

# SOUTH HOLLAND

Nov | Dec 2025

*Living*

Winter Warmth & Wellness



# Winter Wonderland

Friday, December 5  
6:00-8:00pm

Veterans Memorial Park  
500 E 160th Place

- JOIN US FOR FUN FAMILY ACTIVITIES INCLUDING:**
- Tree lighting
  - Skating rink
  - Trolley rides
  - Holiday crafts and vendors
  - Cookies and hot chocolate
  - Train rides on the South Holland Express

Photos with Santa are reserved for South Holland residents. Register in advance at the Community Center.

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

## FROM YOUR MAYOR



*Mayor De Graff greets a Veteran at the 2025 Military Tribute*

Dear South Holland Residents and Friends,

It's that special time of year again!

On behalf of our Village Board and Administration, I wish everyone a very Happy Thanksgiving and a Blessed Christmas season!

In this issue, you'll look back on many of our successful fall Village events, which helped us advance our "Coming Together 2030" Strategic

Plan. The sunny and dry autumn of 2025 brought record resident attendance, something for which we are truly thankful.

We are blessed to be known as a community of "Faith, Family, and Future." This season, let's remember how God continues to bless us with food, shelter, safety, and peace. As a faith community, we have both the privilege and responsibility to help those in need. South Holland has long been known for serving others as the hands and feet of Jesus. It is my prayer that we would continue to care for those lacking life's basic resources and the freedom we enjoy.

Let's also give thanks for our U.S. veterans and their families, many of whom we met at our Military Tribute a few weeks ago. Their sacrifice ensures the freedoms we cherish.

As 2025 comes to a close, let's thank God for our dedicated Village team and the hundreds of volunteers who serve through our churches, schools, businesses, and service organizations. Their efforts help our village not just survive, but thrive.

Above all, let us give thanks to God for the true reason for this season—the birth of our Savior, whose love and sacrifice give life meaning and hope.

Wishing everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and a Blessed Christmas season,

**Don A. De Graff**  
Mayor

## VILLAGE BOARD

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Printed in South Holland at Park Press  
930 E 162nd Street

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# 7<sup>th</sup> Annual WINTER SPORTS SHOWCASE

Sunday, December 7 • 12:30-5:30pm

Learn skills in each of the following sports:

**BASEBALL/SOFTBALL • FOOTBALL  
CHEER • VOLLEYBALL  
BASKETBALL • SOCCER**

For boys and girls grades K-6.

**PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED AT  
SOUTHOLLAND.ORG  
OR AT THE COMMUNITY CENTER.**



**South Holland Community Center**  
501 E 170th Street • South Holland, IL 60473  
www.southholland.org • 708 331-2940



## WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND SOUTH HOLLAND



### YARD WASTE PICKUP

As you clear fall leaves from your yard this season, please remember that Homewood Disposal will no longer pick up yard waste from the yard waste carts beginning November 30 through the winter months. Yard waste pickup will resume April 1. From December through March, the yard waste carts can be used for regular garbage.



### SNOW ORDINANCE

As winter weather arrives, please keep in mind the Village's snow ordinance. If snowfall exceeds two inches, no parking is allowed on Village streets. This ensures our plow drivers can clear the roads quickly and safely for everyone.

For easier cleanup, shovel snow to the right side of your driveway (when facing the street). This helps prevent the plows from pushing snow back in.



### SECURITY ALARM PERMITS

From now until January 1, 2026, those with a residential or business security alarm system will need to renew their permit for 2026, or register for a permit if it is a new system. Having a permit ensures that emergency responders have current contact information for the occupants of your home or the managers of your business. Registration/renewal can be done at the South Holland Police Department, 16330 South Park Avenue.

# OUT AND ABOUT

## FACES FROM EVENTS AROUND THE VILLAGE

### CRUISE NIGHT

A warm summer evening set the stage for another memorable Cruise Night on South Park Avenue. Hundreds of visitors strolled the street to admire the classic, custom, antique, and exotic cars on display. The event also featured music, food trucks, and gas card giveaways—creating the perfect blend of nostalgia and community fun.



