

SPECIAL ISSUE 2025

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MAYOR

Thomas B. Hood

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VILLAGE OF GURNEE

325 N. O'PLAINE RD.

Village Hall: **847-599-7500**

Utility Billing: **847-599-7525**

Community Dev.: **847-599-7550**

Police Non-Emergency: **847-599-7000**

Public Works: **847-599-6800**

www.gurnee.il.us



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This newsletter is published by the
Village of Gurnee with supporting content
from Woodland District 50, Gurnee District 56,
Warren Township High School, Gurnee Park
District & the Warren-Newport Public Library.

To provide feedback, please contact:
Apollack@village.gurnee.il.us

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

Dear Residents,

Summer is upon us and the activities that accompany it are here in full force. Whether it is visiting one of our many parks, barbecuing in your backyard or visiting Six Flags, there are many options for us to enjoy this summer.

I am proud of the Village of Gurnee and the country in which we live. Over my lifetime of living in Gurnee, I have met many selfless residents that have been willing to give what they have to help others. I have seen everything from someone giving the proverbial cup of cold water all the way literally giving an organ to save someone's life. I encourage you to keep seeking new and meaningful ways to support and uplift those around you.

My passion is seeing the unique potential in each member of our community and helping them to achieve that. Over the years, I have realized that this usually only occurs when you engage with those around you. Sometimes this can be challenging, as you may have to step outside of your comfort zone to reach out to others. Each of you has so much to offer, it could be time, finances or your special talents in a multitude of different areas. One of the ways you can engage is to participate in a block party in your neighborhood. This is the second year of block party grants in which the Village will cover the first \$500 of costs. It is my hope that you will build relationships with your neighbors and share in each other's gifts.

There are many other opportunities in town that you can participate in that are more formally organized such as service clubs like the Exchange Club, Rotary Club, church organizations, mentor opportunities at the schools and volunteering with a local charity such as Love Inc. A more complete list of opportunities is posted on the Village website. Additionally, the Gurnee Care Commission has just begun meeting to determine the needs that we can address as a community. Opportunities can be as simple as just listening to your neighbor at a block party or getting involved in a local charity. The choice is yours.

So often, we spend our time talking about how or what we should give to others. Frankly, I have found it is harder to receive than to give. We must be vulnerable and share with others if we need help. If you need assistance, feel free to email me at Mayor@village.gurnee.il.us or simply connect with your neighbors. I think you will find that the people of Gurnee are incredibly willing to help. I continue to pray that we enjoy all that God has given to us and to especially appreciate those that He has placed in our lives.

As always, please feel free to reach out to me to discuss whatever you have on your mind.

Sincerely,

Mayor Tom Hood



VILLAGE RECOGNIZES OFFICER OF THE YEAR TOM YENCICH AND CIVILIAN OF THE YEAR HOWARD THOMAS

At the June 2nd Board meeting, the Village recognized two outstanding members of the Gurnee Police Department, Officer of the Year Tom Yencich and Civilian of the Year Howard Thomas. Officer Yencich, a 12-year department veteran, serves as a canine handler and leader among his peers. This

year, he played key roles in life-saving incidents, highlighting his dedication to safety, service, and mentorship. With over 30 years in public safety communications, Howard Thomas is the calm voice behind the scenes. He's a certified Emergency Medical Dispatcher, a Police and Fire dispatcher and often the go-to problem solver when situations get complex. From delivering a baby over the phone to managing critical incidents like structure fires, he brings unmatched professionalism, knowledge and heart to every shift.

GURNEE HONORS HOMETOWN HEROES WITH BANNER RECOGNITION CEREMONY

The Veterans Commission and the community also recently recognized Gurnee's Hometown Heroes by presenting them and their families with their distinguished banners. The program was launched last fall to honor and recognize veterans and service members from the Village who have served in the US Armed Forces or are currently serving, protecting our nation, preserving our democracy and defending the ideals we hold dear.



COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: BETH KESLINKE & LYNN GRANSTROM

The Village is excited to introduce Beth Keslinke and Lynn Granstrom as the co-chairs for the newly formed Gurnee Arts Commission. Beth is a dedicated art teacher at Warren Township High School (WTHS) and a driving force behind the establishment of the WTHS Art Club, which she helped create 12 years ago. The club has since grown to 50 members

and has launched a new chapter of the National Art Honor Society. Under Beth's guidance, WTHS students have painted five murals on campus and one in the community, in addition to participating in numerous events, including the annual Live Arts Festival. Lynn Granstrom is a talented local graphic designer and serves as the Executive Director of the Gurnee Chamber of Commerce. In her role with the Chamber, Lynn has been instrumental in organizing various community events and has successfully increased Chamber membership by over 50%. Her graphic design business works with both Fortune 500 companies and small businesses. In her spare time, Lynn also enjoys designing jewelry, a passion she has pursued for the past 12 years. We look forward to having Beth and Lynn lead us on this exciting journey as the Arts Commission develops this summer!

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Gurnee Days Open Houses

Saturday, August 9, Public Works: 9am to 12pm, Police and Fire: 10am to 12pm

Get a behind-the-scenes look at Gurnee's essential services during our annual Open Houses. Bring the family and explore Public Works, the Fire Department and the Police Department through hands-on activities, demos and more. Kids can experience backhoe digging, a stop drop & roll inflatable, riding in a plow truck and uncovering evidence in the crime lab. Don't miss live demonstrations, including fire safety, hydrant flushing and breakfast with the K9 team. Parking is available at Viking Park, with a free shuttle running between open house locations. Experience the fun while learning more about the teams that keep Gurnee moving forward and safe every day.

Safety Stars and Dilly Bars Back to School Bash

Friday, August 15, 5pm to 7pm, Welton Plaza (Old Grand Avenue)

Join the Gurnee Police Department and community partners for an evening of fun at the annual Safety Stars & Dilly Bars Back to School Bash! This family-friendly event celebrates the start of the school year with games, activities, giveaways and FREE Dilly Bars for the kids, provided by Gurnee Dairy Queen and McCullough Kubota. New this year, enjoy live music while you explore interactive displays and connect with local organizations. Don't miss this energetic kickoff to the school year in the heart of Gurnee!

