordinator – Jennings (Fund 121)
 - Heavy Equipment Operator (Fund 121)
 - Program Facility Coordinator – McMillen (Fund 121)
 - Park Person C – Facilities (Fund 121)
 - Fleet Mechanic – Golf (Fund 439)
- 48 total P-Card statements were processed for December for charges made at the end of October to almost the end of November.
- There was a total of 422 invoices processed during December from 12/1 to 12/31.
- Seasonal Ice Rink positions are all filled.
- 2026 Seasonal Requisition successfully submitted. HR is working on getting seasonal positions posted!
- Working with HR to implement their new iSolved website for new job requisitions, and it will also be used for hiring in and reviewing new applicants. Implementation has been fairly smooth as it largely just changes our workflow and is not an overhaul of our processes. All of our usual forms, like the PDR (personnel data report) and the PRR (personnel requisition request), have moved to a digital format that should ultimately be easier to submit and approve.

+ Customer Service and Finance

- Joyce has begun researching record retention schedules to clean up the basement and files at the main office.
- Garden plot forms and website are ready to start taking online registrations starting in January.
- Maddie has been completing all of the campground registrations since the campground is closed in mid-November.
- Joyce and Rhonda prepared and reviewed 2025 employee performance evaluations.
- Rhonda and Joyce attended a Safety Leadership for Managers and Supervisors meeting offered by the City's Risk Management department.
- Internal Audit began an audit of the administration. Much time has been spent gathering data for the internal auditor. These audits are done on a cycle determined by the Audit Committee by area of the department.

- Rhonda attended the December Park Foundation meeting.
- Rhonda attended the 4th quarter Finance Directors meeting led by the City Controller’s office.

✦ **Foellinger Theatre Report**

December focused on preparation and foundational work for the 2026 season. Installation of the new house lighting system continued on schedule, and a full staff reorganization was completed, including the development of updated job descriptions for upcoming 2026 hires.

Work also began on a new sponsorship deck to strengthen engagement with community partners, alongside early efforts toward a marketing rebrand to refresh the theatre’s identity for the upcoming season. The 2026 calendar continued to take shape with growing promoter interest and potential bookings.

In addition, the team met with Ticketmaster to learn show-building processes in preparation for operating without a traditional box office during the off-season.

Overall, December emphasized infrastructure improvements, operational restructuring, and strategic planning to support a strong 2026 season.

Current Updates:

Facility Projects

House Light Installation: Installation of the new house lighting system continued throughout December. The project remains on schedule and is expected to significantly enhance the patron experience for the 2026 season.

Next Steps: Planning is underway to identify the next off-season facility projects. Potential priorities include:

- Repairs to the loading dock
- Activation of the empty mulch space (House Left)
- Updating aisle and stairway lighting in the house

✦ **Staffing & Front of House**

2026 Job Descriptions - New job descriptions were completed for all planned 2026 positions, supporting upcoming hiring efforts and improving organizational clarity.

Staff Separation & Reorganization - All staff roles have been fully separated and reorganized. This restructuring reflects lessons learned during the 2025 season and aligns staffing more closely with operational needs for 2026.

Ticketmaster Training - The team met with Ticketmaster to learn the show-building process, a key step as the theatre prepares to operate without a traditional box office during the off-season. Two confirmed rental shows—David Lee Roth and UB40—were successfully built in the system.

✦ **Marketing**

- Sponsorship Deck Development: Development began on a comprehensive sponsorship deck designed to engage local businesses and community partners for the 2026 season. Sponsorship opportunities will be offered at multiple levels and may include benefits such as banners, naming opportunities, brand recognition, on-site activations, and more.
- Marketing Rebrand: Initial work began on a marketing rebrand to modernize the theatre’s identity and better reflect its goals heading into 2026. Conversations have started with several marketing firms, and the team is currently evaluating the best path forward to execute this vision.

✦ **2026 Season Calendar**

The 2026 season calendar continues to fill with potential shows and growing promoter interest. Outreach to promoters is on-going, with discussions focused on both co-promotion (co-pro) and rental opportunities.

Steve Schuhmacher – Deputy Director of Park Maintenance,
Facilities, Technicians, Grounds/Heavy Equipment, MainTrac, Projects, Storeroom, Administration, Safety
Compliance

✦ **Facilities Supervisor: Greg Reith**

- Pavilion rentals totaled 71 for January.
- Annual cleanings were completed at the Albert G. Jennings Recreational Center, the Community Center, and Weisser Park Recreation Center. The annual cleaning consists of a top-to-bottom cleaning of the facilities, which includes everything from changing light bulbs to buffing, stripping, and waxing the floor.
- Graffiti was removed from the following locations: Packard Park and Miner Playground
- Facilities relief workers and working leader, assisted the Maintenance Techs with the cleanup of a broken water line at McMillen Community Center.
- Relief workers have been performing pre-season maintenance on equipment to get it ready for the summer season.

Maintenance Technician Supervisor: Mike Cremeans

- The portable ice rink at Lakeside Park was removed due to vandalism.
- The holiday displays at the downtown community center and all recreation centers were removed and stored for the season.
- Work began to remove/relocate three hose bibs in the atrium of the Botanical Conservatory.
- Ceiling repairs were completed at the McMillen Park Community Center vestibule, which was damaged due to a burst heating coil water line.
- The break area of the Lawton Park greenhouse was remodeled to add cabinetry and update appliances and plumbing fixtures.
- Repairs were completed to damaged boards on the Rivergreenway
- A total of 20 calls were sent to the on-call person this month. 5 of which were lock issues, 8 were calls from dispatch regarding alarms, and 7 were miscellaneous issues.
- **Maintenance Technician completed the following last month:**
 7: Alarm Maintenance, 33: Building Maintenance, 10: Carpentry, 19: Electrical Repair,
 11: HVAC Maintenance, 3: Key Core Maintenance, 1: Light Maintenance, 21: Lock Maintenance,
 3: Paint, 0: Playground Maintenance, 26: Plumbing Maintenance, 13: Sign Maintenance, 4: Vandalism

It's that time of year to put Santa's workshop to bed.
 The team did an amazing job ensuring the lights all worked for the holiday season.





Grounds Maintenance/Heavy Equipment: Rob Schenkel

- Tree limb and debris cleanup continues as needed at various park locations.
- Rivergreenway Trail continues to be serviced weekly to remove sticks, debris, and snow.
- Botanical Conservatory and Lakeside Park compost bins continue to be emptied as needed.
- Grounds crews run trash routes three days a week, ensuring all receptacles in the parks are emptied.
- Crews have plowed snow, shoveled walkways, and applied salt to icy walkways, parking lots, and roads in parks and community centers as needed.
- Grounds crews transported several pieces of old equipment from the Shoaff Park Golf Course maintenance facility and delivered them to the Lawton Park laydown yard to be scrapped or sent to auction.
- Parking blocks have been straightened and replaced as needed in various parks.

Main Trac Coordinator: Nicole Roth

- Main Trac Entries: 3,964 for the month.
- We have had 11, 311 calls this month, and 0 volunteer hours reported.
- Busy entering time sheets and contracted/sales invoices.
- Running monthly reports for Recreation Staff.
- Nicole and KayeC had the second annual chili competition. It was well received and a lot of fun for the team. They had 10 entries, and Maintenance Technician, Jake Willis, took home the trophy



Superintendent: Mike Gore

- Approve and record invoices for various materials that are being used in our grounds, maintenance, and facilities departments.
- Overseeing a variety of issues on all sides of Maintenance.
- The 2026 River Greenway inspections have started. (only on the warmer days, of course)
- Spending time with the new HR hiring system, trying to find our new employees.
- Working with contractors to ensure 2026 P. O's are getting completed.
- Starting the MMR reports for IDEM at the spray parks for the 2026 season.

Operations and Support, Storeroom and Property: Travis Roth

- Storeroom staff completed their yearly inventory audit successfully with the staff from the City's internal audit department.
- Staff have started ordering cleaning and paper supplies to stock up for the upcoming spring season as demand increases.
- All of the blanket purchase orders for the storeroom and garage were completed except the P.O. for Kenney Machinery. The purchase order will be taken to the City Council for approval due to the amount being over \$100,000.
- Shelving has been ordered to start organizing Toro parts currently stored in the garage. Many of those parts will move to the storeroom and be cataloged for better inventory controls.
- Property Transactions:

11 Ford F350 Pickup	Transferred	P210
15 Stihl 201TC Chainsaw	Scrapped	P210
25 Radiodetection Locator	Added Into Inventory	P220
15 Toro Push Mower	Scrapped	P230
14 Boss Plow Blade	Added Into Inventory	P240
22 Toro Snowblowers (2)	Added Into Inventory	P240
Sioux Bench Grinder	Scrapped	P252
99 Snap On Volt Tester	Scrapped	P252
99 Snap On Scanner	Scrapped	P252
Motorola APX N30 Radio	Transferred	P295R
25 Toro GM3500 Mower	Added Into Inventory	R211
20 Chevrolet 1500	Transferred	R211
00 Reddy Space Heater	Scrapped	R212

2026 Vehicle and Equipment Purchase Update:

Forestry Bucket Truck	Ordered
Ford F250 Pickup	Waiting on Fleet Quotes
Toro 5910 Mower	Quotes received

Garage Operations Highlights:

- 91 work orders were scheduled this month, 19 of which were services.
- The 2025 equipment list is complete and will be presented to the Park Board for approval in February. Purchase orders will be written once the purchases are approved.
- Selking and Utility Truck Equipment will work closely on the assembly of a new forestry bucket truck for the Parks Dept. The chassis has been ordered and will be complete in around 100 days to allow UTE to start assembling and installing the chip body and bucket attachment. This truck will replace an older model taken out of service last year due to cracks in the bucket elevator assembly.
- Garage employees embarked on the largest and most ambitious garage cleanup to be undertaken in the last 20 years. Mechanics removed over a dozen dump truck loads of scrap materials and were able to recover \$1,500 in metal recycling returns. Unused chemicals and paints were stockpiled to be removed via the solid waste department. New storage cabinets and shelving are in the process of being ordered or installed to improve organization and storage within the shop areas. Staff have worked closely with the storeroom to find better places to store mower parts, and many unused air and oil filters have been returned to NAPA for credit.
- Work this month has also focused on the winter service of golf course mowers, landscape equipment, and the rebuilding of Toro 7210 and 580 mower decks and deck spindles.
- Mechanics have also worked to keep department snowplows and snow equipment running during the multiple snow events that have occurred.
- Garbage truck #185 was taken to Selking to have a new dash cluster installed and calibrated.
- Multiple 2019 Ford trucks were inspected by Bob Thomas Ford to verify if the backup cameras were faulty. This is part of a national recall. So far, all of the vehicles have passed this inspection and have not required replacement cameras.
- The fuel lock controller for the Lawton underground fuel tanks suffered a malfunction due to the keypad numbers sticking badly. An electrician was able to clean them up enough to function correctly, but spare keypads were purchased in case of future problems due to hazardous cold weather conditions.
- A replacement boom section for the large forestry crane is in the process of being built and should arrive during the middle of March. Once there is a tracking number generated for this part, RPM Machinery will start disassembling the existing crane to prepare for the new part when it arrives.

- The Isuzu box truck #188 returned for the body shop with damage to the box repaired, allowing the truck to be put back into service.
- Mechanics have worked closely with the Kreager winter maintenance crew to make sure Toro parts are being ordered promptly to support their operations throughout the winter.
- A budget has been set aside for equipment purchases costing under \$15,000. The first item, a pull-behind pressure washer, has been ordered for Promenade and Headwaters. Quotes are pending for floor machines for facilities and a gas-powered utility cart for the maintenance technicians. Other purchases on the list will be quoted and approved before being ordered.
- A large Stihl order is being put together for Landscape to support their operations, including multiple GTA26 handheld chainsaws and other battery-powered saws.

