

# SOUTH HOLLAND

*Living*

January | February 2024

Welcome to  
**South Holland**  
*Faith, Family & Future*



**State of the Village 2024**



VILLAGE OF SOUTH HOLLAND

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■  
**BLACK  
HISTORY  
MONTH**  
■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

The Village of South Holland celebrates  
Black History Month this February!  
View our visual displays throughout town  
and at [southholland.org](http://southholland.org).





# Mayor's Coffee

**Thursday, March 14  
7:30am**

**South Holland Community Center  
501 E. 170th Street**

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# State OF THE Village

LOOKING BACK AT PROGRESS MADE  
AND FORWARD TO 2024 AND BEYOND

FROM THE DESK OF MAYOR DON A. DE GRAFF:

## Dear Residents and Friends,

I am happy to report that the Village of South Holland is alive and well! In fact, we've never been stronger as a village and as a community of **faith** and **family**. The strength and momentum we've established continue to provide a bright future, and South Holland remains the model community in the Chicago Southland region.

Our recently completed Vision 2022 strategic plan provided us with great people, ever-increasing resources, and new and improved facilities that have allowed our Village to provide the highest quality of essential public services.

I'm very thankful that, both on a fiscal and a calendar year basis, we have again established a balanced budget. I'm proud to say that we as a Village are in the strongest financial position in our history.

We have had more than \$21 million invested in our village during the 2023 calendar year. Our Police and Fire departments have never been stronger in terms of personnel, equipment, and overall performance.

The Village Board and Administration remain united in our approach on how to build and grow our Village, and we are pleased to have now successfully concluded the first year of our strategic plan, **Coming Together 2030**.

Let's take a look back at how each of our departments have made 2023 an outstanding year...



Mayor De Graff and the Village Board of Trustees





Iceless Skating Rink



Pickleball Courts

### **ICELESS SKATING RINK**

South Holland is now home to a charming outdoor skating rink during the winter months. Due to the popularity of the Iceless Skating Rink at the Winter Wonderland event, the Village built its own rink for families to enjoy! Located at the lot behind SoHo Sweets, the rink is constructed using panels of synthetic ice. Skates can be rented on-site for a nominal fee. Hours and more information are available at [southholland.org/skatesoho](https://southholland.org/skatesoho).

### **PICKLEBALL COURTS**

In June, the Village opened the brand-new pickleball courts, located at Paarlberg Park. There are four courts total, each lighted and equipped with a sport court surface. They are open 7am-10pm daily.

### **EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM**

In 2023, the Village launched a new emergency notification system called Smart911. This system is used to communicate with residents during emergencies, and there is an option to receive non-emergency communications as well. To sign up to receive these alerts, visit [southholland.org/smart911](https://southholland.org/smart911).





### NEW VILLAGE APP

In 2023, the Village launched the Village of South Holland app for iOS and Android. The app features information that residents and businesses look for frequently, such as job opportunities, online payments, events, and more. The goal is to help make finding information easier and more accessible by being in the palm of your hand 24/7. The app can be downloaded for free at the Apple store or Google Play store.

### RECRUITMENT VIDEOS

In an effort to attract job candidates for the South Holland Police, Fire and Public Works Departments, we produced quality videos showcasing the work these departments do and featuring testimonials from current employees in those roles. The videos were shared on the Village website, social media and email newsletter, resulting in applicants for all three departments.

### EVENT UPGRADES

The Village's special events team was intentional this year about upgrading the offerings and quality of community-wide events. The Fun Run 5K featured new additions such as a mechanical shark, donut truck, and balloon photo backdrop. At Winter Wonderland, we increased the number of activities available so kids wouldn't have to wait in long lines. Our Independence Day celebration returned to Veterans Memorial Park this year, resulting in a full day of festivities followed by a spectacular fireworks show at our premier park.











### NEW SOFTWARE SYSTEM

The Community Development Department continues modernizing and evolving to better serve customers by implementing a new software suite. This product will consolidate licenses and permits in one location and allow for building permits, and contractor, business, and rental licenses to be applied for online.