VILLAGE MEETINGS

Village Board

August 4
August 18
August 25
September 8
September 22
September 29
October 6

Planning and Zoning Board

August 6
August 20
September 3
September 17
October 8

Village Board and Planning and Zoning Board meetings are held at the Gurnee Village Hall (325 N. O'Plaine Road) and begin at 7pm. Village Board meetings take place on Mondays and Planning and Zoning Board meetings on Wednesdays (Schedule Subject to Change)

MORE EVENTS

50-Year Anniversary of Warren Township Historical Society

Saturday, August 9, 1pm to 4pm

The Historical Society will be hosting this celebration at the Mother Rudd Museum! Explore historic artifacts, walk in the steps of pioneers, meet the men and women who shaped Gurnee and enjoy music, dancing, snacks and history!

Gurnee Mayor's Golf Benefit

Friday, August 22, 10am

Join Mayor Tom Hood for a day on the golf course on Friday, August 22nd at Bittersweet Golf Club located at 875 Almond Road! The benefit is for BiG Great Lakes whose goal is to "change the way the world views adults with special needs."

Training in the Park

Join us for "Training in the Park" this September. The Police, Fire and Public Works Departments are excited to engage with the community during their evening drills. Training and demonstrations will take place at various Gurnee parks over two weeks, commencing at 6pm. The schedule is as follows:
September 9, Vineyard Park
September 10, Betty Russell Park
September 11, Christine Thompson Park
September 23, Ravinia Park
September 24, Southridge Park
September 25, Hunt Club Park

Bonfire and Brews: Taste of Gurnee

Saturday, September 20, 7pm to 11pm

Bittersweet Golf Club - Free Event (Ages 21+)



JOIN US FOR A
WEEKEND OF **FUN!**

AUGUST 9-10

SATURDAY, AUGUST 9: 12-11PM

LIVE MUSIC	FOOD BOOTHS & TRUCKS	FIREWORKS
RIB FEST	KIDS ZONE	AND MORE!



SATURDAY
TIM GLEASON
COUNTRY BAND
5:15-7:15PM



SATURDAY
FIREWORKS
9:00-9:30PM



SATURDAY
ARRA
8:00-9:00PM
9:30-10:30PM



SUNDAY
PARADE
12:00-1:00PM



SUNDAY
90s POP
NATION
1:00-2:30PM

SUNDAY, AUGUST 10: 11AM-3PM

PARADE	FOOD BOOTHS & TRUCKS	FARMERS MARKET
CAR SHOW	COMMUNITY ART SHOW	AND MORE!



Scan this QR Code or visit
www.gurneedays.com!



WOODLAND DISTRICT 50

ABOUT DISTRICT 50

Woodland Community Consolidated School District 50 is an elementary school district covering early childhood through Grade 8. As one of the largest school districts in the State of Illinois, it has approximately 4,600 students enrolled from all of unincorporated Gages Lake and Wildwood and parts of Gurnee, Grayslake, Park City, Third Lake, Old Mill Creek, Wadsworth, Lindenhurst and Waukegan.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

President - Mrs. Brianna Powvens
Vice-President - Mrs. Amy Sabor
Secretary - Mr. Joel Zwiefelhofer
Board Member - Dr. Carla Little
Board Member - Ms. Julia Plescia
Board Member - Ms. Keri Rasmussen
Board Member - Mr. Michael Senol

SUPERINTENDENT

Dr. Robert Machak



SCHOOLS

Woodland Primary

17366 W. Gages Lake Rd., Gages Lake
847-984-8700

Woodland Elementary School

17261 W. Gages Lake Rd., Gages Lake
847-984-8800

Woodland Intermediate School

1115 N. Hunt Club Rd., Gurnee
847-596-5900

Woodland Middle School

7000 Washington St., Gurnee
847-856-3400

EVERYONE BELONGS AT #LIFEINTHEW

Woodland School District 50 invites you to explore the world of #LifeintheW! With four schools, and approximately 4,600 students, there is always something exciting happening in the halls of Woodland. Our learning community is built on a commitment to belonging and inclusion, the foundation of Woodland's Strategic Plan. We offer a variety of programs to enhance learning opportunities and experiences in the classroom and beyond for all learners. There is something for everyone "in the W".

In the classroom, Woodland students engage in rigorous academic instruction, as well as dedicated time for social-emotional learning led by passionate teachers and staff. Our students come from diverse backgrounds, speaking almost 40 languages besides English at home. From classroom libraries to school assemblies that celebrate the cultural diversity of each school, the Woodland curriculum offers students regular opportunities to see themselves in lessons and feel empowered to lend their voice and choice in the way they demonstrate their understanding of academic standards.



At Woodland, we also understand that students who are engaged in our learning community beyond the classroom will have higher attendance rates and better academic performance. Woodland offers a competitive interscholastic athletic program (we will be adding Girls' Flag Football and eSports in the 2025-26 school year), and we offer a robust menu of interest- and academics-based clubs and activities at each of our schools, most of which are generated through suggestion by the students themselves.



Our belief is that students who feel connected to their school community will achieve more academically. Three years into the Strategic Plan, that is definitely the case at Woodland. Since 2022, the percentage of Woodland students in grades 3-8 who meet or exceed proficiency standards on the Illinois Assessment of Readiness has increased by 48.7% in Reading and by 10.1% in Math. In this same period, the percentage of multi-language learners at Woodland meeting English language proficiency standards is double the state of Illinois average.

At Woodland, when everyone belongs, everyone thrives. That is the power of #LifeintheW.

WOODLAND WELCOMES NEW ADMINISTRATORS TO THE #LIFEINTHEW TEAM!

The Woodland D50 Board of Education recently approved the hiring of new administrative leaders to help support the Woodland learning community.

- Woodland is excited to welcome Nicole "Niki" Scofield as the new Woodland Primary Principal. Ms. Scofield most recently served as the Director of Oak Terrace Elementary School's Early Childhood Program in Highwood, IL.
- Dr. Elizabeth Sanchez-Szepesi will step into her new role as the Director of Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability. Dr. Sanchez-Szepesi previously served as Woodland's Director of Language Acquisition.

- Ms. Yamilette Sosa will be Woodland's new Director of Language Acquisition. Ms. Sosa comes to Woodland from Oswego CUSD 308 School District where she served as the Assistant Director of Multilingual Learners.
- Tia Martinez will be taking on a new role as the Director of Educational Supports & Innovation. Mrs. Martinez previously held the position of Assistant Principal at Woodland Middle School.
- Katie Satterlee will join the Woodland learning community as the new Assistant Principal at Woodland Middle School. Mrs. Satterlee most recently worked for McHenry Middle School.
- Dr. Cretia Kirkwood will be the new Assistant Principal/Early Childhood Supervisor at Woodland Primary. Dr. Kirkwood previously served as an Assistant Principal in School District U-46.