Project Administration: Dave Weadock

- Bloomingdale Park Playground Equipment – Installation planned for Spring of 2026.
- Boone Street Park Fence Replacement – Project planned for Spring of 2026.
- Foellinger Theatre House Lighting Installation – Installation is 90% completed. Awaiting fixture replacement by the manufacturer for two lights.
- Foellinger Theatre Ticket Office Windows Replacement – Installation is planned for February. Electrical service work is completed.
- Foellinger Theatre Rear Parking Lot Lighting – Bidding is completed. Purchase order acquisition is in progress.
- Foster Park Golf Course Restoration Plan – Restoration is in progress.
- Foster Park Golf Renovation Design – Planning to begin in early 2026.
- Foster Park Pavement Striping – Installation planned when weather allows.
- Foster Park Playground Drinking Fountain – New fountain is on order and will be installed by Parks staff in the spring.
- Franke Park Longhouse Lighting – Planning is in progress.
- Gren Park Picnic Shelter – Planning is progress.
- Hanna Homestead Park Playground Equipment – Purchase order acquisition is in progress.
- Hanna Homestead Playground Border – Planning is in progress.
- Hamilton Park Picnic Tables and Benches – New tables and benches are on order, and will be installed in the spring.
- Hamilton Park Playground Border Replacement – Construction planned for the summer of 2026.
- Headwaters Park Fountain – Construction in progress.
- Headwaters Park West Sidewalk Leveling – Bidding is in progress, and the Bridge Railing Renovation – Bidding is in progress. Renovation planned for spring.
- Headwaters Park West Sidewalk Stairs and Pavers Renovation – Planning is in progress.
- Johnny Appleseed Campground Fire Pit – Installation planned as weather allows.
- Johnny Appleseed Campground Paving Projects – Revised campsite locations and pavement renovation planned for spring.
- Kreager Park Playground Equipment – Installation planned for Spring 2026.
- Kreager Park Tennis Center Fence Renovation – Purchase order has been issued. Installation planned as weather allows.
- Kreager Park Tennis Courts Recoating – Project is out to bid. Work is scheduled after the first high school tennis season in the spring.
- Lafayette Park Playground Equipment – Design has been finalized. Awaiting approvals.
- Lafayette Park New Sidewalks – Planning is in progress.
- Lakeside Park Pond Fountain – Purchase order issued to vendor. Awaiting installation of the new fountain spring.
- Lakeside Park Electrical Service Upgrades – Installation with a new fountain spring.
- Lawton Park Maintenance Building Roof Design – Partial repairs ongoing. Bidding of main project in the spring of 2026.

- Lions Park Pickleball Court Paving Repair – Project scheduling for mid-April is in progress.
- Lions Park Tennis/Pickleball Courts Recoating – Planning is in progress.
- McMillen Park Basketball Goals Pads Replacement – Purchase order issued to vendor. Awaiting product delivery and installation.
- McMillen Park Pool Liners Replacement, and the Pool Drains Improvements – Construction planned as weather allows.
- McMillen Park Pool Deck Engineering Design – Design services procurement in progress.
- McMillen Park Pavilion Roof Replacement – Planning is in progress.
- McMillen Park Golf Clubhouse Flooring & Painting – Painting is completed. Flooring installation to begin in early February.
- Memorial Park Picnic Tables – Parks has the tables, with concrete pads. The staff will assemble and install tables in the spring.
- Northside Park Psi-Ote Pavilion Lower Updates – Renovation is in progress.
- Northside Park Administration 1st Floor HVAC Replacement – Project is completed.
- Northside Park Pool Sand Filters Replacement – Installation planned for April 2026.
- Promenade Park Safety Surfacing Replacement – Installation planned for Spring 2026.
- Repka Park Playground Equipment – Installation planned for Spring 2026.
- Salomon Farm Rear Parking Lot Lighting and Old Barn Gutters Replacement projects – Planning is in progress.
- Salomon Farm Animal Barn Renovation – Planning is in progress.
- Salomon Farm Restroom Building Door Replacement – Awaiting delivery and installation of new door in late February.
- Shoaff Park Playground Equipment – Installation planned for spring.
- Swinney Park East Trail Relocation – Planning and permitting are in progress.
- Various Parks Paving Projects 2026, and Sidewalks Replacement - Planning in progress.
- Various Parks Signage Improvements – Projects ongoing.
- Various Park Pavilions Exterior Painting – Project planned for Spring of 2026.
- Weisser Park Tennis Courts Fencing Replacement – Project planned for Spring 2026.

Other work:

- Various Parks: reviewed potential and necessary future projects
- Various Parks: planning projects for 2025 budget
- Various Parks: updating park site plan bases and building plans.
- Various Parks: underground utility locates were scheduled and performed.
- Various Parks: assisting the Marketing department by preparing requested project information.
- Various Parks: cost estimates for various projects are being prepared upon request.
- Various Parks: park assessments are being completed.
- Content preparation for Engage Fort Wayne
- PAS Division GIS training sessions in progress with staff
- Preparing GIS content for the Parks mobile application

Safety: Tony DeVido

- The Parks & Rec. Safety Committee meeting was on-1/27/26. 6 Parks employees and 1 guest attended.
- 2 vehicle crash was reported for this time period.
- 2 employee injury was reported during this time period.
- 1 CPR/FA classes were held. 6 employees were certified.
- I participated in the city-wide Safety Review Council meeting.
- Preparations for the implementation of the New Employee Training (N.E.T.) program are complete.

- Assisted the Garage with the start of their clean-up and reorganization project.
- The biennial AED inspections have begun.
- The new CPR/FA curriculum has been received and reviewed. Implementation is set for classes starting in February.

**Chad Shaw - Deputy Director of the** **BOTANICAL** **CONSERVATORY** **Planning &**
Development, Forestry, Greenhouse, Landscape & Horticulture, and Riparian
Botanical Conservatory Report – January 2026

Fern’s Fairylight Express continued to carry the Botanical Conservatory through the heart of winter, inviting guests into a storybook journey filled with trains, discovery, and botanical wonder. January also marked a successful transition as staff completed an abbreviated showchange that shifted the exhibit from its holiday phase into its winter/spring presentation—carefully packing and storing holiday décor, installing new display elements, and reopening the showcase to the public in just three days. While harsh winter conditions shaped the month’s operating environment—including 13 inches of snowfall compared to 4 inches in January 2025—teams across the Botanical Conservatory remained focused on delivering a warm, polished guest experience and preparing for an active late-winter calendar.

Despite weather-related headwinds, January included meaningful program activity and strong behind-the-scenes momentum. Winterval at the Conservatory (January 24) welcomed guests who braved bitter cold, and Talitha Shipman’s Fern’s Fairylight Express book signing (January 17) brought families in to connect directly with the story at the center of the exhibit. Staff also continued advancing key operational priorities—grant and sponsorship reporting, ongoing volunteer engagement, facility winter response, and final preparations for the Sweetheart Orchid Display (opening February 5) and Orchid Show (February 7–8). Looking ahead, the month closes with the team positioned for a full slate of exhibits, programs, and events—including the rescheduled Ben High artist reception (February 22), Great Train Connection (March 13–15), and the Home & Garden Show at the Memorial Coliseum (February 26–March 1)—as the Botanical Conservatory moves steadily toward spring and the opening of Color in Motion: Live Butterfly Exhibit in April.

Grace Torres began her work in the role of Food Service Assistant – Café Flora. Current vacancies include one Food Service Assistant – Café Flora (reviewing applications), and two Camp ACTiVenture staff positions (returning candidates have been selected and are awaiting clearance by Human Resources).

Conservatory KPIs

January 2026 reflected a return to a more typical winter performance pattern for the Botanical Conservatory after an unusually strong January 2025. Weather was a major factor: snowfall in January 2026 totaled 13 inches, compared to 4 inches in January 2025, and Winterval was marked by especially cold conditions that depressed turnout. In that context, most January KPIs landed closer to 2024-era norms, rather than sustaining the elevated pace of January 2025—suggesting that January 2025 functioned as a performance outlier rather than a baseline expectation.

Even with weather-driven softness, the month still paints a steady picture: total revenue finished at \$76,599.46, supported in part by Other Revenue growth and the continued maturation of Café Flora, which contributed \$8,691.42 in January. While attendance, admissions, memberships, retail, and rentals trended below January 2025,



the overall KPI profile remains ahead of January 2024, reinforcing that the Botanical Conservatory continues to operate from a stronger baseline—despite a harsher winter start to 2026.

Attendance

January 2025:	9,468 visitors
January 2026:	5,996 visitors
A decrease of 3,472 or -36.67% to 2025	

Admissions Revenue

January 2025:	\$33,597.00
January 2026:	\$21,806.00
A decrease of \$11,791.00 or -35.10% to 2025	

Membership Revenue

January 2025:	\$12,451.00
January 2026:	\$8,370.00
A decrease of \$4,081.00 or -32.78% to 2025	

Conservatory Shop Revenue

January 2025:	\$20,622.56
January 2026:	\$13,864.14
A decrease of \$6,758.42 or -32.77% to 2025	

Café Flora Revenue

January 2026:	\$8,691.42
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Rental & Catering Fee Revenue

January 2025:	\$10,325.00
January 2026:	\$7,580.00
A decrease of \$2,745.00 or -26.59% to 2025	

Other Revenue (includes Activity Enrollments, Donations, Plant Sale, etc.)

January 2025:	\$12,548.68
January 2026:	\$16,287.90

Conservatory Total Revenue

January 2025:	\$89,544.24
January 2026:	\$76,599.46
A decrease of \$12,944.78 or -14.46% to 2025	

Conservatory Business Development

Staff submitted a grant proposal to the Kevin and Pamela Kelly Family Foundation for support of the 2026 Showcase Garden Exhibits.

Staff submitted all documentation and final notifications for 2025 grant applications and awards for the Conservatory into eCivis per request by the COFW grant administrator. This project ensures all grant tracking and awards are shared and communicated for all grant and fundraising personnel for the COFW.

Staff submitted the final exhibit report to Majic 95.1 for the 2025 ... *Something Blue* Showcase Exhibit. This report will enable us to approach this sponsor for continuing support of upcoming exhibits.

Staff submitted a media sponsorship proposal to Majic 95.1 for support of the 2026 Pueblo Garden: Style of the South Exhibit.

Staff sent a corporate sponsorship appeal to 21 additional corporations for support of our 2026 events and exhibits.

Staff submitted an interim sponsorship update to PBS Fort Wayne and Majic 95.1 for their support of the holiday season of the 2025 Fern's Fairylight Express Exhibit. A final report will be sent in April 2026 for the entire period of the exhibit from November 22, 2025, through April 12, 2026.

Staff completed the Winter 2026 Member ENews – it was sent the third week of January.

Conservatory Public Programs - Events

Winterval (January 24)

Despite bitterly cold temps at a high of 7°F, a total of 395 guests braved the brisk weather during this Parks-wide winter festival. Winterval attendance decreased precipitously from 2025, wherein Winterval at the Conservatory welcomed 1,048 guests. The Botanical Conservatory offered a live ice carving of Bug, a character central to the Showcase Garden, as well as a craft and pot-a-plant giveaway. This year, buskers were added to include face painting, caricature drawing, balloon art, and banjo. Although attendance was lower given the weather, spirits were high as guests and families enjoyed the event.