### FLOODING PROGRAM RATING

The Community Rating System (CRS) is a voluntary incentive program that recognizes and encourages communities to engage in practices that reduce flood risk beyond federal standards. South Holland is one of only 1,520 communities in the nation that participate, and the Village secured a renewal of its excellent 5 rating, which maintains a 25% flood insurance discount for residents.

### NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

The Village actively pursues abandoned homes with no homeowner or bank remaining to manage them. The NRP program was launched to acquire and sell these homes to qualified rehabbers. In 2023, eight homes were sold, each of which has renovations underway.

### NATIONAL BRANDS COME TO SOUTH HOLLAND

Mint Dentistry and Charley's Cheesesteaks, both national brands, opened in the community in 2023. Mint Dentistry, located at 400 E 162nd St, is a spa-like dental office featuring the latest technology and techniques. Charley's Cheesesteaks is located at 1001 E 162nd St and specializes in Philly Cheesesteaks, real-fruit lemonades and more.







Extrication equipment

### **LIFESAVING TECHNOLOGY**

With the use of Foreign Fire Insurance Funds, we were able to purchase and place in service new vehicle extrication equipment (aka Jaws of Life). This new equipment is all-battery operated and provides the needed strength to safely remove victims from vehicles involved in accidents.

### **NEW VEHICLES**

This year, the Fire Department acquired a new fire engine, allowing us to remove a 23-year-old engine from daily emergency service and dedicate it to training use only. The new fire engine was placed into service at Fire Station 43 this past May after firefighters underwent extensive training on its driving and firefighting capabilities. The engine was designed from the ground up to meet the specific needs of our village's residents and business community. In addition to its firefighting capabilities, the engine is designed to serve as an Advanced Life Support apparatus, meaning we can provide advanced emergency medical services with the personnel and equipment on the engine.

We also placed a newly refurbished ambulance in service this past July. We purchased the vehicle used from Calumet City, then sent it out for refurbishment by the Osage Ambulance Company. Refurbishing a used vehicle, versus buying brand new, saved South Holland taxpayers \$170,000!





New ambulance



New fire engine





New firing range

## FIRING RANGE

In 2023, the South Holland Police Department updated its firing range. The previous was operating in its original state since opening in the mid-1960s. With this restoration, the range was stripped bare and updated with all-new computer technology, soundproof deflection panels, ballistic firing stalls, LED lighting, motorized ballistic carriers, new flooring, and state-of-the-art autonomous and programmable training simulators.

## BODY CAMERAS AND IN-SQUAD CAMERAS

All South Holland police officers have been equipped with the most advanced and modern body cameras on the market. With this new technology, our officers will maintain video and audio coverage throughout their assigned shift while engaged with the public during law enforcement-related activities. This is a great way to enhance transparency with the public as well as assist officers during the prosecutorial process of offenders.



Body cameras

## SELF-REPORTING PROGRAM

The Police Department is partnering with the LexisNexis Co. to implement new state-of-the-art self-reporting technology. This technology provides residents the ability to report minor non-investigatory incidents from the comfort of their own homes. For many of our residents, physically going to the Police Department to report a minor incident can be burdensome and time-consuming. With the new self-reporting program, residents can now choose to file a police report from their smartphone or laptop. Once submitted, each report will be received by a police supervisor, who will then approve the report or request additional information regarding the incident.





### NEW PUBLIC WORKS BUILDING

In October 2023, the South Holland Public Works Department officially moved into its brand-new facility located at 155 W 162nd St. The facility consolidates five separate locations and more than 40 Public Works employees in one location. Having all of our employees, equipment, and materials in one central location will increase efficiency, effectiveness, and accuracy of ordering.

The former Public Works building (behind Village Hall) is now the Village Garage, where all Village vehicles will be serviced. Fleet

maintenance of our vehicles was formerly outsourced, but now that service is operated in-house, saving the Village thousands of taxpayer dollars.