WOODLAND IS JUST A CLICK AWAY!

- Woodland Website: Visit our Website today to learn more about all of our programs and services. www.dist50.net
- Facebook and Instagram: Follow to see the everyday magic in the classrooms, celebrate our amazing students and staff, and enjoy fun moments from #LifeintheW. facebook.com/WoodlandDistrict50 instagram.com/woodlanddistrict50
- LinkedIn: Stay up to date on district news, job openings, staff spotlights, and professional achievements. linkedin.com/company/woodland-school-district-50
- YouTube: Watch Board of Education Meetings on Woodland Live youtube.com/@woodlandlive9671
- Woodland Wildcast Podcast: Join Woodland D50's Superintendent, Dr. Machak, as he sits down with community members, staff, and students to share the stories that shape our Woodland learning community. woodlandwildcast.podbean.com

HIRING IN THE W!

We want you to join the #LifeintheW team! We are currently hiring for the 2025-2026 school year. Applications are now being accepted for Educators, Student Support Services, Bus Drivers, Substitute/Guest Teachers, Paraprofessionals, Maintenance/Custodial staff, and Playground Supervisors. These are very important positions that support our students every day. To learn more about these positions and to view all of our current career opportunities, go to www.dist50.net and click on the "Careers" tab.



WOODLAND'S DUAL LANGUAGE PROGRAM CELEBRATES A MILESTONE YEAR

This year marks an exciting milestone for Woodland's Dual Language program. The program started 13 years ago, which means the first cohort of Woodland Dual Language students graduated from high school this year. Many former Woodland students earned official recognition for their bilingual achievements by graduating with a seal of biliteracy.

One-third of Woodland students are enrolled in the Dual Language Program, which serves students from Pre-K through 8th grade. These students are supported by more than 100 Spanish and English-speaking educators. Throughout their educational journey, students in the Dual Language program gain the skills to listen, speak, read, and write in two languages while developing a deep appreciation for diverse cultures.

Watch the Dual Language Video: Scan the QR Code



WOODLAND'S PARENT MENTORS MAKE AN IMPACT

The Parent Mentor program is entering its fourth year at Woodland, and we are currently recruiting new Mentors. The program brings Woodland parents into the classroom as trained volunteers who support both teachers and students. In the classroom, they provide one-on-one student support, lead small group activities, assist teachers, and participate in weekly workshops to build their skills. After completing 100 hours of service, mentors receive a stipend and the program provides numerous opportunities to further their training in the field of education.

Congratulations to the Woodland Parent Mentor Program for receiving a Distinguished Service Award from INSPRA (Illinois Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association)! This award recognizes individuals and groups who partner with their school's communications team to serve as ambassadors for public education.

Parent Mentor Program: dist50.net/page/parent-mentor-program



SPECIAL RECOGNITION OF WOODLAND AWARD WINNERS

Lake Region Honors Sean Murphy as Assistant Principal of the Year

The Illinois Principals Association has named Sean Murphy as the Assistant Principal of the Year for the Lake Region. Mr. Murphy is an Assistant Principal at Woodland Middle School serving the staff and the students in 8th grade. He has been part of the Woodland Learning community as an Assistant Principal for 18 years. Mr. Murphy received this recognition from his peers for his efforts in positively shaping the climate and culture at the Middle School and being active in the community.



Congratulations to Ricardo Gómez Pimentel, Teacher of the Year!

Ricardo Gómez Pimentel has been named the Woodland District 50 winner of the Village of Gurnee's Teacher of the Year Award for 2024-2025. A 4th grade Dual Language Spanish teacher at Woodland Intermediate, Mr. Gómez came to Woodland in 2019 from Spain through the Visiting International Teacher Program. Mr. Gómez is known for his humor, creativity, and deep commitment to students and colleagues. His classroom is welcoming, engaging, and supportive—a space where students feel valued and inspired.



Woodland Teacher of the Year Finalists:

- Elena Villalba, Woodland Primary
- Holly Harms, Woodland Elementary
- Kristin Rath, Woodland Middle School

Congratulations to Amanda Medina, Staff Member of the Year!

Amanda Medina is the Woodland District 50 winner of the Village of Gurnee's Staff Member of the Year Award for the 2024-2025 School Year. Working as a Dispatcher in the Transportation Department, Mrs. Medina has been part of Woodland since 2011. Amanda was chosen for her exceptional dedication, inclusivity, and ability to foster community within her team. As a Spanish speaker, she ensures non-English speaking families feel supported and valued. Known for her reliability and positive influence, Amanda inspires others to do their best.



Woodland Staff Member of the Year Finalists:

- Stacey Leeper, Woodland Primary
- Cathy Bohren, Woodland Elementary
- Isabel Rodriguez, Woodland Intermediate
- Laura Duker, Woodland Middle School
- William Tangney, Cadre Sub/District

Congratulations to Rick McManaman, Woodland's Bus Driver of the Year!

Congratulations to Rick McManaman for being named Woodland's School Bus Driver of the Year! Since joining the team in 2017, Rick has shown outstanding dedication, perfect attendance, and a consistently kind and helpful spirit. His readiness to assist others, along with his strong commitment to safety and excellence, truly makes him worthy of this honor. At Woodland, he found his passion working with students with special needs and is well known for going above and beyond for the kids on his bus.



WOODLAND'S PARENT UNIVERSITY: EMPOWERING FAMILIES, SUPPORTING STUDENTS

Parent University is a program designed to give families in the community access to tools and resources that can support student success at home. Whether it's turning everyday activities into learning experiences, stress management for busy families, or sessions about youth health and safety issues, Parent University offers something for everyone. We believe that parent and guardian involvement is a vital part of a child's academic success and personal growth, and through the Parent University we are ready to support that journey every step of the way. These events are open to community members! Save the Date for these upcoming Parent University events:

- October 18, 2025
- April 11, 2026

Parent University: dist50.net/page/parent-university

DISTRICT FINANCES

Credit Ratings History Moody's and Standard & Poor (S&P): 2024 AA+, 2023 AA+, 2022 AA+, 2021 AA+, 2020 AA+, 2019 AA+, and 2019-2024 Aa2 Moody's. The ratings from Moody's indicate high quality, and the Standard & Poor's ratings indicate a strong capacity to meet financial obligations. Financial Recognition Illinois State Board of Education: 2024 Recognition, 2023 Recognition, 2022 Recognition, 2021 Recognition, 2020 Recognition, and 2019 Review.