Education

- Continuing T'ai Chi (January 13-February 3)
Sandy Gebhard resumed her t'ai chi instruction via a continuing series. With a max registration allotment of 20, 15 students registered to further their mastery of the Sun Style forms of t'ai chi offered during this 4-week program.
- Book Signing– Talitha Shipman (January 17)
Author and illustrator Talitha Shipman enjoyed a great turnout for her second *Fern's Fairylight Express* book signing. The Conservatory saw 254 visitors during this event, many of whom stopped for an autograph or a picture!
- T'ai Chi for Relaxation (January 20-February 24)
Liz Monnier returned with 13 students who registered for the opportunity to relax with the movement of t'ai chi. While Liz instructs a different form, QiQong, this 6-week evening series allows students opportunity to enjoy practicing their forms in the garden after hours.
- Grow it! School Plant Program
Phase 1 of the 2026 Chairperson Booklet has been distributed to all 62 participating schools. It includes information on seed, t-shirt, and pencil orders in addition to the program's general timeline. Phase 2 is more specific to plant shows and will be introduced in the fall of next school year. Though judging plant shows is not until Phase 2, staff have also forwarded information to volunteers so they may continue to advocate for the program and learn about its different components. Acknowledging Phases 1 and 2 is new to the program

and part of the great strides being made to help it become more user-friendly as well as recognized in the community.

- Behind the scenes in January, there were 3 days of bag prep when volunteers stapled plant care sheets, counted, and bundled bags working toward a goal of 17,400 total. This will be the second year for bags to be distributed with the plants. Of course, plants are already being grown at the Lawton Park Greenhouse in preparation for April distribution! Allowing more time this year, optional orders of seeds, t-shirts, and pencils will be due later with an added emphasis on helping to fund the program. All items must be ordered by March 6th with pickup at the Botanical Conservatory from April 1st-30th. Coming up on March 18th is when seed packaging is scheduled for volunteers to count and package seeds according to student orders. Also coming up are two optional Chairperson Meetings at either 10 am or 6 pm on February 5th.

✚ **Youth Field Trips:** The Botanical Conservatory hosted 192 visitors from six school groups in January 2026. 95% of these groups enjoyed a basic visit, with 5% participating in extra programming. Last year, six groups brought 279 students to the Conservatory.

✚ Exhibits & Displays

- Fern's Fairylight Express (November 22-April 12)
The newest showcase exhibit is one for the books! See the magic of *Fern's Fairylight Express* come to life, as you follow an enchanting story by local author and illustrator, Talitha Shipman. Books are available at Allen County Public Libraries as well as for purchase in the Conservatory Shop. With so many favorite features to choose from, guests ooh and aww at the book printed in an XXL version plus they cannot get enough of the Bromeliad Towers. There is also a G-scale model train and a bigger play train for guests to enjoy in addition to other elements from the book that were created in collaboration with the Botanical Conservatory. Guests are also invited to a Scavenger Hunt to learn about ferns and discover what smaller elements are in the garden.
- Ben High: Gathered After the Fall (November 22-April 12)
Ben High is a multidisciplinary artist and graduate of Wabash College whose work incorporates a variety of natural elements foraged from the Botanical Conservatory. His pieces are available for purchase at shop.botanicalconservatory.org. Due to severe winter weather, a public artist reception was rescheduled for February 22nd, 1-3 pm.

✚ **Volunteers/Staff:** The new year has welcomed new volunteers, with 5 people receiving orientation in January. Two of them have opted to focus on the Lawton Park Greenhouse, while 2 others have already fulfilled volunteer service at the Botanical Conservatory. Throughout the month, 5 volunteers filled 22 shifts at the Front Desk, and 8 volunteers filled 34 shifts in the Gift Shop. Weekly grooming also continued in the gardens by 2 go-to volunteers, along with 1 focusing on plants in the Gift Shop. As for programs and events, 7 different volunteers supported Winterval, and 14 volunteers contributed time to preparing several thousand bags for the Grow it! School Plant Program. Although Color in Motion is only 3 months away, 17 volunteers have already committed to 145 shifts, with 44% of the total shifts to still be filled!

✚ Upcoming

November 22-April 12, 2026: Fern's Fairylight Express showcase exhibit

November 22-April 12, 2026: Gathered After the Fall, art display by Ben High

April 21-June 21: Color in Motion live butterfly exhibit

February 5- March 1: Sweetheart Orchid Display
February 7 & 8: Orchid Show
February 21: Book Signing– Talitha Shipman, 10 am-1 pm
February 22: Artist Reception– Ben High, 1 pm-3 pm
February 26-March 1: Home & Garden Show at the Memorial Coliseum

March 13-15: Great Train Connection
March 23: Annual Volunteer Celebration Dinner

April 3-4: Bunny Tales in the Garden
April 12-20: Showchange Week
April 21: Opening of Color in Motion live butterfly exhibit
April 26: Spring Artisan Market

Conservatory Facility and Maintenance

Staff completed the abbreviated showchange that transitioned Fern’s Fairylight Express from its holiday phase into the winter/spring presentation. Holiday décor elements were carefully packed and stored, new display components were installed, and the showcase reopened to the public within three days.

Allied Mechanical completed final work on Boiler #3 to return the unit to full service, strengthening system readiness for periods of extreme cold. Allied is also preparing a quote for the removal of two obsolete air compressors and for a rebuild of the facility’s diesel generator.

Basement reorganization efforts continued throughout the month, with remaining load-outs and builds underway. This multi-week project is anticipated to wrap up in February and will improve storage efficiency and day-to-day operational access.

Staff responded to winter weather with consistent snow removal and ice control to maintain safe passage for guests, vendors, and team members.

Repairs began on leaking atrium wall spigots that had been contributing to wall moisture and water damage. Maintenance staff initiated the plumbing rebuild, and follow-up contractor work will restore and repair the affected wall surfaces to complete the project.

Teusch Electric developed a bid package to replace failing, outdated fluorescent fixtures in the electrical rooms off the linkways—an area with high, difficult-to-access lighting. Teusch Electric is also proposing the replacement of obsolete can lighting in the main hall with LED puck fixtures to improve reliability and efficiency.

In addition, bids were solicited for several facility improvement projects, including hallway painting, chair rail installation in the Kessler Room and Jaenicke Room, ceiling repairs in the Kessler Room, and removal of aging interactive displays in the gallery hall.

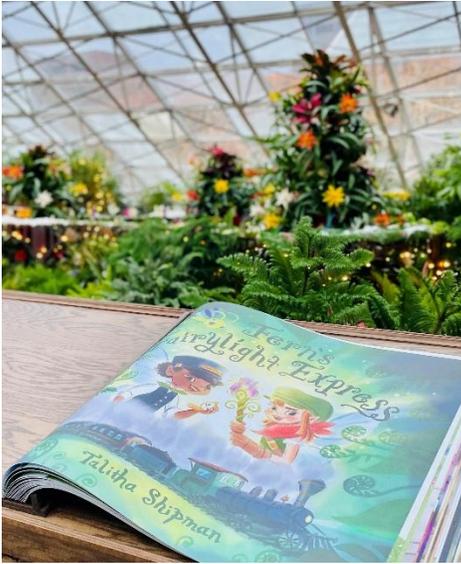
Conservatory Landscape and Horticulture

- The remaining half of the Desert House received an application of worm castings as a soil amendment to increase the organic matter in the soil profile of the new soil.

- Orchids have been purchased to utilize in the Sweetheart Orchid Display which begins in February. Orchids were sourced through a plant broker that the Botanical Conservatory has used during the previous two Sweetheart Orchid displays.
- Botanical Conservatory Horticulture staff also sourced plants from an orchid grower in the Chicago region. A couple of plant acquisition highlights include the procurement of an exotic specimen *Bulbophyllum phalaenopsis* which grows in the hot jungles of Borneo and the infamous Darwin orchid.
- A large metal moon gate arch was acquired to provide a unique element in the Tropical House. It will be placed adjacent to the newly-planted *Aristolochia gigantea*—Brazilian Dutchman’s Pipe, to provide the vining plant a support structure and allow the flowers to hang so visitors can fully view and appreciate their giant flowers when in bloom.
- Lawnganics, our vendor for turfgrass fertilization, pest treatments, and aeration provided an option to prepay for their yearly services for a discount. This vendor has been an incredibly reliable partner in keeping the Botanical Conservatory’s turfgrass healthy for the last four seasons.
- Pride Landcare has worked diligently to reset pavers throughout the Tropical House, Desert House and associated linkways. The work they are currently doing will make the pathways throughout the indoor spaces safer and more accessible for all by eliminating trip hazards for staff and guests.
- Botanical Conservatory staff, with the assistance of the Lawton Park MT’s, have been reorganizing the Botanical Conservatory’s small garage which houses garden tools, carts, and small equipment. When the project is complete, the tools will be on study hanging racks and the small equipment improving safety and efficiently utilizing the small space.



*As part of Winterval, Live Ice Carving of a bug from
Fern’s Fairylight Express*



An XXL version of Fern's Fairylight Express in the Showcase House



Volunteers assist younger guests with pot-a-plant during Winterval



Botanical Conservatory Report – December 2025

- Fern's Fairylight Express has transformed the Showcase House into a luminous winter journey filled with warmth, wonder, and richly planted seasonal moments. Guests are invited to step aboard and follow Fern and friends through glowing scenes, sparkling details, and storybook vignette-style experiences that celebrate imagination, connection, and the joy of coming together. Designed to be both visually stunning and family-forward, this holiday showcase sets the tone for the Botanical Conservatory's busiest season and builds strong momentum as we head into peak attendance weeks. Fern's Fairylight Express is sponsored by the Fort Wayne Park Foundation, Barbara Bradley Baekgaard Foundation, English Bonter Mitchell Foundation, Wilson Foundation, Majic 95.1, and PBS Fort Wayne.
- The Botanical Conservatory hosted several well-received events in December 2025: \$1 Night Light Display

(Through December 19), Santa Saturdays (December 6, 13, and 20), Volunteer/Member Holi-Day Open House (December 10), Talitha Shipman Book Signing (December 20), Holly Shopping Part II (December 20), and several pre-registered programs and workshops throughout the month. Staff are gearing up for several pre-registered programs and workshops throughout the month.

- There is one vacancy for Food Service Assistant – Café Flora (reviewing applications), and there are two candidates who have been selected for the role of Food Service Assistant – Café Flora. The City of Fort Wayne Human Resources Department is screening the candidates for a tentative start in mid-January.

Botanical Conservatory KPIs

- December 2025 closed out a strong year for the Botanical Conservatory with solid overall performance and several important revenue shifts as Café Flora settled into operations. Monthly attendance came in at 14,049 visitors, a modest 5.86% decrease from December 2024, but year-to-date attendance still finished 8.50% higher than the prior year, reflecting sustained growth in overall visitation. The Botanical Conservatory broke its annual attendance record of 120,347 guests from 1984, with 123,460 guests attending in 2025—a 2.59% or 3,113 increase from the record.
- Admissions revenue was down 9.29% for the month compared to December 2024, though year-to-date admissions ended slightly ahead of last year by 1.27%. Membership revenue was a bright spot, increasing 31.92% for the month and 7.07% year-to-date, signaling strong member engagement and retention. Membership revenue exceeded \$100,000 for the first time in the history of the Botanical Conservatory.
- Conservatory Shop revenue declined 12.25% for December and 5.08% year-to-date; however, Café Flora generated \$14,378.89 in December and \$29,671.83 in its first months of operation, assuming much of the packaged food sales that were historically captured by the gift shop. While monthly totals show an ebb and flow between these two lines, both contribute to the same non-reverting fund that supports the Botanical Conservatory’s operations.
- Rental and catering revenue finished slightly ahead of last year, both for the month and year-to-date, and other revenue remained above 2024 on an annual basis despite a softer December. Overall, total revenue for December was 18.41% lower than the prior year, but year-to-date total revenue still finished 3.24% higher than 2024, underscoring continued financial stability and growth heading into the new year.

