

# FOCUS

DECEMBER 2016

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## SPECIAL EDITION

### Thornton Township's "G.A. To Jobs" Program Helps Win State Award

Third time the Township has received this honor



I am extremely pleased to share that Thornton Township was awarded the "Township of the Year Award" at the Township Officials of Illinois Conference held in Springfield recently.

I am very proud of the dedication and hard work our staff exhibits every day to help meet the needs of township residents – helping improve the quality of their daily lives.

Our Food Assistance Center services more than 3,000 families every month and 350 boxes of nutritious food are provided weekly to senior residents who are shut-in. Because state funding for so many programs like senior transportation, health care and more have been cut, Thornton Township has stepped in to fill the void – providing rides for nearly 200 seniors each day to medical appointments, grocery shopping, and other critical service-oriented destinations and offering medical screenings free of charge or for a slight fee to aid seniors in maintaining quality health.

But the program we have initiated to help move families and individuals from General Assistance to full employment is what I believe helped push us over the 'finish line' in getting the prestigious award.

Thornton Township is the largest township in our state and unemployment here and throughout the south suburbs runs higher than the national average.

This is why as Township Supervisor and Chairman of the South Suburban College Board, I moved on creating a collaborative program with SSC to help train and find gainful employment targeting township residents who have been victimized by the economic malaise.

During the past year, over one hundred of our neighbors who had been unemployed have now found meaningful, long-term jobs and are no longer relying on the Township's General Assistance program.

We'll continue to make moving unemployed residents from G.A. to a quality job our top priority. But I am proud of the fact that we have made a real difference in so many lives already.

Sincerely,

Frank M. Zuccarelli  
Thornton Township Supervisor



People working with people.

**Joyce M. Washington,**  
Trustee  
**Gerald "Jerry" Jones,**  
Trustee

**Norbert Cipowski,**  
Trustee  
**Stafford C. Owens,**  
Trustee

**Jacqueline E. Davis-Rivera,**  
Clerk  
**Cassandra Holbert,**  
Assessor C.I.A.O.

**Geary DePue,**  
Highway Commissioner

**Frank M. Zuccarelli,** Supervisor

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# Thornton Township Wins

Thornton Township received the Township of the Year award at the Township Officials of Illinois Annual Education Conference. The township received the award previously in 2004 and 2008.

"We are very proud of the hard work our staff does to provide the highest quality of service to our community," said Frank M. Zuccarelli, Thornton Township supervisor. "Our motto is people working with people and we truly believe that township government is at the ground floor of providing the necessary programs that communities need. We are honored and humbled by this award and that the Township of Illinois recognizes the hard work we have put in this year to help our local residents."

The largest township in Illinois, Thornton Township is made up of all or part of 17 south suburban communities. The township provides a general assistance program offering financial relief for qualified residents. In addition, the township registers voters, helps with homeowners and senior citizen homestead exemption, food assistance

program, free family counseling, after school homework tutoring and weekly senior programs.

Thornton Township received the award for many of the programs that continue to run and expand during the past year. Many state run Meals on Wheels programs have cut down the number of days they offer food with many seniors on long waiting list for services.

But at Thornton Township's Food Assistance Center, they currently serve more than 3,000 families per month with more than 350 boxes of nourishing food delivered each week directly to the homes of senior residents who are shut-ins. The general assistance program team continuously talks to residents and asks them about the type of foods they need.

Because of state funding many organizations can no longer offer transportation services for seniors. Just this year, Senior Services Plus, which was a bus transportation



# Township Of The Year

for seniors, shut down for the first time in 43 years. Some of the Catholic Charities USA around the Chicagoland area had to cut or alter their senior transportation services.

However, the township has filled that void by a record number of rides to medical appointments and grocery stores. The Senior Transportation Department provides trips for the people of the Township that are 60-years of age and older. That population, the "Baby Boomers" over 60, is growing every day. For the last three consecutive years, Senior Transportation had broken records for completed trips every year. The township averages picking up more than 160 seniors each weekday.

In addition, with unemployment higher than the national average in south suburban cities and towns, the township has helped match unemployed residents with purposeful, long-term job opportunities. During the past eighteen months, around 110 township residents have found meaningful, long-term positions and are no longer on General Assistance.