### 2023 STREET RESURFACING

In 2023 the Village utilized Community Development Block Grant funds, State Resurfacing funds, and Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax funds to resurface 3.74 miles of asphalt on 16 streets throughout the village. This program continues our long-standing effort to provide safe streets for the motoring and walking public. All of the resurfaced streets had the asphalt milled and removed and a new top coat of asphalt was installed. Some driveway aprons, sidewalks, and curbs that were damaged were replaced.

### RESTROOM AT PAARLBERG PARK

As part of our commitment to continual improvement of our parks and public services, the Village has built a new restroom facility at Paarlberg Park. The facility is an accessible restroom and will serve the patrons of the playground, pavilion, soccer fields, and pickleball courts starting on April 1, 2024.



Paarlberg Park restroom



## RECREATIONAL SERVICES



Renovated Fitness Center

### POOL/FITNESS CENTER REMODEL

As part of one of the largest renovations in the history of the Community Center, our beautiful space now has a refurbished and repainted aquatics area. In the fitness center, we have added new equipment, carpeting, wall colors, décor, motivational signage, and 8 new televisions (with HDTV coming soon!).

### NEW DIGITAL MESSAGE BOARD

The new digital message board outside the Community Center provides high-quality graphics to display announcements about the Community Center and Village. Freshly painted and backlit, this will serve as a key piece for marketing and communications.

### LED LIGHTING PROJECT

Replacing every fixture throughout the entire building has made for brighter and more effective distribution of light. Smart controls and programmable settings allow the lights in each office and meeting space to be dimmed to specific percentages. An intuitive mobile app allows the lights to be programmed remotely.

### NEW SECURITY CAMERAS

With an additional 53 cameras, the Community Center now has 360-degree coverage of the entire exterior. Internally, additional views were added to allow for maximum coverage of all parts of the building. Updated software allows ease of use when live-viewing or playing back previous footage.

### INDOOR PICKLEBALL

The newest craze sweeping the nation has officially arrived in South Holland. With the installation of outdoor pickleball courts this summer, we received numerous requests for indoor courts for play during the colder months. Three courts have been created in the east end of the Community Center gym. Paddles and balls are available at no cost to our members, their guests, and those who purchase a VSH day pass.





Renovated pool



New digital sign



Indoor pickleball



# My Reflections

FROM  
MAYOR DON DE GRAFF



Unity in the Community

What a year it's been! As you can see, the Village of South Holland had an outstanding 2023. It was made even more special by the launch of our new strategic plan, **Coming Together 2030**.

The purpose of Coming Together 2030 is to unite, support and empower the five key groups that make up the community of South Holland. By coming together, we will strengthen our village, break down barriers, and enhance the life and vitality of South Holland.

The five key groups mentioned above are:

- Churches
- Schools
- Businesses
- Service Organizations
- Neighborhood Groups

Over the past year, several meetings were held with the groups listed above, to brainstorm and strategize ways the groups can form valuable partnerships with each other, as well as strengthen each group's own purpose and membership.



Much progress has been made in just one year of the Coming Together 2030 plan! Here are just a few of the many accomplishments:

- The Block Party Trailer program was launched, where residents can reserve a trailer filled with tables, coolers, road blocks, yard games and more, to host a block party and bring their neighbors together. Representatives from the Neighborhood Groups Committee headed up this program and visited each block party to greet attending residents. The number of block parties doubled this year compared to 2022, as a result of the block party trailers!
- The Village also introduced a new Tool Lending Trailer, which is equipped with tools and equipment for property cleanup and improvement projects and is available for groups to reserve. The South Holland Ministerial Association and a few individual churches used the Tool Lending Trailer for their service projects this summer.
- The Education Commission held a wildly successful Education Fair, which provided valuable resources to parents and students in anticipation of the school year. Many of the Coming Together groups had booths and giveaways at the Education Fair.
- The Garden Club built a sensory garden for the students at ECHO School, and is in talks with several other South Holland schools to do the same.
- The South Holland Ministerial Association hosted Unity in the Community, a worship night at Veterans Park to connect churches with the community.
- The South Holland Business Association granted \$8,750 in scholarships to 7 local college students.
- The South Holland Master Chorale performed for patients at Arden Courts, a memory care facility. They also performed the National Anthem at the Little League season opener and at the Fun Run 5K, as a direct result of Coming Together meetings.
- The Little League and Recreational Services department held a revitalization project at Municipal Park to clean and restore the volleyball sand pit.
- The South Holland Public Library joined forces with the Recreational Services department to host a Summer Reading Finale Pool Party for its top readers.