District 50 has maintained the highest level of "Financial Recognition Status" for its financial profile for five of the last six school years.

ABOUT DISTRICT 56

Gurnee School District 56 is an elementary school district covering early childhood through Grade 8. It services portions of Gurnee, Wadsworth, Waukegan and Beach Park.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Mr. Mark Pos, President
Dr. Jim Blockinger, Vice-President
Mrs. Odie Pahl, Secretary
Mrs. Becky Kotsinis, Treasurer
Mr. Germin Castellanos, Member
Mrs. Mandi Florip, Member
Mr. Cesar Garcia, Member

SUPERINTENDENT

Dr. Luis Correa



SCHOOLS

Spaulding School

2000 Belle Plaine Rd., Gurnee
847-662-3701

Prairie Trail School

13600 W. Wadsworth Rd., Wadsworth
847-623-4333

River Trail School

333 N. O'Plaine Rd., Gurnee
847-249-6253

Viking Middle School

4460 Old Grand Ave., Gurnee
847-336-2108

GURNEE SCHOOL DISTRICT 56

Welcoming Our New Principal and Assistant Principal

We are excited to officially introduce the newest members of our leadership team, who will serve as the Principal and Assistant Principal of Viking School, starting with the 2025–2026 school year.



Welcoming Dominique Geocariss – New Principal of Viking Middle School

Dominique Geocariss will serve as the new Principal at Viking Middle School. She brings both classroom and administrative experience to the role, with over two decades of experience in education, as a Department Chair at Grayslake Central High School, an Assistant Lead Teacher, and a Spanish teacher at Warren Township High School. In addition to her leadership qualifications, Dominique holds additional endorsements in ESL and Bilingual Education, which reflect her

dedication to fostering inclusive and effective learning environments for all students. A champion of curriculum innovation and student-centered instructional practices, she is eager to return to the Gurnee community, ready to partner with Viking Middle School's students, staff, and families.

Please join us in giving a warm welcome to Principal Mrs. Geocariss!

Welcome, Megan Goedken – Viking Middle School's New Assistant Principal

Gurnee District 56 is excited to welcome Megan Goedken as the new Assistant Principal of Viking Middle School! A proud Gurnee resident, Mrs. Goedken lives in the community with her husband and their two middle school-aged sons. Now, she's thrilled to have the opportunity to serve the very neighborhood she calls home.

With 18 years of experience in education, Mrs. Goedken brings a diverse background to her new role. She has taught English at Warren Township High School, led alternative education programs for the ROE Safe School Program, and worked in Special Education at SEDOL. Most recently, she served as Principal at Kenneth Murphy Elementary School in Beach Park.

Please join us in giving a warm welcome to Assistant Principal Mrs. Goedken!



Celebrating Gurnee's 2025 Teacher of the Year: Mrs. Ilene Kile

Each year, the Village of Gurnee proudly recognizes an exceptional educator through the long-standing tradition of the Gurnee Teacher of the Year award. This year, we are thrilled to honor Mrs. Ilene Kile from Prairie Trail School as the 2025 recipient!

Mrs. Kile discovered her passion for teaching as early as fourth grade and has spent the past 30+ years turning that dream into reality. For the past 28 years, she has served the students and families of Gurnee District 56—most of them at Prairie Trail

(formerly O'Plaine)—with unwavering dedication and heart.

Even as she prepares to retire at the end of this school year, Mrs. Kile continues to embody the spirit of a lifelong learner.

In her first year of co-teaching, she consistently sought ways to better support all students and foster an inclusive learning environment. Known for her can-do attitude, she tackles every challenge head-on and is always ready to lend a helping hand to colleagues and students alike. One of Mrs. Kile's greatest gifts is her ability to build meaningful, positive relationships with students. She believes deeply in their academic potential—and, more importantly, in the kind of people they can become. Her teaching style is engaging and hands-on, always tailored to meet the diverse needs of her classroom. Beyond her teaching duties, Mrs. Kile enriches school life by leading the American Girl Club, planning creative school events, and organizing staff activities that help nurture the warm, family-like culture at Prairie Trail. Throughout her career, Mrs. Kile has been a shining example of joy, hope, and the lasting impact a passionate educator can have on an entire school community. Please join us in thanking and congratulating Mrs. Ilene Kile on this well-deserved recognition!

Honoring Our First Gurnee Support Staff of the Year: Ms. Danielle Bonngard

This year, the Village of Gurnee introduced a new award category to celebrate the essential contributions of school support staff—the Gurnee Support Staff of the Year. We are proud to announce that Ms. Danielle Bonngard, a dedicated 1:1 aide from Prairie Trail School, is the first-ever recipient of this honor. In just her first year at Prairie Trail, Ms. Bonngard has made an extraordinary impact. She brings heart, humor, and high expectations to everything she does. Whether helping students through major milestones or offering encouragement during everyday challenges, Danielle approaches each moment with compassion, strength, and a contagious laugh that brightens any room. Her dedication goes far beyond the classroom. From offering one-on-one academic and emotional support to assisting with school-wide events like grade-level musicals, she is a constant source of positivity and care. Danielle holds her students—and herself—to the highest standards, nurturing their independence while ensuring they feel seen, supported, and capable of success. She doesn't hesitate to get down on the floor for a meaningful conversation, and she consistently pushes students to grow academically, socially, and functionally while always maintaining a deeply inclusive approach. Her unwavering belief in her students' potential helps them build the confidence they need to thrive. In a short amount of time, Ms. Bonngard has not only become a trusted presence for students but has also built strong relationships with staff across the building. Her energy, dedication, and joyful spirit have made her an unforgettable part of the Prairie Trail community.



GURNEE SCHOOL DISTRICT 56 CELEBRATIONS



“Mrs. Sutter’s preschool classes took an exciting journey through the pages of *Off We Go to Mexico!* by Laurie Krebs and Christopher Corr. After exploring the cultural highlights of Mexico featured in the book, the students extended their learning by creating their own colorful guitars—just like the mariachi musicians they read about!”

“Kindergarten through second-grade students proudly saved their Superpower Tickets to participate in a special event—Donuts with the Detective! They had the exciting opportunity to spend time with our beloved School Resource Officer, Officer Thomas, take a ride in mini police cars, and explore the inside of a real police vehicle. It was a fun-filled experience the students will never forget!”