Attendance

December 2024:	14,923 visitors
December 2025:	14,049 visitors
A decrease of 874 visitors or -5.86% to 2024	

YTD Comparisons

2024 Attendance:	113,784 visitors
2025 Attendance:	123,460 visitors
An increase of 9,676 visitors or +8.50% to 2024	

Admissions Revenue

December 2024:	\$40,753.34
December 2025:	\$36,966.00
A decrease of \$3,787.34 or -9.29% to 2024	



YTD Comparisons

2024 Admissions Revenue: \$413,990.80
2025 Admissions Revenue: \$419,255.05
An increase of \$5,264.25 or +1.27% to 2024

Membership Revenue

December 2024: \$12,289.00
December 2025: \$16,212.00
An increase of \$3,923.00 or +31.92% to 2024

YTD Comparisons

2024 Membership Revenue: \$96,367.00
2025 Membership Revenue: \$103,180.00
An increase of \$6,813.00 or +7.07% to 2024

Conservatory Shop Revenue

December 2024: \$39,250.02
December 2025: \$34,442.77
A decrease of \$4,807.25 or -12.25% to 2024

YTD Comparisons

2024 Gift Shop Revenue: \$320,547.80
2025 Gift Shop Revenue: \$304,248.83
A decrease of \$16,298.97 or -5.08% to 2024

Café Flora Revenue

December 2025: \$14,378.89
YTD 2025: \$29,671.83

Rental & Catering Fee Revenue

December 2024: \$1,750.00
December 2025: \$1,842.50
An increase of \$92.50 or +5.29% to 2024

YTD Comparisons

2024 Rental Revenue: \$81,940.00
2025 Rental Revenue: \$89,097.50
An increase of \$7,157.50 or +8.74% to 2024

Other Revenue (includes Activity Enrollments, Donations, Plant Sale, etc.)

December 2024: \$40,417.37
December 2025: \$5,869.96

YTD Comparisons

2024 Other Revenue: \$423,185.19
2025 Other Revenue: \$433,838.48



Conservatory Total Revenue

December 2024:	\$134,459.73
December 2025:	\$109,712.12

A decrease of \$24,747.61 or -18.41% to 2024

YTD Comparisons

2024 Total Revenue:	\$1,336,030.79
2025 Total Revenue:	\$1,379,291.69

An increase of \$43,260.90 or +3.24% to 2024

Botanical Conservatory Business Development

- The Botanical Conservatory was awarded support of \$5,000 from the Magee-O’Connor Foundation for the 2025-2026 Fern’s Fairylight Express Exhibit.
- Staff sent complimentary tickets and a copy of the Fern’s Fairylight Express Exhibit storybook to each of our foundation sponsors: Barbara Bradley Baekgaard Family, English Bonter Mitchell, Wilson, Park Foundation (at their December meeting), Magee-O’Connor and our media sponsors PBS Fort Wayne and Majic 95.1.
- Staff send a letter updating the current status of the Desert House Improvements Project and its projected opening to our current foundation sponsors. The letter explained the necessity of moving the project’s opening date from Fall 2025 to January 2026 due to pressing needs for further mediation of the soil and mulch and the horticultural care needed for certain plant specimens and the fifteen new desert specimens that will be unique specimens only on display at the Botanical Conservatory. No other gardens in the Ohio, Kentucky, Michigan and Illinois have these specimens in their collections.
- Staff submitted the 2026 corporate sponsorships brochure to the marketing contacts at another 50 local and area corporations. Additional submissions and follow-ups will continue in January.
- Staff provided the requested information for the Botanical Conservatory’s strategic plan as it relates to tactics and activities for the position of the Supervisor of Business Development. Also provided information requested for member, staff, vendor, and funder surveys. Sent the survey to 90 current, potential and past funders of the Botanical Conservatory.
- Staff completed the follow-up email reminder to the 2025 Fall Annual Appeal to our members; this email also included a link to the membership survey that aligns with the Botanical Conservatory strategic plan currently in progress.

Staff secured sponsorships for the following 2026 special events and exhibits:

Jazzworks!:	WANE 15*
Botanical Brew:	WANE 15*

Proposals are in under review by media for:

Jazzworks!:	89.1 WBOI
Botanical Brew:	89.1 WBOI

Proposals declined:

Botanical ROOTS: PBS Fort Wayne

* Value of the confirmed media sponsorships is \$6,386.

Conservatory Public Programs

Events

Holiday Performance by The Snow Fort Singers (December 5)

In their first year, The Snow Fort Singers delivered beautiful holiday carols dressed in finery akin to the day of Charles Dickens. Guests enjoyed their harmonies on the first Friday evening of December during \$1 Night when they delivered holiday merriment in the Showcase Garden amidst Fern's Fairylight Express.

Santa Saturdays (December 6, 13 & 20)

The Botanical Conservatory hosted three highly successful Santa Saturdays in December, welcoming the return of the ever-popular Santa Mike while delighting families throughout the season. This year, a new craft room was added where visitors could enjoy making paper Christmas tree tealights, which added a hands-on creative element to the festivities. Across all three Saturdays, there was a total of 3,572 visitors—a 17% increase from last year's event—with dedicated volunteers providing invaluable support to help each day's celebrations run smoothly.

PFW Holiday Carolers (December 12)

The PFW carolers returned to fill the Showcase Garden with gleeful songs. These student carolers have become a holiday staple, appearing on the second Friday of December. This year, the performance grew to an impressive a cappella group of seven delivering a robust, rich holiday aural delight to guests on this \$1 Night.

Suzuki Strings Holiday Performance (December 14)

Youth performers delivered an array of string holiday tunes ranging in skill and scope from Jingle Bells to Bach. As the Botanical Conservatory fosters youth performing arts, the group grew to 38 young musicians over last year's 31, maintaining ages from pre-school to teen. Approximately 130 guests bolstered Sunday attendance.

Education

Breakfast with Santa (December 6)

This favorite program again maxed out registration with 40 participants. Impressively, all registrants attended! Twenty children and their families enjoyed meeting Santa, hearing his cookie story, and capturing a photographic moment. Guests also received a gift bag and enjoyed a breakfast served by Classic Café of pancakes, sausage, hash browns, and fruit. Furthermore, they decorated their own wooden train ornament in celebration of Fern's Fairylight Express.

Succulent Christmas Tree (December 7)

This popular pre-registered program made a highly anticipated return having not run last season due to unforeseen circumstances. It quickly filled to capacity at 24 participants and even generated a waiting list, highlighting strong community enthusiasm for this creative, hands-on workshop led by staff. Preparing 1,500 succulent cuttings is no small feat, but the task was successfully completed thanks to Greenhouse Staff and Volunteers!

Evergreen Centerpiece (December 13)

This repeat workshop returned for its 19th year led by professional florist Dennis Bowman, and once again proved to be a favorite among participants. It ran at full capacity with 36 attendees, all eager to learn and create festive evergreen arrangements. Bowman's expertise and engaging instruction help make the program both educational and enjoyable, continuing a long-standing holiday tradition that continues to draw interest year after year.

Book Signing– Talitha Shipman (December 20)

Author and Illustrator, Talitha Shipman, celebrated a successful first book signing for *Fern's Fairylight Express* on December 20th during the final Santa Saturday at the Botanical Conservatory. Surrounded by festive decor and holiday excitement, she met readers, signed copies, and shared the magic of her story with fans, consisting of families and young readers.

Grow it! School Plant Program

Program staff are actively cross-checking 2025 data while streamlining 2026 program offerings in the Botanical Conservatory's 2nd year of coordinating this 99-year-old program. Calendar dates have been selected for 2026 while staff are also upgrading and rebranding all material from SCFVA to Grow it! Simultaneously, staff are modernizing operations to reflect phases 1 and 2 as a new format to more clearly articulate how the program functions between two school years. Year 2026 is the program's 100th Anniversary Year, which invites opportunity to celebrate and gain program recognition. In accordance with the Botanical Conservatory's new Strategic Plan, staff seek to attract and increase stakeholder support when promoting the identity of the Grow it! School Plant Program; securing sponsorships to improve program quality is included in this effort. Short-term goals have also been set to retain the necessary level of volunteer support, to provide essential school support, and to send branded school signage in advance.

Youth Field Trips

This December, 15 groups brought 499 visitors to the Botanical Conservatory. These students enjoyed Staff-Led Labs (42%), Self-Taught Activities (35%), and Basic Visits (23%). In December of 2024, eight groups brought 156 people to visit the Botanical Conservatory.

Exhibits & Displays

Fern's Fairylight Express (November 22-April 12)

The latest showcase exhibit is one for the books! See the magic of *Fern's Fairylight Express* come to life, as you follow an enchanting story by local author and illustrator, Talitha Shipman. Books are available at Allen County Public Libraries as well as for purchase in the Conservatory Shop. With so many favorite features to choose from, guests ooh and aww at the book printed in an XXL version plus they cannot get enough of the Bromeliad Towers. There is also a G-scale model train and a bigger play train for guests to enjoy in addition to other elements from the book that were created in collaboration with the Botanical Conservatory. This combined holiday/winter exhibit was prior decorated for the holidays with a "soft showchange" scheduled the first week of January.

Ben High: Gathered After the Fall (November 22-April 12)

Ben High is a multidisciplinary artist and graduate of Wabash College whose work incorporates a variety of natural elements foraged from the Botanical Conservatory. His pieces are available for purchase at shop.botanicalconservatory.org. A public artist reception will be held January 25th, 2026 from 1-3 pm.

Window Display: Candy Cane Lane (November 24-January 3)

In partnership with Anthis Career Academy, the Botanical Conservatory participated in the 2025 Merry & Bright Window Decorating Contest put on by Downtown Fort Wayne. Students, Diomar Soto, Pau Nge, and Brayla Miller created and collaborated on the design to combine a train, fairy, and candy cane theme. Such talent! Guests were invited to vote and learn more about these graphic design students when visiting in person.

\$1-Night Light Display (November 28-December 19)

This seasonal display was emphasized as part of special holiday hours when the Botanical Conservatory is open late from 5-8 pm on Thursdays and Fridays from Thanksgiving up until Christmas. Only \$1 admission, there were 8

different dates to choose from when the gardens in light are best seen at night! Musical groups entertained with holiday melodies on three of these dates. Cumulatively over seven nights, not including Night of Lights, the gardens were enjoyed by a total of 3,099 guests. This exceeds 2,510 guests in 2024 by +23%. Among them were 899 children (38% more than 652 in 2024) and 171 members (just shy of last year's 185).

Volunteers/Staff

December was another busy month for volunteers, as they supported a flurry of activities! Regarding holiday activity and volunteers at-large, 6 volunteered for Breakfast with Santa, 12 volunteered across the Santa Saturdays, 9 volunteered for evergreen cuttings for the pre-registered Evergreen Centerpiece program, and 7 volunteered to deconstruct holiday décor after the new year. These numbers reveal an increase in volunteer participation over last year. Six new volunteers also received orientation, most of which applied to volunteer at the Lawton Park Greenhouse.

Ongoing at the Front Desk, 8 volunteers filled 27 shifts while 9 volunteers covered 41 shifts in the Gift Shop. CAS students finished their semester with 18 collective hours in December. Most of the hours were spent pulling ivy to prepare for future renovation in the Showcase Garden. This semester, the students made a huge contribution having also planted new Mediterranean beds, assisted with rock removal in the Desert House, pulled wintercreeper from the outdoor berms, helped with the installation of the Pumpkin Path, switched out pots in Terrace, and pulled annuals from the front beds. This ongoing partnership with CAS continues to greatly benefit the Botanical Conservatory. Looking ahead, staff are considering opportunities to accommodate an ongoing demand for volunteers to assist with grooming in the indoor and outdoor gardens.

Volunteer & Member Holi-Day Open House (December 12)

During this annual holiday appreciation event for volunteers, members, and their guests, everyone received a complimentary pastry & beverage from our very own Café Flora. They also received a 20% discount in the Conservatory Shop. From 11 am-3 pm, all were invited to craft a luminary tree or wooden train ornament. Evening hours were again extended to 8 pm exclusively for volunteers and members during which PFW carolers sang holiday favorites in the Fern's Fairylight Express showcase exhibit. Specifically, volunteers were gifted free admission passes along with a specially-designed lapel pin by Diomar Soto, a graphic design student at Anthis.