Education Fair

It is so very encouraging to see all of these groups working together to make a tangible difference for our community. The individuals in our five key groups have shown they are taking this initiative seriously and that they see the impact it can have. I'm eager to see how much more will be accomplished in the remaining six years of Coming Together 2030.

Plans are already underway for further goals and initiatives in 2024 and beyond. We will continue to share them in future editions of *South Holland Living* and on our Village's website and social media. If you want to learn more about Coming Together 2030, please feel free to visit [southholland.org/comingtogether](https://southholland.org/comingtogether).

As we begin 2024, our Village Board and Administration look forward to 'planning the work and working the plan.' We remain committed to our Coming Together 2030 strategic plan, never resting upon our laurels, but excited to continue our momentum to be the absolute best community in which to live and work in the Chicago Southland region.

Don A. De Graff  
Mayor



## WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND SOUTH HOLLAND



### ALL ABOARD! INTRODUCING THE SOUTH HOLLAND EXPRESS

What started as an old riding lawnmower turned into the main attraction at this year's Winter Wonderland. In the past, the kiddie train used at Village events was made of 55-gallon plastic drums with wheels. But this year, the mechanics in the Village's fleet maintenance garage wanted to step it up a notch... or 10.

The visionary team figured out a way to turn the old lawnmower into a beautiful, early-1900s-era train that seats 16 people (kids AND adults) and comes equipped with steam, colored LED lights, and music pumped into each car. It's the type of vehicle that would have cost the Village tens of thousands to purchase already made, but it came at a minor fraction of that cost thanks to the innovation and resourcefulness of the Village's own employees.

We call it the South Holland Express.

At Winter Wonderland, despite battling a soggy surface after hours of rainfall, the South Holland Express was a huge hit, bringing kids and their parents alike to share in the wonder of a train ride in the park. The train will also be used for other Village events such as the 4th of July.

The Village would like to thank the devoted employees who put in many long hours to build the South Holland Express: Robert Aguilar, Mario Pisterzi, Joe Aghimien, Cosme Rios, Grant Gutierrez, Gary Medema, and Ron Tiemens. From the welding to the technology to the pristine paint job, it was a group effort resulting in a masterpiece that will delight families for many years to come.





## OUT AND ABOUT

### FACES FROM EVENTS AROUND THE VILLAGE

#### BREAST CANCER WALK/DRIVE

This year marked the sixth year of the annual Breast Cancer Walk/Drive. Participants walked the path at Veterans Memorial Park or drove in a car caravan down South Park Ave to raise awareness of breast cancer. The day concluded with a ceremony to recognize survivors. Proceeds from this year's event will benefit cancer research at the University of Chicago Medical Centers.



#### MILITARY TRIBUTE

South Holland veterans were honored at the 9th Annual Military Tribute, which took place at the Community Center. The veterans were treated to a lunch followed by a moving tribute and live music.





# OUT AND ABOUT

## FACES FROM EVENTS AROUND THE VILLAGE

### HARVEST FEST

Kids and families were invited to the return of the Harvest Fest held at the Community Center. At this popular event, kids dressed in costume and enjoyed games, candy, craft projects and pumpkin decorating.





# OUT AND ABOUT

## FACES FROM EVENTS AROUND THE VILLAGE

### WINTER WONDERLAND

Children and adults filled Veterans Memorial Park for South Holland's Winter Wonderland. The evening began with a tree lighting, followed by visits with Santa, an iceless skating rink, train rides on the South Holland Express, kid crafts and activities, trolley rides through town, and much more!