“This year, Prairie Trail School proudly hosted a vibrant Black History Month celebration filled with meaningful activities, delicious food, lively dancing, and student-created artwork. The event honored the rich history, culture, and contributions of African Americans, while bringing the school community together in a spirit of learning and celebration.”

IESA TRACK AND FIELD STATE FINALS

In May, five Viking athletes proudly competed at the IESA State Track Meet in East Peoria. Their hard work and dedication throughout the season earned them special recognition at the May Board of Education meeting. We are incredibly proud of these student-athletes for their commitment and for being outstanding representatives of our district!



**STATE FINALS 2025**
CLASS 4A TRACK & FIELD

**8TH GRADE
200M DASH
KHYRII
COLEMAN**
**NEW
SCHOOL
RECORD
24.19**

**STATE FINALS 2025**
CLASS 4A TRACK & FIELD

**7TH GRADERS
ADRIEL, HADDIN, YAYRA & KAYDEN
4X200 RELAY**
**4X400 RELAY
NEW SCHOOL RECORD
4:09.97**

**STATE FINALS 2025**
CLASS 4A TRACK & FIELD

**7TH GRADER
KAYDEN HUDGINS**
**THE FIRST VIKING ATHLETE TO QUALIFY
FOR STATE IN FOUR RUNNING EVENTS!**
**100M DASH
200M DASH
4X200 RELAY
4X400 RELAY**

**STATE FINALS 2025**
CLASS 4A TRACK & FIELD

**7TH GRADE
200M DASH
KAYDEN
HUDGINS**
**NEW
SCHOOL
RECORD
24.58**


DISTRICT FINANCES

Budgeting and Report

Copies of Gurnee District 56's budget, teacher's contract and required compensation disclosures are all available on the District's website. Go to www.d56.org, select "Menu," then select "Business Office". Residents with questions can contact the District's Offices at 847-336-0800.

District Finances

Gurnee District 56 has been working hard to ensure that all of its facilities are optimal for student learning in accordance with the Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan for maintenance of our buildings. The five-year plan includes security enhancements, HVAC system replacement, upgrades to our parking lots, new software to maximize energy efficiency, as well as other maintenance items to achieve the most efficient use of energy. The District's facility upgrades and improvements are part of the Working Cash bond the District had borrowed, and all projects are on time and on or below budget.

WARREN TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL

ABOUT DISTRICT 121

Warren Township High School (WTHS) District 121 is a comprehensive four-year high school with an enrollment of approximately 3,600 students. Warren is one of the largest high schools in Lake County, Illinois.

District 121 covers over 50 square miles and includes all or part of Beach Park, Gages Lake, Grandwood Park, Grayslake, Gurnee, Millburn, Old Mill Creek, Park City, Third Lake, Wadsworth, Waukegan and Wildwood.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Tony DeMonte, President
Beth Pope, Vice President
Natalia Alvarez Martinez, Secretary
John R. Anderson
Stephen E. Carlson
Dr. Tasia Fields
Susan Squires

SUPERINTENDENT

Dr. Daniel S. Woestman



FACILITIES

Warren Township High School is one high school district with two campuses. Each campus houses two grade levels. The O'Plaine Campus generally houses 9th and 10th grades and the Almond Campus generally houses 11th and 12th grades.

Almond Campus

34090 Almond Road, Gurnee
847-662-1400

O'Plaine Campus

500 N. O'Plaine Road, Gurnee
847-662-1400

Transportation Center

3801 Swanson Court, Gurnee
847-662-1400

This last year was a significant step for Warren Township High School as we continue to push into the future.

Exciting steps we've taken this year to support students and families include:

1. Hiring a "Family Liaison" position to support improved communication and support for families as they transition to our community high school;
2. Starting a 9th grade peer mentoring program to connect all of our incoming 9th grade students to older students;
3. Visiting award-winning high schools in Tennessee, New York, and California to learn what forward-thinking schools are doing to best prepare students for the real-world.

As we look into the future, it's clear that we need graduates who can enter a highly-skilled workforce, whether it's stepping into the skilled-trades, a medical career, or working in schools. This past year we had over 1,200 students participate in at least one Career and Technical Education (CTE) course, and over 500 enroll in multiple CTE courses.

In addition, after years of conversations regarding the sub-par, decades-old locker room at O'Plaine, the school board approved a new locker room that will improve the facilities for all students in their Physical Education classes and for athletes. Construction for the locker room will begin this fall.

Thank you for your continued support of our community schools,

Dr. Danny Woestman
Superintendent



FINANCIAL INFORMATION

For many years the district delayed repairs and renovations due to the lack of funds. With the improved health of the district's finances, we have prepared a 10- Year Facilities Plan to prioritize projects. Some of the upcoming projects are listed below and on the next page:

1. O'Plaine Campus Locker Room Addition: Many community members know our current locker rooms are located in the lower levels of the school and are subject to flooding and sometimes sewage backup. The new addition will be located at the south end of the school. The addition will house both physical education and athletic locker rooms along with an athletic trainer's room and staff offices. The cost of the project will be paid out of District funds. The anticipated start date for the project is September 1, 2025 with completion in the summer, 2026.

2. The boys swim locker room will be moving up to the first floor of the building next to the pool. The space is currently occupied by the athletic trainer's room. It will be renovated to include showers and lockers for our aquatics programs. When the athletic trainer's room and locker room addition are complete, the renovation for the swim locker room will begin.
3. Other projects planned for this summer and the upcoming school year are Phase III of the O'Plaine campus roof replacement, the Almond campus track resurfacing, new fencing at the O'Plaine campus stadium, replacement of one of the O'Plaine campus HVAC chillers, and refreshing classrooms with new flooring and paint. Many of our student common areas will have new seating and our Almond campus library will have new student reading areas, bookshelves, and an added STEM area.

DIANA ALCALA NAMED WARREN TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL'S Gurnee Teacher of the Year: *Social Worker selected by her colleagues for award from the Village of Gurnee*



Social Worker Diana Alcala has been voted by her colleagues as Warren Township High School's 2024-2025 Gurnee Teacher of the Year.

Each school year, the Village of Gurnee recognizes three Gurnee educators, including one each from Warren Township High School District 121, Gurnee School District 56 and Woodland School District 50. The Gurnee Teacher of the Year receives a \$1,000 honorarium.