Upcoming

November 22-April 12, 2026: Fern's Fairylight Express showcase exhibit

November 22-April 12, 2026: Gathered After the Fall, art display by Ben High

November 28-December 19: \$1-Night Light Display

January 1: New Year's Day, CLOSED

January 4-9: Soft Showchange

January 11: Winter Artisan Market, 12-4 pm

January 13-February 3: Continuing T'ai Chi, pre-registered

January 17: Fairy Fun with Talitha Shipman, pre-registered

January 17: Book Signing– Talitha Shipman, 10 am-1 pm

January 20-February 24: T'ai Chi for Relaxation, pre-registered

January 24: Winterval, 10 am-3 pm

January 25: Ben High Public Artist Reception, 1-3 pm

February 5- March 1: Sweetheart Orchid Display

February 7 & 8: Orchid Show

February 21: Book Signing– Talitha Shipman, 10 am-1 pm

February 26-March 1: Home & Garden Show at the Memorial Coliseum

March 13-15: Great Train Connection

March 23: Annual Volunteer Celebration Dinner

Botanical Conservatory Landscape and Horticulture

The second shift of poinsettias were planted and installed on the poinsettia tree in the Showcase House. Lively oranges, yellows, pinks, and white continued to brighten the holiday portion of Fern’s Fairylight Express showcase garden at the Botanical Conservatory.

Pest treatments were made in the Desert House to combat mealybugs and aphids. The treatments seem to be helping. Limited flare-ups observed on a few remaining plants will be treated again in early January.

Over half of the Desert House has had an application of worm castings to the soil as a soil amendment with the remainder of the worm castings to be applied in early January after the busy holiday season.

Students from the Center for Academic Success (CAS) finished the semester with continued work on ivy removal in the Showcase House. The Algerian ivy has been nearly eliminated in the Showcase House through their hard work.

Plants have been selected for the outdoor annual displays and will be ordered in early January for the upcoming season. The Botanical Conservatory will continue using Proven Winner plants, as they have proven to be strong performers in the landscape.

Several new and interesting plants have been added to the permanent collection including a relative of the world’s largest orchid species—*Grammatophyllum* Broga Tiger, three new species of staghorn fern—including the largest species—*Platyserium wandae*, and new bromeliad species among others. They will be permanently housed in the Tropical House and will serve to further enhance the beauty and interest found at the Botanical Conservatory.

Botanical Conservatory Facility Maintenance

Maintenance and facility operations in December focused on supporting Fern’s Fairy Light Express and ensuring a safe, welcoming environment for guests. Staff worked collaboratively to repair, replace, and maintain showcase props throughout the holiday season and to support numerous special events, including Santa Saturdays, Breakfast with Santa, Meet the Author, caroler and musical performances, and holiday markets.

Allied Mechanical performed boiler maintenance and addressed moisture issues in the boiler control systems; most items have been resolved, with one remaining part on order to complete the final repair. Allied also completed an additional round of filter replacements on the Showcase air handlers due to heavy dust accumulation from showchange activity.

Teusch Electric repaired malfunctioning emergency exit lights and relocated a bollard in the Desert House to the center island to allow for final planting work.

Fort Wayne Roofing made repairs to address a leak at the north-most skylight in the gallery hall.

Reorganization of the basement storage areas began this month and will continue into the first quarter of 2026.

Maintenance staff provided consistent snow removal throughout December to maintain safe access for guests and Staff.



The Snow Fort Singers perform a Capella carols on a \$1 Night



Guests enjoying a tealight craft during Santa Saturdays



PFW Carolers extend warmth & joy for the holidays



Young musicians of Suzuki Strings convey music of merriment



Mr. Claus delivering holiday magic during Breakfast with Santa



Pre-registered participants creating a festive Succulent Christmas Tree



Pre-registered participants creating a fragrant Evergreen Centerpiece



Talitha Shipman is participating in 1 of 3 book signings during the current exhibit



The Anthi Career Academy Students posing with their collaborative design for a local contest



Middle: Student, Diomar Soto designed a 2025 lapel pin from his own memories of Woody the Talking Tree



Volunteers enjoying their Annual Holi-Day Open House with delicious treats from Café Flora



CAS Students diligently clearing ivy on the south side of the Showcase House



Horticulture Staff emitting warm holiday wishes to volunteers & the rest of staff

Planning Report – January 2026

- Riverfront Phase IIB construction has slowed due to the weather. The contractors have installed the wood benches at the cascading stairs. Staff continue to coordinate construction activities with adjacent developments at the old Schaab Metals building, More Brewing, relocated Depot, and the Eddy. Staff continue to meet with AEP for coordination of this project with their transmission line rebuild.
- Design work continues for the Foster Park Entrance project. The design team has completed value engineering revisions to the DD set to reduce the estimated construction cost for staff review.
- Staff continue to work with members of Wildwood Park Community Association and Heritage Landscapes on the Wildwood Park and Rockhill Park Historic Landscape Study and Guideline project.
- The Northwest Central Collaborative met to discuss its Connected Neighborhoods Grant. Staff are working with the group to discuss the feasibility of several proposed projects in the area parks.
- Staff took part in a review of the revised trail/bike ordinance with representatives from the Mayor’s office, Legal, and FWPD.
- Staff attended the virtual Great Lakes Region Climate Action seminar to obtain continuing education units.
- Staff attended a Global eTraining introductory training session.
- Staff participated in the Indiana Region Future Cities event as a special area judge for Parks and Recreation. Eight Middle School teams presented models of their future cities designed with the theme of Farm to Table in mind.

- The Conservatory Staff reviewed our DISC assessments and learn about each other’s personalities and how to best work with each other.
- Staff finalized draft tactics to include in the Strategic Plan for Conservatory.
- Staff presented the professional service agreement for the Conservatory’s Exploration and Terrace Garden Design to City Council and obtained approval.

Horticulture and Landscape Report- January 2026

- 38 volunteers worked 264.35 hours in the greenhouse, the greenhouse provided 40 plants to be sold at the Botanical Conservatory’s Gift Shop, and 14,099 seeds were sown in the greenhouse for the Parks, Grow it! School Plant Program, Conservatory Showcase, and Mother’s Day Plant Sale.
- 1,243 plants were provided for the Conservatory’s Winter Showcase, with 10 plants were donated to Bonsai Club’s annual meeting.
- Greenhouse staff provided a tour for IVY Tech’s Greenhouse Management class.
- All landscape staff helped install the “Fern’s Fairylight Express” winter showcase at the Botanical Conservatory following the partial removal of the Holiday show.
- Winter weather this month kept all landscape staff busy removing snow and salting Lawton Park, Promenade Park, Lakeside Park, Headwaters Park, and Foster Park.
- The Lakeside Park team focused on litter pickup, leaf removal from the reflection ponds, leaf and limb cleanup, and removal of the holiday greens from the urns. Staff cut down and cleaned up the native grass vegetation around the ponds. They do 1/3 of the pond every season to help control weed trees/shrubs. The remaining vegetation is left up to provide wildlife habitat for overwintering.
- The Foster Park team focused on litter pickup, leaf removal, and garden pruning. When the weather allows, the Foster Team has been working its way across the golf course, raising tree limbs, removing brush around trees, and pruning dead wood.
- The Downtown Team continued to pick litter as weather allowed in Freimann Square. They also worked on cleanups at the Downtown Community Center and Promenade Park. Additionally, they did some pruning at Headwaters and assisted the City Team in pruning REA Park.
- The City Team cleaned up beds at McMillen Park and Northside Park. They pruned trees in REA Park, Castlewood Park, and Shoaff Park.
- Due to a particularly harsh winter this year, the teams have spent several days inside. Indoor work includes designing their annual flower beds, truck cleaning and inventorying, equipment maintenance, facilities cleaning and organization, and painting.

- Each Gardener also completed 3 hours of online pesticide training to stay current with their continuing education credits needed for their pesticide licenses.
- Several landscape staff members assisted with seeding the greenhouse in seeding during January.
- The 2026 landscape staff's master schedules were completed.
- Renewal of landscape maintenance contracts began.
- Bids were awarded to remove and replace diseased and dying ornamental trees in Memorial Park. Ransom Tree Service will be removing 45 trees and stumps this winter. Once complete, Triscape will be removing all chip mulch, restoring turf, and planting 48 new trees in the park. Work is to be completed by April 30th, weather depending.

Riparian Management Report- January 2026

Revisited several tree sites that were wrapped to protect from beaver damage for maintenance, and added new trees to the list due to the recent influx of beaver activity along the Saint Marys River. Covered 12 miles on the riverbanks and 40 acres of parks in the danger zone.

Began geese activity monitoring for the geese egg addling season.

Visited a dock system in Ohio to research a possible new dock system for Promenade.

Completed re-certification for CPR.

Attended the Midwest Fish & Wildlife Conference at the Grand Wayne Center.

Completed a presentation for the Little River Wetlands' "Breakfast on the Marsh" in February.

Forestry Report- January 2026

The 2025/2026 Street Tree Removal Project is underway. So far, 57 of the contracted tree/stump removals have been completed. The remaining 37 contracted removals are expected to be completed by May. In-house crews will be working to remove the remaining 226 trees that have been identified as high-priority candidates for removal and were not contracted for removal.

Currently, there are 173 small tree stumps (< 7") and 300 larger tree stumps (> 6") outstanding along our streets.

Both Mudrack Tree Service and WORX Companies have agreed to honor their unit cost pricing from our most recent stump removal bid (2021) for an additional contract. This was a surprise and will allow for the completion of all our currently outstanding stumps by spring.

Coordination with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, GrowIt! and Southwest Allen County Schools has begun. This spring, we anticipate delivering more than 2,700 White pine seedlings to area third graders.

All nine members of the Forestry team attended the Indiana Arborist Association's 79th Annual Conference in Indianapolis on January 20th-22nd. This conference continues to prove invaluable for professional development.

In January, Forestry crews completed 4 out-of-cycle tree maintenance requests. Examples of these requests include tree limb elevation to facilitate buses, removal of limbs touching homes, clearing street lighting and signage, and removal of dead limbs.

In-house crews removed 54 trees in January. 7 of these were storm-related, and 3 were the result of vehicle damage. Crews responded to and cleared 12 storm-related broken/fallen/hanging limbs.

Completed 12 tree damage appraisals for trees that had been struck by vehicles. These appraisals resulted in \$7,600.00 in damages to City-owned trees.

Responded to and closed (11) 311 Call Center requests for service this month.

Planning Report – December 2025

Riverfront Phase IIB construction has slowed due to the weather. The contractors are installing the wood benches at the cascading stairs as weather permits. Staff continue to coordinate construction activities with adjacent developments at the old Schaab Metals building, More Brewing site, and the Eddy. Staff continue to meet with AEP for coordination of this project with their transmission line rebuild.

Design work continues for the Foster Park Entrance project. Staff received a cost estimate for the DD plan set for review. Staff continue to coordinate with City Utilities on the restoration of their utility construction project throughout Foster Park.

Staff coordinated with V3 for the Mitigation Monitoring services at Franke Park Renaissance and Lawton Park Trestle Bridge projects. The monitoring report was submitted to meet the requirements of IDNR Construction in a floodway permit.

Staff presented the professional service agreement for the Conservatory's Exploration and Terrace Garden Design to the City Council and obtained approval.

The Hanna Homestead Master Plan was reviewed with Elecia Peggins, East Central Neighborhood President. Preparations are being made to release an RFP for construction drawings for this project in early 2026.

Staff met with the Inclusion Institute and the Mayor in December to discuss future coordination between groups relating to accessible design and programming.