# OUT AND ABOUT

## FACES FROM EVENTS AROUND THE VILLAGE

### FUN RUN 5K

More than 400 runners and walkers took part in the 2025 Fun Run 5K. This annual event blends fitness with fun, featuring “fun stations” along the route that offered live music, bubbles, balloons, and plenty of encouragement from smiling volunteers. Many participants came decked out in creative costumes. The race raised \$3,000 in support of the youth mentoring organization Intelligent & Ambitious Minds.



# OUT AND ABOUT

## FACES FROM EVENTS AROUND THE VILLAGE

### HARVEST FEST

Families packed the Community Center for this year's Harvest Fest, where kids showed off their costumes and enjoyed an afternoon filled with dancing, games, crafts, and candy. Pumpkin decorating was a big hit, and the top costumes earned special trophies to close out the celebration.



# OUT AND ABOUT

## FACES FROM EVENTS AROUND THE VILLAGE

### BREAST CANCER WALK

The annual Breast Cancer Walk/Drive brought the community together to raise awareness and support. Participants either walked the path at Veterans Memorial Park or joined a car caravan down South Park Avenue, showing their support for those affected by breast cancer. The event concluded with a heartfelt survivors' brunch held at the Community Center.



# OUT AND ABOUT

## FACES FROM EVENTS AROUND THE VILLAGE

### PARADE OF LIGHTS

To commemorate Fire Prevention Week, the South Holland Fire Department hosted its annual Parade of Lights. This unique “lights only” evening parade honors those impacted by fires and recognizes the bravery of firefighters and first responders. The evening began with a brief service at Thorn Creek Reformed Church before the illuminated parade made its way through South Holland and Thornton.



### BLOCK PARTIES

Throughout the summer, South Holland neighborhoods came alive with block parties celebrating community spirit. The Village’s Block Party Trailer—stocked with games, tables, and supplies—helped make each gathering a success. Firefighters stopped by many of the parties, giving kids a chance to cool off by running through the spray of a fire hose. From live music and inflatables to good food and laughter, each block party offered neighbors a chance to connect and have fun.



# CALENDAR OF EVENTS



Winter Wonderland

## November 30 and December 7 SOUTH HOLLAND MASTER CHORALE CHRISTMAS CONCERTS

*Nov 30: 4pm, Christ Our Savior Parish  
880 E 154th St, South Holland*

*Dec 7: 4pm, St. John Neumann Church  
17951 Dixie Ave, Homewood*

The South Holland Master Chorale is hosting two holiday-themed concerts in December. The theme of both concerts is "Holiday Joy & Fanfare," featuring holiday favorites and sing-alongs. The Chicago Gargoyle Brass and organist Mark Sudeith will join the Chorale in this festive Christmas concert.

## December 2 MAYOR'S COFFEE

*7pm, South Holland Community Center  
501 E 170th Street*

Residents can hear from and speak with Mayor Don De Graff. Coffee and refreshments will be served.

## December 5 WINTER WONDERLAND

*6-8pm, Veterans Memorial Park  
500 E 160th Pl*

The annual holiday extravaganza features a tree-lighting ceremony, trolley rides, an iceless skating rink, a craft/movie tent, refreshments and more. Visits with Santa are for South Holland residents only and advance registration is required; register at the Community Center.

## December 6 COFFEE WITH FIREFIGHTERS

*9am, SoHo Cafe, 16129 South Park Ave*  
Residents can meet and talk with members of the South Holland Fire Department on the first Saturday of every month. Note: This month's gathering meets at SoHo Cafe due to construction at the Fire Department.

## December 7 WINTER SPORTS SHOWCASE

*12:30-5:30pm, South Holland Community Center, 501 E 170th St*

Boys and girls in grades K-6 will learn the fundamentals of baseball, softball, basketball, football, soccer, volleyball, and cheer. Registration is required; register at [southholland.org](http://southholland.org) or at the Community Center.