Ms. Diana Alcala has served in education for 33 years as a school social worker. Diana joined Warren Township High School in 2004 and for the last 21 years she has been supporting WTHS students, collaborating with school staff, families, and community partners, to ensure that students can access available school and community resources. "In my role as a school social worker, it has been important to me that I provide a safe and trusting environment where every student feels valued, heard and supported," said Ms. Alcala. "I've had the unique privilege of being able to advocate for

students in need while empowering them to grow socially, emotionally and academically, and to maximize their potential."

"I'm fortunate to have worked alongside such dedicated and skilled colleagues at Warren who always put their students first. I've learned so much from this school community, and I'm sincerely appreciative and humbled to receive this award and recognition," says Ms. Alcala.

"Diana is an exceptional resource for our students," said Dr. Danny Woestman, Superintendent of Schools for Warren Township High School District 121. "She is well loved by our staff and families and works tirelessly every day to make sure our community's students are provided support and care."

"Diana possesses a vast knowledge of community resources that greatly benefit our students and their families," said Dr. Laura Kirk, Almond Campus Associate Principal. "Her ability to connect families with necessary support services has proven invaluable, particularly in challenging times. She proactively seeks out resources, collaborates with local organizations to ensure students have access to the help they need, and schedules in-school presentations for the student services department to build a greater understanding of, and a connection to, various community resources. These are a few examples that demonstrate her unwavering commitment to the well-being of our students and their families." Alcala holds a bachelor's degree in Social Welfare from the University of Wisconsin- Whitewater, and a master's degree in Social Work with concentrations in School Social Work and Children and Families. Alcala is also a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the state of Illinois.

OMAR GARCIA NAMED WARREN TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL'S GURNEE SUPPORT STAFF OF THE YEAR: *Support staff member selected by his colleagues for award from the Village of Gurnee*



Support staff member Omar Garcia has been voted by his colleagues as Warren Township High School's 2024-2025 Gurnee Support Staff of the Year.

Each school year, the Village of Gurnee recognizes three Gurnee staff members, including one each from Warren Township High School District 121, Gurnee School District 56 and Woodland School District 50. The Gurnee Support Staff of the Year receives a \$1,000 honorarium.

Omar Garcia joined Warren Township High School in 2008 and for 17 years he has been providing services for our students, staff and facilities. Omar's responsibilities include everything from maintaining building equipment, setting up events, delivering and moving equipment, to offering guidance and physical help to fulfill requests. He greets everyone with a smile and provides assistance with enthusiasm. He is a valued member of the Buildings and Grounds department.

"I am very grateful for all of the opportunities that Warren has given me," said Garcia. "I will carry Warren in my heart for a very long time."

"Omar is an amazing part of our high school," said Dr. Danny Woestman, Superintendent of Schools for Warren Township High School District 121. "He is seen as a reliable, smart, and hardworking individual who continues to grow and serve the district and our community in many ways." "Often, I see Omar going the extra mile to make sure something is done right - so students and staff can have a worry-free experience when they are at school," said David Gregg, Director of Building and Grounds. "Omar will often stay later than his scheduled hours to fix issues with the heating or cooling, to help others set up for events and activities, or to support our athletic teams. No matter what he is doing, you will always see him with a positive attitude and a smile on his face."

"Omar exemplifies the qualities of a Support Staff of the Year honoree: dedication, kindness, and a genuine commitment to helping others," said Mary Storvik, Almond Campus Mathematics Teacher. "His contributions to Almond are immeasurable, and his presence makes our workplace a better and brighter environment for all. He is a shining example of what it means to go above and beyond, and I cannot think of anyone more deserving of this honor."

DISTRICT 121 RECOGNITIONS

Class of 2025 by the Numbers:

- 916 students graduated officially as of May 18, 2025
- 114 Illinois State Scholars
- 3 National Merit Semifinalists/Finalists
- 6 National Merit Commended Students
- 23 National Recognition Program Scholar Students
- 68 Students earned the Seal of Biliteracy
- 59 Students earned the Commendation Towards Biliteracy
- 247 Students graduated with academic honors according to the Cum Laude system

Blue Devil Champions

Notable team athletic achievements

- Football - IHSA State Quarterfinalist
- Boys Golf - NSC Champion
- Girls Volleyball - NSC Co-Champion
- Boys Basketball - IHSA Regional, Sectional, Super-Sectional Champion, IHSA State 2nd Place
- Devilettes - IHSA State Qualifier in Competitive Dance

Notable extracurricular achievements

- Illinois Music Education Association All-State Musicians: Patrick Francisco and Addie Piskiewicz
- Competition Marching Band made finals at the Illinois State University Marching Band Championships for the first time in 14 years and placed 10th overall.
- Jazz Ensemble won Grand Champion at the Mundelein Jazz Invitational
- Wind Symphony was selected to perform at the Superstate Concert Band Festival held at the University of Illinois, performing in the Krannert Great Hall
- Dinner Theatre Production: Theatre Fest Qualifier
- IHSA Short Film State Qualifier
- Avanza, Future Latino Leaders: 1st place for the Varsity team at the Chicano College Bowl Competition
- FBLA National Qualifiers: 27 students qualified to attend the National Leadership Conference in Orlando
- IHSA State Qualifier in Speech: Emilia Lorenzo

WARREN RECOGNIZED NATIONALLY FOR COMMS EFFORTS

This year Warren Township High School was recognized by the National School Public Relations Association as a recipient of two 2025 Publication and Digital Media Excellence Awards. If you live within the district boundaries, you have probably seen our bi-annual newsletters that are mailed to all residents. We try to keep these newsletters concise so busy residents can quickly understand how their taxpayer dollars are being used. See why our newsletters were recognized nationally by reading them at <https://wthshs.info/comms>.