Understanding that in times of budget crunches, collaboration becomes even more important, this aggressive effort is being done in collaboration with South Suburban College, which provides skills-building workshops to help participants develop and present better job interview capabilities. The township also runs GED programs where students can receive more personal attention because we focus on smaller class sizes.

The township also has a robust youth and adult program that features free family counseling and after school tutoring and programs in Dolton and Riverdale.

"We understand the importance of working together for a common goal," added Zuccarelli. "We are here to serve the people and make sure that we build each other up and we build our communities up. We are able to accomplish this because we have a strong board of trustees who care about the community and a strong management team in all areas working to make sure we provide the best services possible."



# Department Highlights

A great township team needs great people. It starts with a great leader in Frank M. Zuccarelli, then our quality and caring trustees and finally our strong management team. That's how we won Illinois Township of the Year. Here are just some of the highlights from our departments this year.

## YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES

### Partnership with students and police

Through our Faith, Dignity, and Respect Initiative, we trained more than 1,200 local high school juniors and seniors on community policing issues. We equipped students with the skills and tools necessary to keep them, their friends and families safe during interactions with law enforcement officers. It was an opportunity to bridge the gap of communication and improve trust and relationships between the community and law enforcement.

### After school

Due to the passion of staff and the structure of the program, we have almost 100 percent parent involvement in our after-school program. This is one of the secrets to the success because involved and empowered parents are the first line of educators in our children's lives.

### Days in the Park

About 20 young adults served over 5,700 Township residents at our Days in the Park bringing the community together for food, fellowship and fun.

### Summer enrichment program

Our multi-layered program helped students and their families both culturally and academically. They were trained to become effective future leaders and taught how to become professionals. Our adult staff also mentored younger staff.

### Community supports our referendums

Our Youth and Family Services department is very excited that the voters of Thornton Township overwhelmingly endorsed the three referendum questions on the ballot this November. The issues dealt with developing or enhancing our educational, mental and psychiatric health, and homelessness services.



## GENERAL ASSISTANCE AND FOOD ASSISTANCE CENTER

### Over 110 people back to work

Over the last 18 months, the General Assistance Department in partnership with South Suburban College began an aggressive job readiness program. This partnership helped train our General Assistance clients in various industries and find them part time and full time jobs.

### Serving families in need

The Food Assistance Center served more than 20,800 families this year, an increase of 2,200 from last year. With the ongoing budget crisis in Springfield, we continue to feel the local affects in families that are struggling to keep food on their tables.

### Holiday baskets

Once again Thornton Township is ensuring that families are not going to bed hungry during the holidays. We distributed more than 8,000 Thanksgiving and holiday baskets with our community partners distributed boxes in Dolton, Harvey, Calumet City, South Holland, Lansing, Dixmoor, Phoenix, Markham, Hazel Crest, Riverdale, and Thornton Township.

### LIHEAP assistance available

Our General Assistance Department is processing applications for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. Area residents can come to either the Township Hall in South Holland or the Food Assistance Center in Harvey to meet with trained staff that will walk them through the application process. Thornton Township is currently processing about 50 applications a day between the two locations.



# CLERK AND ASSESSOR'S OFFICE

## Early voting

For the first time, Thornton Township served as an early voting site. More than 9,400 people came to the township building and voted during the two-week stretch before Election Day. We thank everyone who came in and participated as well as the Election judges who helped make everything run smoothly.

## Voter outreach

The Clerk's Office was aggressive in young voter outreach attending South Suburban College and District 205 to register students for voting.

## Property Tax Refund program

We have distributed checks to more than 12,000 residents with the end of the year figures likely to increase past 14,000 residents. Also, our assessor created property tax refund seminar in Harvey, Calumet City, South Holland, Riverdale, Dolton, and other towns to help residents get acquainted with the process.



# SENIOR SERVICES / ZAP

## Senior Protection program

The Senior Center hosted a six-week Tom J. Dart Senior Citizen Law Enforcement Academy. The sessions ranged from personal safety, home protection, identify theft and telemarketing frauds to seniors learning about law enforcement agency operations such as 911 vs non-emergency calls, K-9 demonstrations and an overview of the Gang Crime and Narcotic units.