Horticulture and Landscape Report- December 2025

26 volunteers worked 234.7 hours in the greenhouse.

The greenhouse provided 152 plants to be sold at the Botanical Conservatories Gift Shop.

11,261 seeds were sown in the greenhouse for the parks, Grow it! School Plant Program, Conservatory Showcase, and Mother's Day Plant Sale.

2,034 cuttings were taken for gift shop, Home and Garden Show, Mother's Day Plant Sale, and the parks.

The Lakeside Park team focused on litter pickup, stick/limb cleanup, light pruning of Junipers, removing spent perennials, and fall cleanups in landscape beds. Staff continued to pick up leaves both on the grounds and in the reflecting ponds. Decorative holiday greens were added to the urns and around the fountains. Memorial stones were installed after the memorial trees were planted. The team found themselves spending a lot of time on snow and ice removal due to the early winter weather.

The Foster Park team focused on litter pickup, leaf pickup, fall bed cleanup, and removing spent perennials/cleanup in the perennial gardens. Memorial stones were installed after the memorial trees were planted. Staff began pruning trees and removing overgrown brush within the golf course. The team found themselves spending a lot of time on snow and ice removal due to the early winter weather.

The Downtown Team continued to pick litter in the downtown parks. Downtown staff spent a lot of time on snow and ice removal at Headwaters, Riverfront IIA, and Promenade due to the early winter. Due to heavy snows, crews moved to the ornamental tree pruning schedule. Crews spent time pruning trees in Bloomingdale, Headwaters, Promenade Park, Rea Park, Roosevelt Park, and the Thieme Drive/Rockhill Drive area. The team did spend some time helping in the greenhouse during poor weather.

Like the other teams, early snows kept the City Team busy with snow and ice removal. Because of all the snow cover, they spent much of their time pruning ornamental trees in their parks. Foellinger Theatre, Kettler, Kreager, Lions, Northside, Rea, Repka, and Weisser all had pruning done in them. Fall cleanups were done in Foellinger Theatre, Franke and Shoaff Parks. The team did spend some time helping in the greenhouse during poor weather.

Shade Trees Nursery completed their 2025 park tree plantings. 153 trees were planted across 29 different parks this year.

2025 staff evaluations and goals were completed.

Leaf Cleanups were 90 percent completed at Headwaters Park by MJK Total Lawn Care as per contract. Heavy snow made this difficult so the remainder of the leaves will be picked up during the winter months of 2026 as needed.

Pride Landcare continued picking up leaves as part of their maintenance contract. Heavy snow means that they will continue through the winter months of 2026 as weather is favorable.

Bids were awarded to remove and replace diseased and dying ornamental trees in Rockhill Park. Wheatcraft Tree Service will be removing 43 trees and stumps this winter. Once complete, Pride Landcare will be removing all chip mulch, restoring turf, and planting 43 new trees in the park. Work is expected to be completed by April 30th, weather depending.

✚ Riparian Management Report- December 2025

Barge and service boat were properly winterized, and a maintenance schedule was organized with the garage.

Completed Lead Boldly Management Training.

Attended Maumee Watershed Alliance's 2025 River Summit at Grand Wayne Center.

Continued pesticide credit courses.

Continued CDL training for Alex Geiger

Continue to collaborate and coordinate with Public Works Division for next year's honeysuckle removal along riparian zones, along with in-house maintenance of previously cleared areas. New equipment (forestry mulcher) will be implemented in these areas as well as the robot mower.

Began new volunteer program planning for 2026.

✚ Forestry Report- December 2025

Despite the wintry weather conditions arriving early, this year's fall tree planting project is complete.

Contractors continue working on this year's tree removal project. So far, three of the ten lists have been completed, with the remaining list expected to be completed before May 1st.

Much of December was spent preparing for 2026. Staff completed quarterly performance evaluations as well as annual performance reviews. These evaluations allow for early intervention with 'opportunities for improvement' and foster continuous growth through regular recognition.

In December, Forestry crews completed 11 out-of-cycle tree maintenance requests. Examples of these requests include tree limb elevation to facilitate buses, removal of limbs touching homes, clearing street lighting and signage, and removal of dead limbs.

In-house crews removed 143 trees in December. 7 of these were the result of damage caused by storms. 5 were located within the parks, and 6 were the result of vehicle damage.

Completed 12 inspections/appraisals of trees that had been damaged by vehicles. In total, these incidents resulted in \$6,700.00 in damages.

Crews responded to and cleared 25 storm-related broken/fallen/hanging limbs, which included 7 private trees in streets.

Responded to and closed (27) 311 Call Center requests for service this month.

Kathryn Pargmann – Manager, Lead of Marketing

- ✦ **January Marketing:** www.RiverfrontFW.org had 6,847 hits to the site this month. We continue to use RiverfrontFW.org to promote upcoming events and share current Riverfront news.
- ✦ The Marketing Team supported the Winterval event staff by working with local media, taking numerous photos and videos at the event for use on social media and the web. We had 17,540 hits to the Winterval link in January. Despite the very cold temperatures, we did have a nice turnout of participants in the event.
- ✦ Numerous tasks with the February 4th release of the Spring Fun Times were completed by the Marketing Team, including the addition of a new interactive PDF with links to splash pages and the ability to e-mail directly from the PDF. Website content updates, calendar posts and social media posts will be completed in early February.
- ✦ **Web Statistics:** *Active Users:* 14,689 *Event Counts:* 106,652
- ✦ 52 Graphic Design projects completed.
- ✦ Day Camp brochure and Franke Advance Camper brochures and Day Camp postcard for SACS are completed and being reviewed.
- ✦ Department comprehensive rental brochure completed.
- ✦ Received accessibility grant for Headwaters Rink and the Sensory Clubhouse from WindSwell Foundation (formerly AWS).
- ✦ Working on funding request letter from a local hospital for Hanna Homestead.
- ✦ Submitted letters of intent for a playground grant and for the entrance to Foster Park. Waiting to hear if we are invited to apply.
- ✦ Social media promotions for: Extended Travel carousel, Winterval, and Engagement posts.
- ✦ Arranged for over 20 media interviews with select staff promoting January events.
- ✦ January *Media Mentions:* 74. Social Media Totals for January:

FB Followers	109,940
FB Viewers	398,361
X (formerly Twitter) Followers	13,899
Instagram Followers	31,150
- ✦ **December Marketing:** www.RiverfrontFW.org had 7,884 hits to the site this month, and the Promenade Park link had 393 hits. The Rental link continues to be a popular source of information. A total of 575 hits in December.

- ✦ The marketing team is working on various materials before the release of the David Lee Roth show at Foellinger Theatre. The show will be on June 11, 2026.
- ✦ The marketing team assisted with party prep for Youth Center parties the week of Dec. 15. We attended all the Youth Center Holiday events and took photos for social media and the web.
- ✦ **Web Statistics:** Active Users: 22,809 Event Counts:112,673
- ✦ 27 Graphic Design projects completed.
- ✦ Fun Times printer and mailer designated and contracted for 2026.
- ✦ Plan to add links to the Fun Times PDF that is posted on the website so anyone looking through the book can go directly to registration for that program. How to do this has been researched and tested, and will be used starting with the Spring Fun Times book.
- ✦ Working on a grant application for accessibility at Headwaters Rink and the Sensory Clubhouse.
- ✦ Sent Sponsorship e-mail to local business list.
- ✦ Completed Tree City application.
- ✦ Confirmed media sponsors for Spring Fun Times.
- ✦ Social media promotions for: Wassail, Capital Improvement Projects, Engagement, and Ice Rink.
- ✦ Arranged for 9 media interviews with select staff promoting December events.
- ✦ December **Media Mentions:** 89, and Social **Media Totals** for December:

FB Followers	109,384
FB Viewers	2,688,657
X (formerly Twitter) Followers	13,900
Instagram Followers	30,987

Gary Whitacre – Manager, Golf Operations

- ✦ The golf courses will be ready to open by mid-March. Saturday, March 21, is the target date, but weather and other factors can move that target either direction.
- ✦ The courses will be receiving 18 new golf carts upon opening, while trading in 12 carts. This net gain of 6 carts will bring us closer to our optimal number of carts and also begin cycling out 10-year-old carts, thereby making the fleet younger. The 12 carts being traded are 2015 models, which will leave us with 28 more of that model year, which are nearing the end of their useful life. The fleet will stand at 97 carts upon acquisition as we work towards 110.

- ✦ Seasonal jobs have been posted, and responses are beginning to come in. We will have a strong core of experienced workers, and we are receiving many quality new applicants.
- ✦ Both Foster Park and McMillen Park will have new supervisors this year, as two long-time employees have retired. Rick King will be at Foster Park, and Lee Dishong will be at Foster.
- ✦ In an effort to continue to improve service level and upgrade efficiency among all courses, all employees are receiving enhanced training on best practices. This will improve course-to-course consistency and standardize the operation.
- ✦ The Grounds Staff, led by Chris Rudolph, will be at full strength this year. Chris has hired an assistant, and the momentum acquired from late last season will continue to build. 2024 was an extremely difficult year for a number of reasons, but it served its purpose in identifying problem areas and improving practices. At some point this season, Foster Park will be able to open all 18 holes as per normal, eliminating the provisional green and altered holes we have used for the last two seasons.
- ✦ Kim Moore and Mark Beneke have been retained as contract instructors for 2026. We will be able to offer affordable, quality instruction at our facilities.
- ✦ Golf continues to grow nationally, and after a brief hiccup last year, the Parks courses will continue to grow. There is every reason to be optimistic for this season as we move closer to warm weather.

Dawn Ritchie – Greenway & Trails Manager



- ✦ We had about 80 bicyclists and walkers for the Winter Solstice event on 12/21 at Salomon Farm and the Pufferbelly Trail.
- ✦ We will be taking a revised motor vehicle ordinance for trails, sidewalks, and parks to address electric devices like e-bikes to the City Council in February.
- ✦ We had the pre-construction meeting with our contractor, Bunn Excavating, for the Illinois Road Trail and Road Improvement project. They plan to start work on this 2-mile-long trail corridor (Rockhill Park to Getz Rd) in late March/early April. They are hoping to finish the project this year. We will schedule a “Meet the Contractor” meeting for nearby property owners/businesses.
- ✦ We bid out the Stellhorn Road Trail and Sidewalk project and awarded it to Key Concrete. The trail will stretch from Northwood Plaza to Eicher Drive on the north side of Stellhorn, and the sidewalk will be constructed on the north side from Eicher to Reed Road.
- ✦ We will begin appraising this quarter for the NE Trail, the Lake Avenue Trail, and the Stellhorn Road Trail. We have around 70 parcels to acquire this year for these trail projects.
- ✦ We hired Ransom Tree Service to remove about 40 dead trees along the trails this winter. They just completed the work.
- ✦ We will be borrowing a data bike from the Metropolitan Planning Organization in South Bend to measure pavement conditions on our trails, which will help prioritize maintenance.

- ✦ We are resubmitting a Federal BUILD grant application to fund the engineering of the remaining 30 miles of the Poka-Bache Connector. We scored very well last year and will hopefully get the grant this time.