MORE DISTRICT 121 RECOGNITIONS

Notable extracurricular achievements

- Science Olympiad: 13 Individual State Qualifiers
 - 1st Place Entomology: Casper Kirk and Iniya Saravanan
 - 2nd Place Optics: Chloe Aldrin and Kai Dennis
 - 2nd Place Write It Do It: Vandana Sriachutananda and Safa Waris
 - 2nd Place Code Busters: Rohan Nitin Rao, Abhishek Sahoo, and Seth Taukolo
 - 3rd Place Bungee Drop: Soulee Heller and Vandana Sriachutananda
 - 4th Place Dynamic Planet: Kai Dennis and Abhishek Sahoo
 - 5th Place Microbe Mission: Madasyn Tolbert and Rohan Nitin Rao
 - 6th Place Forensics: Chloe Aldrin and Soulee Heller
 - 11th Place Electric Vehicle: Chloe Aldrin and Sidrah Mohiuddin

Notable individual athletic achievements

- Jaxson Davis - Illinois Mr. Basketball, IBCA All-State, Gatorade Player of the Year, Chicago Sun-Times All-Area
- Caleb Noble - IHSA Wrestling State Champion, IHSA All-State
- Aaron Stewart - IHSA Wrestling State Champion, All-State in Football and Wrestling
- Royce Lopez - IHSA Wrestling State 5th Place, IHSA All-State
- Alayna McCormick - IHSA State Diving 10th Place, IHSA All-State, ISDA All-State
- Addison Stanciak - WTHS Female Athlete of the Year, NSC Offensive Player of the Year in Soccer, 2025 Lake County News-Sun Player of the Year
- Jack Wolf - WTHS Male Athlete of the Year
- Kaylee Wilson - IHSA State Qualifier in Cross Country
- Elizabeth Richie - IHSA State Qualifier in Swimming
- Camryn Clark - IHSA State Qualifier in Gymnastics
- Emilia Montes - IHSA State Qualifier in Gymnastics
- Evan DiVito - IHSA State Qualifier in Swimming
- Justice Humphreys - IHSA State Qualifier in Wrestling
- Jonathan Marquez - IHSA State Qualifier in Wrestling
- Anthony Soto - IHSA State Qualifier in Wrestling
- Erin Bush - IHSA State Qualifier in Wrestling
- Sarah Oh - IHSA State Qualifier in Badminton
- Madeline Venisnik - IHSA State Qualifier in Badminton
- Jacob Rasmussen - IHSA Sectional Champion, IHSA State Qualifier in Track & Field
- Mekhi Cabell - IHSA State Qualifier in Track & Field
- Eli Hagstrom - IHSA State Qualifier in Track & Field
- Jayden Johnson - IHSA State Qualifier in Track & Field
- Weston Locke - IHSA State Qualifier in Track & Field
- Nathaniel Welch - IHSA State Qualifier in Track & Field
- Jackson Wiklund - IHSA State Qualifier in Track & Field
- Anna Iwuagwu - IHSA Sectional Champion, IHSA State Qualifier in Track & Field
- Signe Scott - IHSA Sectional Champion, IHSA State Qualifier in Track & Field
- Sanaii Vaughn - IHSA Sectional Champion, IHSA State Qualifier in Track & Field

ABOUT WARREN-NEWPORT PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT

The Warren-Newport Public Library District, founded in 1973, serves a population of approximately 66,000 within a 55-square mile area that covers all or most of Warren and Newport Townships, including Gurnee, Wadsworth, Park City, Wildwood, Grandwood Park, Old Mill Creek, and portions of Grayslake, Millburn, Lake Villa, Libertyville, and Waukegan.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Celeste Flores, Vice President
Wendy Hamilton, Treasurer
Kerry Eagar, Secretary
Bonnie Sutton, Trustee
Lauren Bugner, Trustee
Caroline Costa Beadle, Trustee

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ryan Livergood



WARREN-NEWPORT PUBLIC LIBRARY

224 N. O'Plaine Road
Gurnee, IL 60031
847-244-5150

WARREN-NEWPORT PUBLIC LIBRARY

Our Library, Reimagined

About 15 months ago, we thought we knew our library and our community pretty well. Then we took a hard look through fresh eyes and discovered something surprising: we could be doing so much better. The changes you're seeing today when you visit the Warren-Newport Public Library, from new café seating at the front of the library to new privacy booths, are chapters in a story that started with a simple question: "How can we serve you better?"

The first chapter starts back in May 2024, when we worked with an independent consultant that spent a few days in our library observing how the community interacted with our space and asking WNPL staff questions about what we observe every day. The result of these observations and interviews was a report that was eye-opening to us. There were many key discoveries, including that our service desks were too far from where people needed our help and that our collections were not displayed in ways that help people discover great reads.

The second chapter began in the summer of 2024. We made some immediate changes to the library, such as removing the teen collection from The Vault to make more space for teens and creating a new café area at the front of the library.

As we saw positive outcomes from the changes we made, the third chapter led the Board to formally hire an architect to help us create a facilities improvement plan. A lot of hard work by staff and the Board is leading us to the first major transformation of the library you will begin to see starting in August.

In the current chapter of our story, the changes you will see when you visit the library this August include new service desks positioned where you need help the most and new shelving optimized for easier browsing and discovery of library materials.

There are several more chapters of this story yet to be written. Looking ahead several months, our youth areas will be completely renovated, and the space used by teens and adults will be enhanced as well. The exciting changes we have planned will create wonderful interactive and engaging spaces for youth, a variety of seating options (from quiet study seating to collaborative spaces), and easier browsing as collections will be organized for discovery.

Hopefully there won't be any major plot twists to this story. We will be implementing these changes so as to minimize disruption. We also invite you to provide us feedback as changes are implemented so we can make sure our story results in a happy ending for our entire community.

If the library hasn't been part of your story for a while, now is an exciting time to visit us to see all the changes we are making at WNPL. While you are here, check out our amazing "Library of Things" collection: why buy a telescope or coding robot you might only use once or twice when you can borrow? Or, visit The Workshop, our creative makerspace, and work with our staff to make something cool. From making stickers to printing a 3D file, the only limit on what you can create is your imagination!

In addition, everyone in our community can sign up for a digital library card that allows you access to our wonderful online learning, reading, and entertainment resources. Whether you are looking for an audiobook to listen to while on your morning commute or walking your dog, or want to learn some new skills that will help you create a side business, a digital library card is your key to unlocking a wealth of resources for you to use.

Whether you visit us at the library or online, whether you come to us or we come to you, we hope that you know that WNPL is here for you. We are very excited about all the changes we are making to serve you better!

Until our next story together,

Ryan Livergood

Executive Director

Warren-Newport Public Library District



**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
RYAN LIVERGOOD**

THE WORKSHOP: A CREATIVE HAVEN FOR OUR COMMUNITY

In November 2024, WNPL held a ribbon-cutting and grand opening ceremony for The Workshop, a creative space designed for crafting, imagining, and making. The event was attended by patrons, donors, members of the Friends of WNPL, and government officials. Since its opening, The Workshop has been cherished and utilized by our staff and patrons. We are thrilled to announce that we have extended The Workshop hours to 10am to 7pm Monday-Thursday, while still offering one-on-one appointments on Fridays. We can't wait to see the amazing creations our patrons will come up with.