## December 9 COMMUNITY POLICING MEETING

*10am, South Holland Community Center  
501 E 170th St*

The South Holland Police Department hosts a Community Policing Meeting on the second Tuesday of every month, alternating mornings and evenings. This is an opportunity to address any questions or concerns for the Police Department.

## December 12

### SHPD CHRISTMAS BINGO

*11am-2pm, South Holland Community Center, 501 E 170th St*

The South Holland Police Department is inviting residents aged 55+ to enjoy a day of Bingo, food and prizes. Visit [southholland.org](http://southholland.org) to register.

## December 13

### BREAKFAST WITH THE ELVES

*10am-noon, Heritage House, 443 E 157th St*

South Holland residents and their children are invited for breakfast, ornament decorating, and pictures with Santa's elves. Tickets are \$5 for residents, \$8 for non-residents. Spots are limited so register by December 5 at the Community Center or online at [recservices.southholland.org](http://recservices.southholland.org).

## AT THE LIBRARY

The following programs are held at the South Holland Public Library,  
16250 Wausau Ave, unless otherwise indicated.

## November 19

### LITTLE CHEFS, HEALTHY BITES SERIES

*5pm*

Kids and their grownups will make easy, no-cook snacks while building confidence and curiosity around food. We'll use kid-safe tools and make a recipe for Easy-Peasy Apple Crisp. Registration required; supplies are limited.

## December 1-23

### DECEMBER HOLIDAY PHOTO SPOT

Stop by the library and snap a festive family photo in front of our winter-themed backdrop! Patrons are welcome to ask staff to take their picture. This is a simple, fun way to capture the season's holiday spirit.

## December 6

### BUS TRIP TO "ELF THE MUSICAL"

*12-5:30pm*

Enjoy an afternoon of laughter and rediscover your holiday spirit with Buddy, the human elf. This performance, held at the Auditorium Theatre in Chicago, is 2 hours and 30 minutes long with intermission. Open to ages 5+. Registration is required; tickets are \$25 per person.

## December 11

### HOLIDAY UKULELE CLASS

*6:30pm*

Strum into the holiday season with Robin's Nest! This is a beginner ukulele class for young adults and adults. Ukuleles are provided, or bring your own.

# FAITH IN

# Motion

## STEPPING THROUGH THE DOOR YOUR JOURNEY OF FAITH AND PURPOSE

By Rev. Dr. Carmin Frederick-James, Covenant United Church of Christ

Recently, during a powerful prayer call led by Rev. Dr. Patrick L. Daymond, a profound truth echoed in my heart, reminding me of a timeless Chinese proverb: "Teachers open the doors, but you must enter by yourself."

This wisdom resonates so deeply, especially within our vibrant community here in South Holland. We are blessed with incredible leaders, mentors, and spiritual guides—our "teachers"—who generously share their wisdom, open pathways, and illuminate possibilities for us. They point to the doors, but the beautiful, sometimes daunting, act of walking through them is uniquely ours.

What does it look like when a door is open for you? In our daily lives, these "doors" can appear in countless forms. Perhaps it's an invitation to serve on a committee at church, an opportunity to volunteer with a local charity, or even a quiet nudge to reconcile with a loved one. The Bible tells us in Revelation 3:8, "I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut." This is the power of a divine invitation—a door placed before you by God Himself.

For me, a recent open door appeared as an invitation to serve in a new role on our pastoral staff. This new position would allow me to teach more, and also to develop my writing skills. The door was opened for me by a leader, but it was up to me to choose to walk through it, to embrace the challenge, and to trust that God would equip me for the journey. Think about the times someone has encouraged you to use a gift you didn't even realize you possessed, or when a

friend connected you to a resource that perfectly aligned with a need. Those are open doors! Our leaders and community members often create these opportunities, but the next step—that courageous walk of faith or action—is always ours. It's about saying "yes" to growth, "yes" to service, and "yes" to the unique path God is unfolding for you.



