

North Township NAVIGATOR

YOUR GUIDE TO NEWS AND SERVICES IN EAST CHICAGO, HAMMOND, HIGHLAND, MUNSTER AND WHITING • FALL 2012

\$1.9 MILLION FUELS DIAL-A-RIDE

The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission has awarded North Township \$1.9 million to expand Dial-a-Ride transit service for the next three years.

It is a short-term answer to the hopes and prayers of North Township Trustee Frank Mrvan, who had been looking for funding to ramp up Dial-a-Ride after Hammond-based easygo bus service ceased operations in June.

“We plan to enhance Dial-a-Ride by increasing our hours and the number of vehicles on the road,” Mrvan said. “We take our responsibility to provide reliable transportation for residents of North Township very seriously.”

NIPRC Transportation Planner Belinda Petrosky said 26,000 to 30,000 riders per month used the now-defunct easygo service. NIPRC funding for Dial-A-Ride will come from the region's share of federal Congestion Mitigation Air Quality program dollars.

Petrosky said the township may be able to tap new funding sources in 2015, but all other transit programs require a 20 percent match.

HOW TO SCHEDULE A TRIP

Dial-a-Ride operates Monday through Friday except holidays. For reservations, email dial-a-ride@ntto.net or call (219) 932-2530. Follow the prompts and push #4.

“We are looking to acquire additional vehicles and staff, both drivers and another scheduler,” Mrvan said. “We will need to look for continued funding. Reliable public transportation is critical to thousands of township residents.”

North Township Transportation Director Jerry Siska said calls to the township's bus service have been on the rise since June. He expects the number of riders will continue to increase following a spike of more than 200 trips each month since easygo ceased operations.

“In August, we made 1,205 trips, the largest monthly total since October 2007, when we had four buses on the road instead of three,” Siska said. “Our schedulers are doing all they can to make the service as efficient as possible and our drivers should be commended.” ▲

CITIZENSHIP, ESL CLASSES

English as a Second Language and Citizenship classes are now being held at the Circle of Services center in Hessville.

Cindy Rivera, employment and education coordinator for North Township, said citizenship classes will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays while ESL classes will be held from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

You may enroll for either program at the Circle of Services building, 2835-165th St. For information, call (219) 803-0659.

BRIDGE RECONSTRUCTION

Reconstruction of the Indianapolis Boulevard bridge in Highland is scheduled to be completed in November.

The project, designed to make the road safer by dramatically lowering the bridge deck and reconfiguring the curve, has hampered traffic in and around Wicker Memorial Park for the last seven months.

“There are always a few hurdles when you have a road project of that magnitude,” North Township Trustee Frank Mrvan said. “The results have been well worth it.”

OAK HILL CEMETERY GETS LONG-OVERDUE TLC

Ownership of Oak Hill Cemetery has been legally transferred to North Township and, with it, responsibility to correct decades of neglect.

Township Trustee Frank Mrvan said he is grateful to volunteers from the Calumet Region Civil War Preservation Project and First Baptist Church in Hammond for assisting in the general clean-up and identification of grave sites.

Marc Chase, Times investigations editor and member of the local Civil War preservation group, said he became aware of the deplorable condition of Oak Hill under the former owners when he was working on a series of articles about

Indiana's involvement in the Civil War. Chase became interested in doing what he could to remember former soldiers, who are buried there.

“The goal of our group is to seek out and replace worn out, damaged and missing gravestones of Civil War veterans throughout Northwest Indiana. There are dozens of soldiers whose last resting place is Oak Hill cemetery,” Chase said. “As part of that effort, we have gotten to know the genealogy and the stories of many of these individuals.”

By the end of the year, Chase said he plans to have 11 new grave markers at Oak Hill. ▲



WE'RE HERE TO HELP YOU! FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT US AT NORTHTOWNSHIPTRUSTEE.COM.



FRANK MRVAN
 North Township Trustee
 (219) 932-2530
 fjmrvan@comcast.net



LORI POLGAR
 Director of Operations
 (219) 932-2530, ext. 324
 polgarl@ntto.net



RICHARD J. NOVAK
 Board member
 novakr@ntto.net



RALPH FLORES JR.
 Board member
 floresr@ntto.net



PETE AUKSEL
 Board member
 auksel@ntto.net

EAST CHICAGO OFFICE

2105 Broadway, East Chicago, Indiana 46312

Phone: (219) 398-2435 Fax: (219) 397-2190

Office Hours: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Friday; closed Mondays.

HAMMOND OFFICE

5947 Hohman Ave., Hammond, Indiana 46320

Phone: (219) 932-2530 Fax: (219) 937-4412

Office Hours: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday; closed Fridays

HESSVILLE OFFICE

2738 165th St., Hammond, Indiana 46323

Phone: (219) 803.0659 Fax: (219) xxx-xxxx

Office Hours: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday; closed Fridays

NEWS TIP? STORY IDEA?