National / State / Division News and Media Coverage:



NATIONAL RECREATION
AND PARK ASSOCIATION



[February 2026 – Parks & Recreation Ezine:](https://parksandrecmag.mydigitalpublication.com/publication/?i=859541&p=0&view=issueViewer)

<https://parksandrecmag.mydigitalpublication.com/publication/?i=859541&p=0&view=issueViewer>

[January 2026 – Parks & Recreation](https://www.nxtbook.com/nrpa/ParksRecreationMagazine/december-2025/index.php#/p/Intro)

<https://www.nxtbook.com/nrpa/ParksRecreationMagazine/december-2025/index.php#/p/Intro>

[Good to be Home January 2026](https://www.fortwayne.com/magazine/good-to-be-home-january-2026)

[Fort Wayne magazine January 2026 | FortWayne.com](https://www.fortwayne.com/magazine/good-to-be-home-january-2026)

[Fort Wayne magazine February 2026 | FortWayne.com](https://www.fortwayne.com/magazine/good-to-be-home-february-2026)

[Fort Wayne magazine December 2025 | FortWayne.com](https://www.fortwayne.com/magazine/good-to-be-home-december-2025)



WPTA, Transit Equity Day

<https://www.21alivenews.com/2026/02/05/citilink-celebrates-transit-equity-day/>

WPTA, FWPd supports proposed pink alert system for missing persons

<https://www.21alivenews.com/2026/02/04/fort-wayne-police-support-proposed-pink-alert-system-missing-persons/>

WANE, Striking a balance – Affordable housing need persists as number of high-income households rises

<https://www.wane.com/top-stories/striking-a-balance-affordable-housing-need-persists-as-number-of-high-income-households-rises/>

WANE, Soccer stadium spurs potential commercial development in residential areas

<https://www.wane.com/top-stories/new-fort-wayne-fc-stadium-spurs-potential-commercial-development-in-residential-areas/>

WANE, Fort Wayne invites Waynedale residents to discuss neighborhood's future

<https://www.wane.com/top-stories/fort-wayne-invites-waynedale-residents-to-discuss-neighborhoods-future/>

WANE, Why is Fort Wayne having so many fires

<https://www.wane.com/news/local-news/why-is-fort-wayne-having-so-many-fires/>

WFFT, Passenger rail update

https://www.wfft.com/news/local-officials-discuss-midwest-connect-progress/article_34b26b25-215b-4fbb-a04b-4f478af24c78.html

WFFT, New Haven mayor appointed to national transportation advocacy committee

https://www.wfft.com/news/new-haven-mayor-appointed-to-national-transportation-advocacy-committee/article_08e54e72-5658-436b-86c5-e455f4720d3a.html

WFFT, Rosa Parks' birthday honors a legacy that still moves history

https://www.wfft.com/news/rosa-parks-birthday-honors-a-legacy-that-still-moves-history/article_c6e0b7a3-b82d-4e69-b287-d7e796dfd11e.html

Adams Radio Group, Waynedale residents invited to help shape the future of their neighborhoods

<https://www.1039waynefm.com/2026/02/05/waynedale-residents-invited-to-help-shape-the-future-of-their-neighborhoods/>

WANE, Back 9 Golf project update

<https://www.wane.com/top-stories/back-9-golf-construction-update-its-not-that-building/>

WFFT, City Council considers changing public comment procedures

https://www.wfft.com/news/city-council-considers-changing-public-comment-procedures/article_f6ac99a5-6c2d-4f1b-b98a-a573d9c8f364.html

WFFT, Shoveling sidewalks

https://www.wfft.com/news/fort-wayne-residents-face-fines-for-uncleared-snow-and-ice-by-9am/article_8abd64d2-1792-4470-ae69-16f0c6491a16.html

WELT, Investing in the City of Fort Wayne program with Chad Shaw from Parks and Recreation Dept. as guest

<https://soundcloud.com/mayorfw/fort-wayne-park>

WANE, FWACC assists outside shelters – Takes in 58 cats this month

<https://www.wane.com/news/local-news/fwacc-assists-outside-shelters-takes-in-58-cats-this-month/>

WANE, FWPD – Copper thefts are almost impossible to identify

<https://www.wane.com/top-stories/fwpd-copper-thefts-are-almost-impossible-to-identify/>

WANE, City Council meeting recap - W. Jefferson parking lot shot down again

<https://www.wane.com/top-stories/fort-wayne-west-jefferson-parking-lot-shot-down-again/>

WANE, FWCS quells immigration and customs enforcement concerns

<https://www.wane.com/top-stories/fort-wayne-community-schools-superintendent-quells-immigration-and-customs-enforcement-concerns/>

WPTA, IURC approve I&M's latest power plan

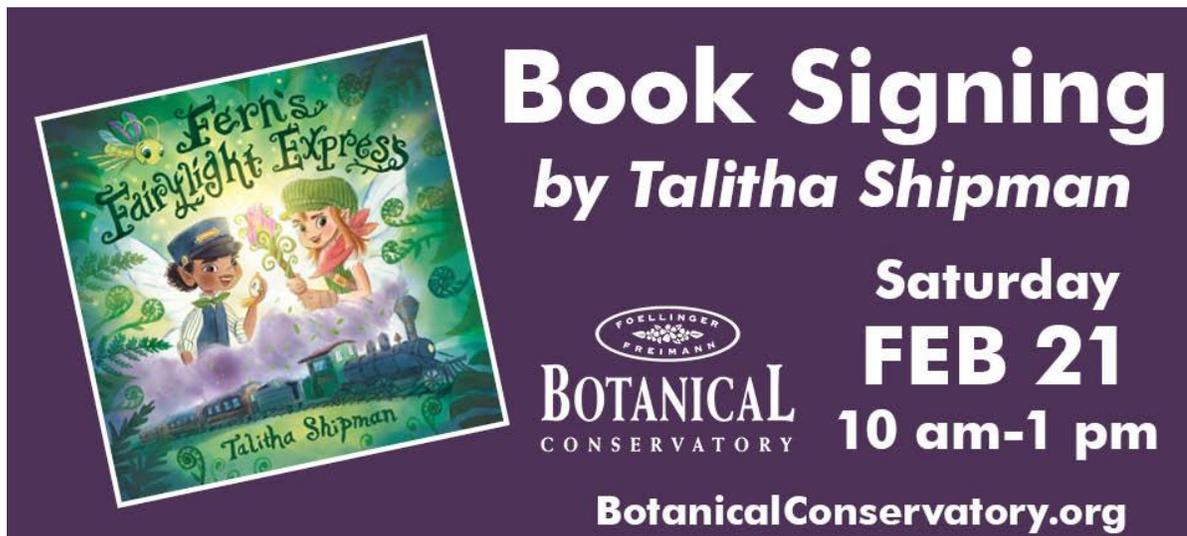
<https://www.21alivenews.com/2026/01/29/indiana-utility-regulatory-commission-approves-ims-latest-power-plan/>

WFFT, Hillegas Road project update

https://www.wfft.com/video/multiple-road-constructions-may-impact-spring-commute-including-hillegas-road/video_f618b236-6b9e-556a-87a9-748f2e265fe1.html

WBOI, What the end of temporary protective status means for Burmese in Indiana

<https://www.wboi.org/government/2026-01-23/what-the-end-of-temporary-protective-status-means-for-burmese-hoosiers>



Book Signing
by Talitha Shipman

Saturday
FEB 21
10 am-1 pm

BOTANICAL
CONSERVATORY

BotanicalConservatory.org

WANE, Winterval celebrates 15th year despite bitter cold

<https://www.wane.com/news/local-news/winterval-celebrates-15th-year-despite-bitter-cold/>

WANE, Honoring Dr. Crawford with \$1 skating

<https://www.wane.com/top-stories/honoring-dr-john-crawford-with-1-skating/>

FW Bus Weekly, Mayor Tucker's State of the City address date/location announced

https://www.fwbusiness.com/news/article_6175b8c2-9d92-43de-9106-349d2db96710.html

Wednesday - Friday, 4:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Dr. Crawford \$1 Days, Thursdays, Feb. 12, 19, Saturdays & Sundays, 12:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Headwaters Park, 333 South Clinton Street

The Ice Rink is open for public skating from Wednesday to Sunday. Admission is \$7 for skaters ages three and older, free for children two and under, with \$4 skate rental.

Thanks to a generous donation from Marcia and Grant Crawford, reduced admission and skate rental opportunities will be available on Thursday evenings starting January 29 and continuing until February 19 to honor the memory and community service of Dr. John Crawford, a physician, radiation oncologist, and 20-year member of the Fort Wayne City Council. Admission and skate rental will be \$1 each.



For the latest parking map, please go to www.fortwayneparks.org and search Headwaters Park. Ten-punch skating passes will be available to purchase at the rink, located at 333 South Clinton Street in downtown Fort Wayne, during normal operation hours.

Stay up-to-date on Facebook pages for @HeadwatersParkFW and @FortWayneParks. Headwaters Ice Rink sponsored by: WANE 15, Loud 103.3, and Hot 107.9.

WPTA, Mayor Tucker and Commissioner Turpin answer questions during neighborhood forum
<https://www.21alivenews.com/2026/01/23/city-county-leaders-answer-questions-during-allen-county-neighborhoods-forum/>

WANE, House committee passes amendment to add DeKalb and Steuben counties to casino consideration
<https://www.wane.com/top-stories/house-committee-passes-amendment-to-add-dekalb-steuben-counties-to-casino-consideration/>

WPTA, Casino relocation amendment opens path beyond Allen County
<https://www.21alivenews.com/2026/01/22/four-county-competition-indiana-casino-relocation-amendment-opens-path-beyond-allen-county/>

WBOI, **AWS Foundation changes name to WindSwell**
<https://www.wboi.org/health-science/2026-01-21/aws-foundation-changes-name-to-windswell>

WFFT, Protecting animals during cold weather
https://www.wfft.com/news/protecting-your-animals-during-extreme-winter-temperatures/article_6657a0ad-d617-44ee-ae44-a5372a916505.html

Riverfront Social Runners Promenade Park, 202 West Superior Street

The Riverfront Social Runners are calling all runners and walkers—no matter your experience level! Join the club on the Strava App and discover your community at your own pace. Stay connected and up to date on upcoming meetups, fun challenges, and Riverfront adventures by following Riverfront Fort Wayne on Strava and social media. Don't miss the chance to get active and make new friends along the way!

WFFT, Mayor Tucker's State of the City date has been announced
https://www.wfft.com/news/mayor-sharon-tuckers-state-of-the-city-address-set-for-feb-11/article_35a5c9ed-cb94-41aa-9e03-71cfb3c77c84.html

WFFT, Winter contingency plan update
https://www.wfft.com/news/st-joseph-shelter-preps-for-freezing-temps-as-demand-rises/article_c6a3f8d6-73d2-4e3e-b2b0-e7f2e7b84084.html

WFFT, Mayor on temporary protected status for the Burmese population
https://www.wfft.com/news/fort-wayne-burmese-face-possible-deportation-mayor-responds/article_a6699100-8b70-40f0-bac0-f5f17d1da11f.html

WANE, Could an Olympic-sized pool be coming to New Haven
<https://www.wane.com/top-stories/could-an-olympic-sized-pool-be-coming-to-new-haven/>

WFFT, Mayor at MLK Day event
https://www.wfft.com/news/dr-king-unity-day-honoring-dr-martin-luther-king-s-legacy/article_85bf1ce0-7650-4749-9955-



[2275f9ff1ec1.html](#)

City TV, News Around Town program – Public safety highlighted

<https://acpl.viebit.com/watch?hash=InIWIA3pMAasCkeh>

City TV, On the Move program with Councilwoman Chambers – Guest is Amanda Fall

<https://acpl.viebit.com/watch?hash=WZvqFiWb56lmdGDa>

WPTA, Walk in the Park feature on new playgrounds

<https://www.21alivenews.com/2026/01/19/walk-park-2026-playground-projects/>

WOWO, Turpin on possible casino

<https://wowo.com/wowo-exclusive-commissioner-ron-turpin-talks-casino-with-kb/>

FW Bus Weekly, Downtown DORA expansion

https://www.fwbusiness.com/news/article_ffd27844-20a7-4a9f-b770-8ca4fa278004.html

PBS, Primetime 39 program with Sen. Johnson and Rep. Abbott as guests

<https://www.pbs.org/video/january-16-2026-johnson-abbott-xmvltx/>

Headwaters Ice Rink

***Weekdays, 4:00 – 9:00 p.m. Saturdays & Sundays, 12:00 – 9:00 p.m.**

Headwaters Park, 333 South Clinton Street

The Headwaters Ice Rink, a community favorite since 2003, is set to open for the 2025–2026 season on the Saturday before Thanksgiving, weather permitting. Following opening day, the rink will operate Monday through Sunday through January 6. Regular hours are 4:00–9:00 p.m. Monday–Friday and 12:00–9:00 p.m. Saturday–Sunday. Admission is \$7 for skaters ages three and older, free for children two and under, with \$4 skate rental. The season will feature special programming, including an afternoon Winter Market in partnership with the YLNI Farmer’s Market on November 29, December 20, and February 14, and beginner skating sessions in January with the Fort Wayne Ice Skating Club. Thanks to a generous donation from Marcia and Grant Crawford, reduced admission and skate rental opportunities will be available in January and February to honor the memory and community service of Dr. John Crawford, a physician, radiation oncologist, and 20-year member of the Fort Wayne City Council.