## Senior Lunches and exercises

The township continued to offer exercise classes and senior lunch programs every weekday. Hundreds of seniors take part in the program each week

## Senior Lawn care

Averaged cutting almost 1,000 lawns per week



# OPERATIONS

## Holiday joy

Thornton Township will give more than 4,500 wrapped gifts to almost 1,200 children this holiday season as part of its Christmas Care program.

## Home Handicap ramps

Thornton Township built handicap ramps on several residential homes in the community.

## More parking for seniors

The township acquired property located adjacent to our Senior/ Youth & Family Services Center in Riverdale so that next spring we can add additional parking spaces.

## Transportation

**Record numbers** – 2016 saw the highest number of senior riders in the township history. We average picking up more than 160 seniors each weekday for medical, grocery or errand appointments

**New buses** – This year, the township has purchased six passenger buses, including several new ones in November, to help make the rides for seniors more convenient.

**Paved roads** – on 182nd and 184th streets in Lansing along with work done on Paxton and Clyde avenues in unincorporated roads of Dolton, Calumet City and South Holland.



# COMMUNITY RELATIONS

## Diversity programs

The department continued to offer the community a variety of programs including Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration, the Taste of Thornton Township, Women of Honor, the Spirit of Thornton Township, and the Martin Luther King celebration. Community Relations also organizes Veterans Day, Steppers event, township picnics and participate in more than 10 village parades.



# Your Elected Officials

These men and women work hard every day in front and behind-the-scenes serving the public throughout the year. They get to know as many people as possible so here is your opportunity to get to know them.



## Frank M. Zuccarelli, Supervisor

**How long have you been a board member?** 23 years.

**What do you enjoy most about public service?** When you get an opportunity to make a real difference in someone's life that sticks with you. Local government is where you can make that impact.

**Your favorite Township event:** Spirit of Thornton Township and Christmas Care program.

**Your favorite movie:** Scent of a Woman and Pretty Woman.

**Your favorite musical artist:** The Beatles and Tina Turner.

**Last bad movie you saw or the worse movie you ever saw:** Mars Attacks!

**One fact about you that people might not know:** I was in the Air Force.



## Stafford Owens, Trustee

**How long have you been a board member?** 3 years.

**What do you enjoy most about public service?** I like giving back and serving the community because the community has done so much for me.

**Your favorite Township event:** Taste of Thornton Township and the community parades.

**Your favorite movie:** Gladiator.

**Your favorite musical artist:** Bill Withers.

**Last bad movie you saw or the worse movie you ever saw:** The Last Airbender by M. Night Shyamalan.

**One fact about you that people might not know:** My second favorite movie is the Lion King.



## Joyce Washington, Trustee

**How long have you been a board member?** 19 years.

**What do you enjoy most about public service?** The best part is having the ability to be involved in the lives of children and senior citizens and make a positive impact.

**Your favorite Township event:** I enjoy the senior luncheons and senior parties and our Christmas Care toy giveaway.

**Your favorite movie:** The Color Purple.

**Your favorite musical artist:** Luther Vandross and Nina Simone.

**Last bad movie you saw or the worse movie you ever saw:** The Exorcist.

**One fact about you that people might not know:** I collect antique teapots.



## Geary "Pepe" DePue, Highway Commissioner

**How long have you been an elected office?** 2 years.

**What do you enjoy most about public service?** I enjoy volunteering at the senior and special services dances. Just seeing the happiness our events bring gives me happiness.

**Your favorite Township event:** Holiday Dinner.

**Your favorite movie:** The Godfather.

**Your favorite musical artist:** Sly and the Family Stone.

**Last bad movie you saw or the worst movie you saw:** The English Patient.

**One fact about you that people might not know:** I collect muscle cars.



## Nobert Cipowski, Trustee

**How long have you been a board member?** 11 years.

**What do you enjoy most about public service?** I love working with the seniors. Just talking to them and finding out what their needs are helps me serve them better.