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 northtownship@theideafactory.us.com

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SENIORS ENJOY ARRAY OF ACTIVITIES

Seniors in North Township get the VIP treatment every day of the year. Township Trustee Frank Mrvan wouldn't have it any other way.

"I enjoy spending time with our seniors at our monthly activities and love to get feedback on what we can do better," Mrvan said. "We have thousands of seniors who participate in activities throughout the year. I credit the success of these popular programs to Projects Coordinator Dennis Simala and Senior Special Event Supervisor Eleanor Uribe. These two have worked to create a senior's program we are all very proud of."

Simala coordinates senior lunches while Uribe is the township's senior special events coordinator.

SENIOR LUNCHEONS

Every North Township resident 60 or older is eligible to attend monthly luncheons at Wicker Park Social Center in Highland.

Luncheons feature speakers and entertainers such as financial experts, physicians, representatives from the Alzheimer's Association and the Humane Society. Indiana Secretary of State Connie Lawson is the guest speaker in November.

"It doesn't cost anything to belong to our senior's program," Simala said. "Any senior who wants to come to lunch simply needs to call one week in advance. We typically have about 240 individuals who attend and there are 1,400 in the program."

WHAT'S ON THE MENU?

OCTOBER LUNCHEON and FLU SHOTS: Kick off fall at noon Oct. 17 and get your flu shot, too! Lunch features salad, beef stew /vegetables over noodles and chocolate cake. Includes bread and butter, coffee or hot tea.

THANKSGIVING LUNCHEON: This year's feast begins at noon Nov. 14 and features Thanksgiving fare including chicken noodle soup, roasted turkey breast, stuffing, mashed potatoes, corn, cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie with whipped cream. Includes bread and butter, coffee or hot tea.

INFO: Reservations are \$5 and should be made one week in advance. Call (219) 932-2530 and press 2.

SENIOR EVENTS

Uribe is convinced she has the best job on the planet. She loves that she gets to come to work each day to plan events for the township's seniors.

Whether it's a trip to Shipshewanna, the ever-popular Four-Winds Casino or crooning to the songs reminiscent of the Big Band era, Uribe not only plans events, she takes reservations, makes centerpieces and chaperones every excursion.

"I've gotten to know my seniors so well, I know which ones I'll see cutting a rug at our dinner dances or signing up for our casino trips," Uribe said. "Our goal is for everyone to have fun and we've never been disappointed." ▲

LETTER FROM THE NORTH TOWNSHIP TRUSTEE



We have so many wonderful things to be thankful for as we continue to grow services

We enjoyed a spectacular summer at North Township and are preparing for an equally busy autumn. The calendar is already full of activities at Wicker Park and programs at our Circle of Services center in Hessville.

Educational opportunities abound at the Circle of Services with evening citizenship and English as a Second Language classes and the Hammond Police gang series. Read about these programs inside this newsletter, check out our website or simply drop in at the center to find out what's new.

We have the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission to thank for funding to expand our Dial-a-Ride transit service for the next three years.

That will mean additional buses and hours to get you to your destinations. Our staff has been working overtime to accommodate nearly 200 more requests per month.

In August, it was my pleasure to host the soldiers and families from the 113th Battalion for a day of fun. We enjoyed a picnic, round of golf and plenty of activities. In November, we give thanks to an estimated 40,000 region soldiers who have returned from battle. At the township, we are working on a number of initiatives to assist our returning soldiers in any way we can. Stay tuned for more information.

FRANK J. MRVAN
 North Township Trustee



AUTUMN IN THE PARK

There nothing quite like a crisp fall day at Wicker Memorial Park. Enjoy our 18-hole golf course, 3 miles of scenic trails, volleyball/tennis courts, our one-of-a-kind dog run, playground and banquet facilities amid autumn's colorful splendor.

SCENIC TRAILS

The 2.5-mile trail that runs along the perimeter of the park is perfect for the avid walker, runner or bicyclist. The half-mile inner trail takes you on a scenic tour of the park, volleyball courts and playground. All trails are paved and open from dawn to dusk.

DOG RUN

Conveniently located along Indianapolis Boulevard, the Dog Run is open every day dawn to dusk. It has been so well used, the township is securing funding to double its size. Look for improvements in 2013!

GOLF COURSE

If you're looking for a challenging and beautifully maintained 18-hole golf course, you've come to the right place! This par 72 course offers tree-lined fairways, a practice green and driving range. For more information or to schedule a tee time before the snow flies, call the Pro Shop at (219) 838-9809

TENNIS AND VOLLEYBALL COURTS

The park features five tennis courts and three volleyball courts for the community to enjoy. In need of a tennis lesson? Call our park office at (219) 838-3420 to sign up or receive information on our tennis camps.