**Rev. Dr. Carmin  
Frederick-James**

But what about those times when you feel a door is resolutely shut? We've all been there. We pray, we seek, we knock, and yet, nothing budes. This can be disheartening, even frustrating. However, a closed door is not always a rejection; sometimes, it's divine redirection.

Consider it an invitation to pause, reflect, and perhaps look for another pathway. Is there an adjacent door you hadn't noticed? Is God calling you to prepare more for a future open door? Or perhaps, as my grandmother used to say, "If God closes a door, He opens a window." A closed door might push us to innovate, to develop new skills, or to trust in a way we never have before. It might lead us to create our own door, using the gifts and creativity God has instilled within us.

For instance, I once felt strongly called to a particular ministry role that simply

didn't materialize. It felt like a closed door, and I was disappointed. But in that season of "waiting," I discovered a passion for writing and storytelling, which led me to contribute to publications like *South Holland Living!* The initial closed door wasn't an end; it was a pivot that revealed an entirely new path.

So, my dear friends and neighbors of South Holland, I encourage you today: look around you. Where are the doors

opening in your life—in your relationships, your community, your spiritual walk, your personal growth? And if you encounter a closed one, don't despair. See it as an opportunity to seek God's alternative plan, to grow, and to trust in His perfect timing.

Remember, our teachers, our leaders, and our community will always be there, opening doors. But the adventure, the transformation, and the beautiful journey of stepping through belong entirely to you.

**Annual Holiday**

# Toy Drive

**Accepting toys November 1-December 6**

Local 4109 and the South Holland Fire Department, in conjunction with the Village of South Holland, is collecting new, unwrapped toys for the Annual Holiday Toy Drive. The toys will be donated to Restoration Ministries, whose mission is to rebuild communities by helping men and women who struggle with addictions.

All items donated are made available to parents for purchase with their own money, but at greatly reduced prices. This gives parents a sense of pride by enabling them to buy toys for their children. The proceeds from the toy sale are returned to Restoration Ministries in support of their programs.

All toys must be new and unwrapped. Donations of gift-wrapping paper and bows are also welcomed. The Fire Department will also collect children's gloves and mittens.

## DONATION DROP-OFF SITE

South Holland Village Hall • 16226 Wausau Ave

## QUESTIONS?

Contact the South Holland Fire Department at 708.331.3123.



For more info on Restoration Ministries, visit [restorationministries.net](http://restorationministries.net).

# HOMETOWN

## Harmony

SOUTH HOLLAND TEEN APPEARS ON AMERICA'S GOT TALENT WITH SCHOOL CHOIR

By Carrie Steinweg



*Photos provided by The Davis Connect, Inc.*

There are few things that can match the joy and energy of a youth choir performance. One local high school choir had the opportunity to display its gifts on a national stage as contestants on the popular televised show *America's Got Talent*. The choir of Leo High School in Chicago advanced all the way to finals, recently finishing in fourth place.

Choir Director LaDonna Hill said that AGT first took notice of the choir after some posts of the group



performing went viral, and it was in November of 2024 when she originally had an online meeting with producers. The full process took 10 months. In March, the choir traveled to Los Angeles for five days for the in-person auditions.

Hill retired at the end of the 2024-25 school year after 25 years as a music teacher, but was able to go on to accompany the choir, which numbered 18 students, throughout the competition. "We were surprised by the response from the judges and how they noticed their hard work. It was really a blessing, and I am so excited for the boys," she says, noting that none of the members had prior musical training and several are athletes who haven't had a main focus on music.

The experience provided amazing opportunities for the students, including partnering with other contestants, working with a guest artist, and learning about the production process. Some students who were seniors at the time of the audition had already graduated by the time the show aired, but thanks to the positive exposure they received, their universities allowed them to compete, Hill says.

"Rehearsals were challenging and AGT provided added support. According to state law, we were provided with tutors, and those under age 18 were mandated to do 3 hours of school for five days a week and have a lunch break. We had to work around everything to make sure they met the academic requirements," Hill says.