# FAITH IN

# Motion

## THE GREAT RESCUER

By Pastor Dan Svendsen, South Holland Fire Chaplain

*This is an abbreviated version of the message Pastor Svendsen gave firefighters at the 2023 Parade of Lights ceremony.*

The notion of rescue is embedded in the very fabric of your vocation. If human life was not worth saving or rescuing, you all would not do what you do.

We see rescuing life as a good thing because life itself is good. Thus, when calls come in, you do not know the details. All you know is that a life is in danger and in need, and therefore you must go and do all that you can do to help.

This conviction is rooted in our Divine Creator: since Almighty God has given life to one of his creatures, it is our responsibility to uphold that life. In other words, if God gives it, it is never our right to unjustly take it. It is, however, our responsibility to preserve it.

We have had a stark reminder recently that not everyone thinks this way. The evil of terrorism works in the exact opposite direction from what emergency personnel do. Terrorists go to an enemy they pretend to know, and without any moral or political cause, ruthlessly take the life of people whom they hate and fear.

Rescuers like firefighters go to a person whom they have never met and likely never will again, and regardless of who that person is or where they are from, we seek to save and uphold their life. Behind this beautiful activity is a conviction that life is precious and not ours to give or take, but only to treasure and uphold.

But saving and rescuing reflects God

activity and character in a deeper way. For He is not only a divine Creator, He is Himself a divine Rescuer of the helpless. He is THE Rescuer!

Psalm 25:5 says, "Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long." But who needs to be saved? Only very few in the course of a day need to be saved by firemen. But every single one of us needs to be saved by God.

Psalm 79:9 says, "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name; deliver us, and atone for our sins, for your name's sake!" And how much was God willing to do in order to save us? Allow me to illustrate how far he went.

The human heart is naturally drawn to a story where a parent can give his or her life for one's own child. We see this as tragic and yet fitting and beautiful: giving your own life for the ones you love most.

Likewise, our hearts are drawn to what firemen do. What good person cannot see



Pastor Dan Svendsen



the intrinsic goodness and love for humanity in those who freely give of themselves to save even those whom they do not know?

But consider God who, in order to save, did something that transcends our ability to understand. He did not give himself to save his Son, he gave his Son to save us.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

This is the greatest rescue story ever told. And none of us can fully live, or make sense of this life, unless we have accepted this hand that God extends to us through his Son. Because no matter how many times one may be saved by heroes like you, one day we don't get the help we need in time.

Thus, hear and consider: God gave what no one else could give, His only-begotten Son, to be our sacrifice for sin. Jesus of Nazareth, a Jewish man of the first century, God's Son, went to Calvary's cross, an undisputed fact of history, to bear our sin and satisfy the justice of God. He rose again, really and truly, a fact that thousands have attempted to disprove, but remains the cornerstone of the faith which bears Christ's name.

He walked this earth as resurrected for 40 days, and he ascended into heaven where he now rules as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And all who simply trust in Him are rescued from every sin, because God is the great Rescuer.

Above every movement of human history, behind times of war and peace, ruling over every moment filled with joyous laughter, and every outcry of pain and anguish, stands the One who rescues and saves every humble person who is willing to reach out and take hold of what is offered to them.

He is the One for whom and by whom and through whom all things exist. Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, and the life.....receive by faith the life that is found only in Him.

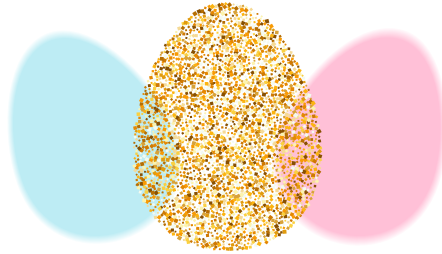




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# *Easter* EGG HUNT

**SATURDAY, MARCH 23 • 11:00 AM**

**Veterans Memorial Park  
500 E 160th Place**

**FREE to kids ages 1-10 years**

**Children are divided into five age groups and will hunt for eggs filled with candy. Bring a basket or paper bag to collect your goodies.**

**Learn more at [southholland.org](http://southholland.org)**



[southholland.org](http://southholland.org)