BANQUET FACILITIES

Looking for a place to host your wedding, retirement party or meeting? Our banquet facilities are perfect for you. To make an appointment to view our spaces, call Bridget at (219) 923-3830. For rental fees and catering, visit our caterer's website at www.diningsolutionswickerpark.com.



Around the Township

Highland

SPECIAL UNITY EVENT

The Unity Event presents Miss Saigon. This partnership of the Carnegie Arts Center, Highland High School and South Shore Orchestra allows students to experience a large-scale production while working with professional actors, directors and designers.

WHEN: 7 p.m. November 2

WHERE: Monbeck Auditorium at Highland High School

TICKETS: \$14 in advance, \$20 at the door, \$50 for premiere seating with meet-and-greet.

INFO: Visit www.theunityevent.org

Hammond

A CHRISTMAS STORY

This annual exhibit features six animated displays depicting scenes from A Christmas Story. The displays were first showcased in the windows of Macy's in New York City. Kids also can make crafts and write letters to Santa.

WHEN: November 10 to January 6

WHERE: Indiana Welcome Museum, 7770 Corrine Drive, Hammond

INFO: Call (800) ALL-LAKE or visit www.southshorecva.com

Munster

PUMPKINS, WITCHES AND HAYRIDES! OH MY!

This family-friendly event features hayrides, a pumpkin patch, bounce houses, face painting, balloons, trick-or-treating and costume contests.

WHEN: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. October 6

RAIN DATE: October 7

WHERE: Centennial Park

INFO: Call (219) 836-7275

East Chicago

ANNUAL 5K RUN/WALK

The 4th Annual 5k Run/Walk encourages runners and walkers of all fitness levels to join the East Chicago Parks and Recreation Department for a day of health, fitness, teamwork and community pride.

WHEN: 9 a.m. November 17

WHERE: Block Junior High School, 2700 Cardinal Drive, East Chicago

REGISTRATION: \$18 registration must be postmarked by Friday, Nov. 2

INFO: Call Fran Nowacki at East Chicago Parks at (219) 391-8476 or visit www.eastchicago.com

Whiting

OKTOBERFEST

This annual festival features contests, entertainment, food, arts and crafts! Enjoy the sounds of live "Oompah" bands while you grab a brew with your crew in the Bier Garten and stuff yourself silly with sausage, brats, cabbage, noodles and schnitzel.

WHEN: 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. October 6

WHERE: 119th Street, Whiting

INFO: Call (219) 659-0292 or visit www.whitingindiana.com



COVERED BRIDGE TOUR

Join us on this day-long bus trip to visit central Indiana's fabled covered bridges while enjoying the festivities and artisan shops set up for the occasion.

WHEN: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 18

WHERE: Brown County, Indiana

FEE: \$35 per person; deadline is Oct. 11

SENIOR HALLOWEEN DANCE

It's time to do the Monster Mash, the boogie-woogie and even the hip hop. Arrive in costume (optional) and let your fellow high-steppers guess who's hiding behind that mask. Prizes will be awarded. Pete Carlo Four will provided the entertainment.

WHEN: 1 to 4 p.m. Monday, Oct. 22

WHERE: Wicker Park Social Center, Highland

FEE: \$8 per person

FOUR WINDS CASINO TRIP

Roll the dice, letting Lady Luck guide you to fame, fortune or at least a rollicking good time on this trip to New Buffalo, Michigan.

WHEN: 9 to 4 p.m. Friday, Oct. 26

WHERE: Four Winds Casino, New Buffalo, MI

FEE: \$26 per person. Upon arrival at the casino, you will receive a \$15 slot credit and a \$10 food credit. Deadline to register is Oct. 18.

LEGACY GIRLS DINNER-SHOW

Close your eyes and let these upstarts take you back to swing and the boogie-woogie songs made famous by the Andrews Sisters.

WHEN: 1 to 4 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 8

WHERE: Wicker Park Social Center, Highland

FEE: \$20 includes dinner and show

TURKEY BINGO

Grab a friend and trot on over to Wicker Park for an afternoon of fun. Every winner gets a gift card good for a turkey at a local grocer!

WHEN: noon to 3 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 15

WHERE: Wicker Park Social Center, Highland

FEE: Free

FOUR WINDS CASINO TRIP

We'll test our luck again – weather permitting – and make a second trip to Four Winds Casino.

WHEN: 9 to 4 p.m. Friday, Nov. 16

WHERE: Four Winds Casino, New Buffalo, MI

FEE: \$26 per person. Upon arrival at the casino, you will receive a \$15 slot credit and a \$10 food credit. Deadline to register is Nov. 5.

RESERVATIONS: For more information or to make reservations for any of these events, please call Special Event Supervisor Eleanor Uribe at (219) 313-3934 or email uribee@ntto.net.