After auditions, the choir later returned for 12 days for the quarter-final round, then made another trip to appear in the semi-final round. Once they made it to the semi-finals, they knew they'd either be going home or staying for the long haul. Hill told the boys to "Believe enough to pack to stay." They ended up being there for 20 days, finishing in fourth place in the finals.

One of the members of the choir is Derrick Davis III of South Holland, who is currently a senior at Leo High School. "He is a real joy to have in choir and he worked really hard," Hill says of Davis. "I can't imagine him or any of the boys not being successful in what they go on to do."



"It was amazing that I grew up watching the show and that I was on it," says Davis. "I really liked meeting new people and performing with all of my brothers. I treat them like family, and it was good knowing we had so many people supporting us."

Although the process was intense, he says he appreciated the added responsibility, which meant getting up early to report for auditions and choreography sessions.

His favorite performances during the competition were Centuries by Fall Out Boy, and Hall of Fame by The Script. After his graduation next spring, Davis intends to go on to college, although not to pursue music. He hopes to become a professional athlete and grow his photography business.

Davis says the experience has been life-changing not only because of what went into performing, but because he is now meeting strangers who recognize him from the show. He says he'll forever be grateful for his time at Leo High School. "It's been great knowing people are always going to support you and have your back," he says. "It's like a family."💧

# A LASTING LEGACY

COACH STEVE RUZICH HONORED WITH STADIUM DEDICATION AT SOUTH SUBURBAN COLLEGE

By Julia Huisman



Photos provided by Steve Ruzich

It's rare these days for a person to stay with one organization for decades, especially in the fast-changing world of college athletics. Yet Steve Ruzich, head baseball coach and athletic director at South Suburban College (SSC), has done just that. For 40 years, he has led the Bulldogs baseball team, and this fall, the college recognized his remarkable tenure by naming its baseball field after him: Steve Ruzich Stadium.

The decision to rename the field was announced in November 2024, but Coach Ruzich wanted to wait until his former players could gather to celebrate. Each year, SSC hosts the Bulldog Baseball Golf Outing, which brings together alumni, supporters and community members to raise funds for the program. This year's event, the 20th annual golf outing, took place on September 19, followed by the field dedication ceremony on September 20.

"We have a great following with our alumni, and I wanted to be able to share this honor with them," Ruzich says.

WGN news anchor Patrick Elwood served as master of ceremonies for the dedication,



Coach Steve Ruzich (far left) with his family at the field dedication

which also featured heartfelt speeches from SSC leaders, South Holland Mayor Don De Graff, former players, and Coach Ruzich's family. "It was terrific," Ruzich says. "Different speakers, a nice luncheon—it was really done the right way."

Longevity is one thing, but success is another. Over his career, Coach Ruzich has amassed a record of 1,385 wins and 817 losses. He has coached 24 players who were drafted by major league teams, including five who advanced to the big leagues. His achievements have earned him induction into the NJCAA Baseball Coaches Hall of Fame (2014), and in January 2026, he will also join the American Baseball Coaches Association (ABCA) Hall of Fame.

Despite the accolades, Coach Ruzich says the true reward comes from watching his players grow. "We've had a lot of wins here, but honestly, what's most rewarding is when the guys I've coached turn out to be successful in life and have a great family," he says. He admits it's challenging to win at a small college in a small town, but "the success has been there because the kids have bought into the program. We have a tough work ethic; it's a year-round program. The greatest part is to see the kids develop on and off the field."

Mayor De Graff, an avid baseball fan himself, praises Ruzich's contributions to both SSC and South Holland. "I've known Steve as a great baseball coach for a long time," he says. "His dedication to coaching for 40 years is exceptional, and he exemplifies what loyalty and commitment look like. The legacy he's built reflects South Holland's values of family and future, and we in South Holland are very proud of his many years of service."

When asked what's kept him at SSC for 40 years, Coach Ruzich credits the freedom the college has given him to coach his own way—what he calls 'old school tough.' "I make sure the kids are accountable for who they are," he says. "They have to be able to work hard when they come here. I will challenge them a little bit, but it's only for their good."