We are incredibly grateful for the financial support that goes beyond our library's annual budget and makes The Workshop possible for our community. The generous contributions from donors to the 2023 Annual Fund, participants in the 2023 Library After Dark event, and the Friends of WNPL have made this vision a reality.



GET CONNECTED WITH A DIGITAL LIBRARY CARD

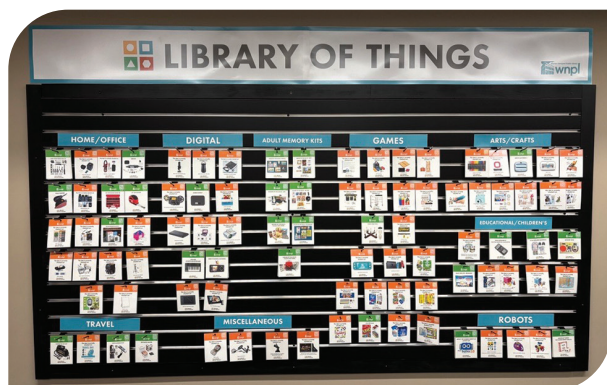
Discover the convenience of our online digital card option, accessible to all members of our community. By signing up for a digital library card, you gain access to a wide array of online learning, reading, and entertainment resources. Borrow eBooks and audiobooks, learn new languages, explore online databases, and take enriching classes all from the comfort of home.

Already a cardholder? You can now easily add your library card to your Apple or Google digital wallet on your phone for quick and convenient access. Join us today and start your digital card journey at wnpl.info/library-cards.

DISCOVER SOMETHING NEW WITH LIBRARY OF THINGS

Your library card gives you access to more than just books; it opens a world of hands-on experiences through our Library of Things collection. Want to see the stars through a telescope? Curious about using a Cricut machine for your next DIY craft? Or do you want to test out a Nintendo Switch before investing in your own?

From practical tools to fun tech and creative gadgets, the Library of Things is the perfect way to explore new hobbies, experiment with new technologies, and expand your horizons...risk free. Explore more by visiting wnpl.info/library-of-things.





Village of Gurnee
325 N. O'Plaine Road
Gurnee, IL 60031

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POSTAL PATRON

SMALL ACTIONS, BIG IMPACT.

Every day, the Warren-Newport Public Library changes lives. Projects and initiatives, such as The Workshop and the Library of Things, enrich our patrons' experiences, strengthen our communities, and create lasting connections between community members. These relationships support the future of our families, friends and neighbors. The Library is very grateful for our communities' support.

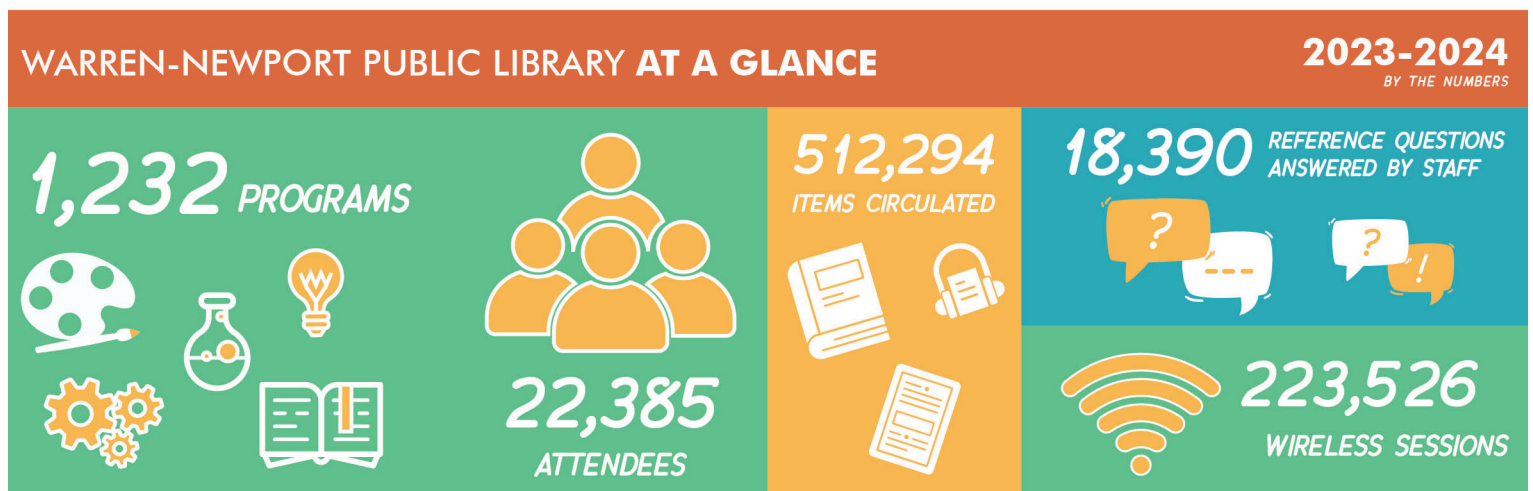
All of us have the potential to change lives and improve our communities by getting involved. For example, the Friends of the Warren-Newport Public Library is a group of community volunteers committed to supporting the Library through fundraising, programming, and raising awareness of library services. Find out more and get involved with your library at www.wnpl.info/friends or www.wnpl.info/support-the-future. Thank you!

- Find Friends of WNPL/Book Ends on Facebook
- Email the Friends at: Friends@wnpl.info
- Book Ends: Stop in the Friends' used bookstore for daily bargains.
- Friends of WNPL Saturday Book Sale happening Saturday, November 8 from 10 am – 2pm
- Friends of WNPL Meeting taking place Thursday, October 23 at 1pm

FRIENDS OF WNPL
SATURDAY SALE

NOVEMBER 8
10AM - 2PM
MEETING ROOMS A&B

Subject to change.



NEW BUSINESSES

Buona Beef/Rainbow Cone
7360 Grand Ave.

**Bob Flowers Studio,
Shop Lana Grace**
Riverside Plaza

Boot Barn, Fashion Q
Gurnee Mills

COMING SOON

Bank of America
6340 Grand Ave.

Haraz Coffee House
5572 Grand Ave.

**Muller Honda
(Renovation)**
7000 Grand Ave.

GURNEE BUSINESS AWARDS

The Village of Gurnee is currently accepting submissions for the "Best of Gurnee" awards. Businesses may be nominated in three categories - Paying It Forward, Bringing Me Home and Special Needs Champion - described in the nomination form. For more details on how to nominate a Gurnee business, please visit our website at www.gurnee.il.us/best-of-gurnee