Honoring our VETERANS

President Calvin Coolidge dedicated Wicker Memorial Park in 1927 to the doughboys of World War I and all of the soldiers who followed.

As the person in charge of the 300-acre park, North Township Trustee Frank Mrvan ensures it remains dedicated to the region's veterans.

"Our veterans sacrifice so much for all of us when they leave their families to go to battle – sometimes it is their limbs, other times, it's their mental capacity," Mrvan said. "It is important to me to assist those who return in any way I can."

Those efforts include a golf outing and picnic for soldiers and their families from Valparaiso's 113th battalion each year, the Victory for Veterans Memorial Ride, a celebration every Veteran's Day and maintenance of the eternal flame, located on park property near the intersection of Ridge Road and Indianapolis Boulevard.

VETERANS ACTION COALITION

Mrvan thought that wasn't enough and four months ago began work as one of the founding members of the Northwest Indiana Veterans Action Coalition, one of the first groups to merge former military members and civilians to improve the lives of soldiers returning from battle.

"It is the very least I can do," Mrvan said. "Our returning soldiers need our help."

A SPECIAL WELCOME HOME

When May 18, 2013 rolls around, Pat O'Donnell hopes there are thousands of local residents on hand at Wicker Memorial Park to give our soldiers a long-overdue welcome home.

O'Donnell, a disabled Vietnam War veteran and chairman of the NWI Veterans Action Coalition, said the day dedicated to thanking local soldiers was the brainchild of Michael Sparber, whose son served in Afghanistan.

"We have about 40,000 veterans in Lake County alone," O'Donnell said. "Life is tough for a great many veterans and suicide rates among returning soldiers is at an all-time high. What we are hoping to do is to get as many soldiers and their families as possible to the park on that day and we're hoping the community comes to the park too, to shake their hands, look them in the eye and say, 'thanks.'"

ETERNAL FLAME BURNS BRIGHTER

The eternal flame, which has been keeping vigil at Wicker Memorial Park for nearly 20 years is burning brighter, thanks to the efforts of at least 1,000 local veterans, who ride their motorcycles each September to raise funds. Proceeds from the Veterans Memorial Ride are donated to North Township and earmarked for the eternal flame. Donations from last year helped fund an engraving which has been etched in iron and which states, "For those who served."



"As the inhabitants of the North Township repair this park in the years to come, as they are reinvigorated in body and mind by its use, as they are moved by the memory of the heroic deeds of those to whom it is dedicated, may they become the partakers and promoters of a more noble, more exalted, more inspired American life." – CALVIN COOLIDGE



Cindy Rivera, left, employment and education coordinator for North Township, helps families gather food items donated by the Food Bank.

FREE FOOD DISTRIBUTION

Nearly 2,000 residents representing 600 North Township families received free food in September compliments of the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana's food pantry.

More than 10 tons of food was distributed to residents who lined up at Wicker Park five hours before the give-away began.

North Township Trustee Frank Mrvan thanked the Food Bank and McDonald's operators of Northwest Indiana, who support the food distribution effort.

"We appreciate their efforts," he said. "For too many families, these donations are all that prevents them from going hungry."

GANG PREVENTION SERIES

In partnership with North Township, the Hammond Police Department is offering classes to residents who want to better understand criminal street gangs.

The program examines "big picture" of criminal street gangs, how they flourish, who they target, police response and more.

WHEN: 6:30 to 8:15 p.m. Wednesdays throughout October

WHERE: Hessville Circle of Services Building, 2835 165th St., Hammond

INFO: Call (219) 932-2530 to register.

SERVICE PROVIDER BOOK

A booklet of service providers is available for the asking. It features information on community organizations, churches and departments within local government that provide low- or no-cost assistance for counseling, clothing, emergency shelter, prescriptions, child care and gas vouchers.

The directory is available in book format at the Trustee's Hammond and East Chicago offices or digital format online at www.northtownshiptrustee.com.

INFO: For more information or to be listed in the Service Providers Directory, please call (219) 932-2530, ext. 331.



Frank J. Mrvan



NORTH TOWNSHIP TRUSTEE
BUILDING A STRONGER COMMUNITY

5947 HOHMAN AVENUE
HAMMOND, INDIANA 46320

WE'RE HERE TO HELP YOU! FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT US AT NORTHTOWNSHIPTRUSTEE.COM.

HALLOWEEN SPOOKTACULAR

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27

2 PM - 5 PM

WICKER PARK PAVILION
2215 RIDGE ROAD
HIGHLAND

TRICK OR TREATING
GAMES • PRIZES • HAY RIDES
DJ • BOUNCY HOUSE
PUMPKIN DECORATING

FOR MORE INFORMATION
CALL (219) 932-2530, EXT 331