As for having a stadium named in his honor, Ruzich reflects humbly: "I never got into this thinking about individual accolades. This means so much because it's always been about family here at the college. I went to school here, I played here, my kids went to school here. It's an honor to have something named after you. I've spent many, many years out there on that field, and to see your name up there, it means a lot." 🔥



# Winter Wellness

STAYING ACTIVE AND JOYFUL IN THE COLD MONTHS



As the snow begins to fall and the nights grow longer, it can be tempting to curl up on the couch until spring returns. But here in South Holland, winter is far from a time to hibernate. It's a season to recharge and rediscover the simple joys that keep our minds and bodies thriving.

## **MOVE MORE, FEEL BETTER**

When the temperature drops, so does our motivation to get moving. Yet regular physical activity is one of the best ways to boost energy, improve mood, and strengthen immunity during the colder months. The South Holland Recreational Services Department offers several indoor options to keep residents active. From open gym sessions at the Community Center to group fitness classes designed for all ages, there's something for everyone. "Even 20 minutes of movement can make a big difference," says Ed Stewart, Director of Recreational Services. "We encourage residents to stay consistent, whether that's

lifting weights in the Fitness Center or trying a yoga class with friends.”

And if you prefer the great outdoors, winter can be beautiful in its own right. Bundle up and take a brisk walk through Veterans Memorial Park or along the Calumet River trail. The crisp air and quiet landscape are nature’s invitation to slow down and reflect.

### BEATING THE WINTER BLUES

The darker days of winter can sometimes bring feelings of fatigue or sadness. Staying socially connected and maintaining routines can help. You could grab a cup of coffee with friends at SoHo Cafe, or visit the South Holland Public Library, which offers book clubs, events, and cozy spaces to gather—all excellent ways to lift your spirits.

If you’re struggling with mood changes or stress, don’t hesitate to reach out to local counseling resources or a nearby church. Mental health is as important as physical health, and our village offers compassionate support for both.

### SIMPLE JOYS OF THE SEASON

Winter wellness isn’t just about exercise or nutrition; it’s about embracing moments that bring joy. Try starting a gratitude journal, enjoying a cup of hot chocolate, or calling a neighbor just to check in. Small acts of kindness, to yourself and others, have a ripple effect.

For families, build fun winter rituals: movie nights with blankets and popcorn, snowman contests when weather allows, or indoor “picnic dinners” to break up the routine.

With a few mindful choices, South Holland residents can thrive during this upcoming winter season. Stay active, eat well, reach out, and take time to savor the quieter rhythm of the months ahead. 🔥



### 5 WAYS TO BEAT THE WINTER BLUES IN SOUTH HOLLAND

1. Walk the Community Center Track – Free for members and non-members alike.
2. Join a Library Program – From book clubs to hobby workshops, and even some fitness classes, there’s something new at the South Holland Public Library each month.
3. Visit a Local Cafe – Enjoy warm drinks and friendly faces at SoHo Cafe, Starbucks, or a local eatery.
4. Try a New Fitness Class – The Community Center offers low-impact and family-friendly options.
5. Stay Social – Check in on a neighbor or volunteer at a community event. Connection is powerful medicine.



# BE PART OF THE



## SOHO SHOPS AT TOWN CENTER



South Holland's vibrant new retail destination is taking shape, and there's room for you.

Whether you're an artisan, boutique owner, or visionary start-up, **The SoHo Shops at Town Center** offers the perfect space to grow your business and connect with our community.

Join a dynamic mix of local talent, creative energy, and neighborhood pride, all in the heart of South Holland.

**Now accepting applications for retail tenants!**

**Application Deadline: January 5, 2026**

Don't miss your chance to help shape the future of South Holland's Town Center.



Visit **[SouthHollandShops.com](https://SouthHollandShops.com)** to apply today.

SoHo Shops at Town Center | 16114 South Park Ave | South Holland, Illinois



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# Mayor's Coffee

**Tuesday, December 2  
7:00pm**

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

**Meet Mayor Don De Graff and  
enjoy coffee and refreshments!**



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