Holiday Showcase Exhibit: Fern’s Fairylight Express

Foellinger-Freimann Botanical Conservatory, 1100 South Calhoun Street

All aboard the Botanical Conservatory’s journey of discovery, imagination, and botanical wonder. This winter, step into a one-of-a-kind exhibit where the magic of trains transports you to a whimsical world as part of an enchanting story by local Author/Illustrator, Talitha Shipman. Read along and join your new favorite characters, Fern, Bug and Sprout on an unforgettable adventure through Fairy Glen. Experience the magical transformation of the Fairylight Express as you work together to get it back on track. For visitors of all ages, don’t miss this opportunity to Let Your Imagination GROW! Sponsored by: Fort Wayne Park Foundation, Barbara Bradley Baekgaard Foundation, English Bonter Mitchell Foundation, Wilson Foundation, Majic 95.1 and PBS Fort Wayne.



FW Bus Weekly, P.J. Smith named police chief

https://www.fwbusiness.com/news/article_273b85c4-a70d-4d8a-9738-bc0a2e7baf2e.html

WFFT, Report: Indiana tops U.S. in AI energy consumption

https://www.wfft.com/news/report-indiana-tops-us-in-ai-energy-consumption-with-nearly-half-of-states-energy-going/article_5d6719bb-a7b9-456f-a6c1-2918f24846e5.html

WOWO, Councilman Bender on Fort Wayne's Morning News program

<https://wowo.com/wowo-exclusive-fort-wayne-council-president-marty-bender/>

FW Bus Weekly, Mayor Tucker to speak at upcoming neighborhood forum

https://www.fwbusiness.com/news/article_b8f62cf4-1a3f-4e68-b025-4e01858cf249.html

WPTA, FWACC receive grant

<https://www.21alivenews.com/2026/01/06/fwacc-receives-10k-grant-community-foundation-greater-fort-wayne/>

WANE, Study finds prices in Fort Wayne are outpacing wages

<https://www.wane.com/top-stories/an-expensive-city-fw-prices-are-outpacing-wages-ibr-study-finds/>

WANE, City Council meeting recap

<https://www.wane.com/top-stories/bender-leads-in-2026-fort-wayne-city-council-reorganizes/>

WFFT, Update on City Clerk position

https://www.wfft.com/news/lana-keesling-reflects-on-tenure-endorses-john-mcgauley-ahead-of-departure/article_b2ac5122-49f3-483c-a8f6-69c6ea5fbc7d.html

WFFT, 2nd window open for opioid settlement funds

https://www.wfft.com/news/nonprofits-can-apply-for-fort-wayne-opioid-settlement-funds-starting-jan-2/article_b0c7a9fc-c371-4ecd-8541-da51e70c95db.html

WANE, Headwaters Park ice rink opportunities

<https://www.wane.com/top-stories/skate-into-the-holidays-at-headwaters-park-ice-rink/>

WBOI, Year in review – Sounds, voices and stories that colored the year

<https://www.wboi.org/arts-culture/2025-12-31/the-wboi-2025-wrap-up-the-sounds-voices-and-stories-that-colored-the-year>

FW Bus Weekly, Fernandez announces run for commissioner

https://www.fwbusiness.com/news/article_109daf2c-38a0-4b51-a657-29aeefa77a9d.htmlAdams Radio

WFFT, Cody Brooks appointed deputy chief for FWFD

https://www.wfft.com/news/fort-waynes-cody-brooks-takes-deputy-chief-role-in-fire-department/article_d67e79d3-d4ea-40dd-9ffc-624c9b0f302f.html

WFFT, Mayor Tucker honors 122 city employees for milestone years of service

https://www.wfft.com/news/fort-wayne-honors-122-city-employees-for-milestone-service/article_475f993e-2514-498f-a390-163dcd73d668.html

WPTA, Riverfront Fort Wayne event at Promenade Park

<https://www.21alivenews.com/2025/12/14/riverfront-fort-wayne-spreading-holiday-cheer-promenade-park/>

WPTA, City honors late pastor with memorial parkway

<https://www.21alivenews.com/2025/12/13/city-fort-wayne-honors-late-pastor-with-memorial-parkway/>

FW Bus Weekly, Mayor and Public Works recap 2025 construction season

https://www.fwbusiness.com/news/article_4c1dbccb-074a-47e3-86b4-abb5f6f55541.html

Indiana Capital Chronicle, IEDC releases job data, regional development vision

<https://indianacapitalchronicle.com/briefs/iedc-releases-job-data-regional-development-vision/>

WPTA, Google community forum recap

<https://www.21alivenews.com/2025/12/12/google-officials-promise-more-transparency-fort-wayne-data-center-public-forum-residents-unsatisfied/>

WPTA, Mayor recognizes employees for years of service

https://www.21alivenews.com/2025/12/11/mayor-sharon-tucker-recognizes-122-city-fort-wayne-employees-years-service/?utm_source=taboola&utm_medium=organicclicks&tbref=hp

WANE, Google community forum recap

<https://www.wane.com/top-stories/representatives-from-google-indiana-michigan-power-and-city-of-fort-wayne-hold-public-forum-on-data-center/>

WANE, FWPD explains pursuit protocols

<https://www.wane.com/top-stories/fatal-crash-during-fwpd-pursuit-raises-questions-about-when-officers-chase/>

WANE, Police union contracts approved

<https://www.wane.com/news/local-news/fwpd-unions-see-high-3-raise-among-city-employees/>

WANE, Mayor and Public Works recap 2025 construction season

<https://www.wane.com/news/local-news/infrastructure-upgrades-totaled-over-41-million-in-fort-wayne-for-2025/>



WANE, FWPD mourns loss of officer

<https://www.wane.com/news/local-news/fort-wayne-police-department-mourns-loss-of-officer-after-illness/>

WANE, FWPD honors recruit killed in training exercise in 1987

<https://www.wane.com/news/local-news/fwpd-honors-recruit-killed-in-training-exercise-in-1987/>

WPTA, Mayor and Public Works Division recap 2025 construction season

<https://www.21alivenews.com/2025/12/10/city-announces-over-41m-neighborhood-infrastructure-upgrades-2025/>

WBCL, Allen Co. casino bill clears Senate committee

<https://www.wbcl.org/news/allen-county-casino-senate-bill-clears-committee-miami-tribe-says-no-casino-at-its-fort-wayne-land>

What's Happening at the Statehouse

Linked here is a summary of bills that have been filed for the 2026 session of the Indiana General Assembly that could impact parks and recreation departments if enacted. Headers include a link to the legislation to view the current draft of the bill and further information.

The 2026 session is compressed, with the General Assembly convening a month early in December to consider redistricting, resulting in the decision to cut off a month at the end. As a result, the General Assembly expects to conclude by the end of February, meaning hearings for legislation that gains legs will likely move quickly

[Click here for more](#)



The poster features a large yellow speech bubble on the left containing the text "JOIN OUR TEAM!". To the right, under the heading "WE ARE HIRING for our Community Youth Centers", are three job listings. At the bottom, there is a QR code with "SCAN ME" below it, and the text "Make a positive difference in the life of our youth! APPLY TODAY!" followed by the website "cityoffortwayne.org/jobs-with-the-city".

WE ARE HIRING
for our Community Youth Centers

- **Recreation Center Coordinator**
Jennings and Weisser Centers
(Seasonal) After school and summer Pay: \$15/hour
- **Recreation Coordinator**
Jennings and Weisser Centers
(Year Round / Part Time) Varied schedule w/some weekends Pay: \$17/hour
- **Program Facility Coordinator**
Jennings Center
(Full Time) Varied schedule w/some weekends

See full job descriptions at the website below or call 427-6465 for information.

Make a positive difference in the life of our youth! **APPLY TODAY!**

cityoffortwayne.org/jobs-with-the-city



**THE
UNSTOPPABLE
TOUR**

OCTOBER 4
FOELLINGER THEATRE
FOELLINGERTHEATRE.ORG



FORT WAYNE
PARKS AND
RECREATION



HONEYWELL
ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE January 27, 2026

**Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Announces New Performance
Presented by Honeywell Arts & Entertainment**
Tickets go on sale Friday, January 30, at 10 a.m.

Fort Wayne, Ind. – Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation adds a new show to its lineup at the Foellinger Theatre. Honeywell Arts & Entertainment presents UB40 on Sunday, October 4, 2026, at the Foellinger Theatre. Tickets go on sale Friday, January 30, at 10 a.m. and will be available online at [ticketmaster.com](https://www.ticketmaster.com) or in person at the Parks and Recreation Department, 705 East State Blvd.

UB40: The Unstoppable Tour 2026 – Sun., October 4, at 6:00 p.m.

UB40 is one of the most successful British groups of all time, having sold more than 100 million albums worldwide. Their global No. 1 hits include “Red Red Wine” and “(I Can’t Help) Falling in Love With You,” along with U.S. Top 10 favorites “Here I Am (Come and Take Me)” and “The Way You Do The Things You Do.” The reggae/pop legends continue to perform their iconic catalog alongside songs from their 45th-anniversary album, *UB45*.

About the Foellinger Theatre

The Foellinger Theatre in Franke Park was constructed in 1949 as a gift to the community from Helene Foellinger in memory of her father, Oscar G. Foellinger, former publisher of the Fort Wayne News Sentinel. The Theatre was designed to provide a unique type of entertainment space—an informal, open-air community gathering and performing area, molded into a grassy hillside in the park. For more information about the Foellinger Theatre, please visit fortwayneparks.org.

Media Contact: April McCampbell | april.mccampbell@cityoffortwayne.org | (260) 427-6024

About Honeywell Arts & Entertainment

Honeywell Arts & Entertainment encompasses the full range of arts opportunities and venues of The Honeywell Foundation, a nonprofit public charity based in Wabash, Indiana. The organization is dedicated to providing arts, education, and entertainment for all through live entertainment, movies, arts education, cultural events, culinary experiences, Honeywell Arts Academy, and more. Offerings take place at eight venues including the Honeywell Center, Honeywell House, Eagles Theatre, Charley Creek Inn, Charley Creek Gardens, Dr. James Ford Historic Home, Clarkson House, and 13-24 Drive In. Honeywell Arts & Entertainment partners with a network of venues throughout the region to further the reach of live entertainment programming. Honeywell Arts & Entertainment programs and activities are made possible by generous donors and in part by Arts United of Greater Fort Wayne; the Indiana Arts Commission, a state agency; and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. For more information about Honeywell Arts & Entertainment, please visit honeywellarts.org.

Media Contact: Jessica Bott | pr@honeywellarts.org | (260) 274-1429

Inclement Weather Procedure: Any program changes, facility closures or other weather-related adjustments will be posted to the FWPRD social media pages and website. If the Mayor declares an emergency, all Parks and Recreation facilities and programs will be closed or canceled.