**Your favorite Township event:** Taste of Thornton Township, Days in Park.

**Your favorite movie:** From Here to Eternity.

**Your favorite musical artist:** Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash.

**Last bad movie you saw or the worst movie you saw:** The Monument Men.

**One fact about you that people might not know:** I have been a season ticket holder for Notre Dame football for 50 years.



## Jacqueline E. Davis, Clerk

**How long have you been an elected office?** 13 years.

**What do you enjoy most about public service?** Whenever I see the joy that our programs offer people whether that is getting a food box or just answering a question, it is the reason why I got into public service.

**Your favorite Township event:** Taste of Thornton Township, Special Services dances.

**Your favorite movie:** The Robe.

**Your favorite musical artist:** John Coltrane and Miles Davis.

**Last bad movie you saw or the worst movie you saw:** Ghost.

**One fact about you that people might not know:** I really wish I could sing.



## Gerald "Jerry" Jones, Trustee

**How long have you been a board member?** 4 Years

**What do you enjoy most about public service?** The ability to serve the great residents of Thornton Township is my favorite part. I enjoy having sitting down, meeting and having conversations with our residents.

**Your favorite Township event:** Days in the Parks.

**Your favorite movie:** Hoosiers

**Your favorite musical artist:** Spinners.

**Last bad movie you saw or the worst movie you saw:** Trespass.

**One fact about you that people might not know:** I have coached the Dolton Bears for 25 years and I remember every one of the kids' names.



## Cassandra Holbert, Assessor

**How long have you been an elected official?** 3 years.

**What do you enjoy most about public service?** I really enjoy making people feel good about a situation and giving them some type of hope and inspiration.

**Your favorite Township event:** Taste of Thornton Township.

**Your favorite movie:** Equalizer.

**Your favorite musical artist:** Michael Jackson.

**Last bad movie you saw or the worse movie you ever saw:** Saw.

**One fact about you that people might not know:** Friends say I am a fantastic cook.



# VETERAN'S DAY



**T**hornton Township Supervisor Frank M. Zuccarelli understands first-hand the importance of veterans. As an Air Force man, he served his country and admires the men and women who have served our country. The township hosted a Veterans Day event attended by more than 150 people.

"The strength of America has always been its people. We have men and women of all cultures and religions who volunteer to go into service," said Zuccarelli. "We understand it's a great responsibility and honor to serve a country that has done so much for us. People even today risk their lives trying to come to America."

Each veteran who came to the event received a personal pin that was placed on their jacket by Zuccarelli. One of those men include: Walter "Wally" O'Keefe, 97, a third division Army medic, who was at the Battle of Normandy in World War II.

"I'm proud to live someplace like Thornton Township that cares about veterans," said O'Keefe. "Supervisor Zuccarelli has always cared for us and you can tell this means a lot to him."

Guest speaker Sean Baumgartner, general manager of the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery, spoke about the importance of our veterans.

"We celebrate the service and sacrifice of the nearly 22 million people who have served our military," said Baumgartner, who served in the active and reserved units of the U.S. Air Force as well as the Air National Guard. "Individually and collectively veterans are the lifeblood of democracy. As President Barack Obama once said when the world is threatened it calls on America and we call on our troops."

This holiday started as a day to reflect upon the heroism of those who died in our country's service, and was originally called Armistice Day. It fell on Nov. 11 because that is the anniversary of the signing of the Armistice that ended World War I. However, in 1954, the holiday was changed to "Veterans Day" to account for all veterans in all wars.

"I'm proud to be among a group of men and women who have shown determination and integrity," said Zuccarelli. "In the military, they teach you to work together as one team. Even though we live in times that are sometimes divided, we must have that same attitude that we learned in the military of respecting each other, fighting for each other and loving each other. It is the only way we can truly be stronger together."

## Employee Service Award

Every year, we celebrate our employees who have reached milestones in the years of service to our community.

<b>ROBERT HUNT JR.</b>	5YRS	FINANCE
<b>DERONZO McNeal</b>	5YRS	ZAP
<b>DEUANE WILLIAMS</b>	5YRS	SENIOR TRANSPORTATION
<b>GUADALUPE GONZALEZ</b>	10YRS	FINANCE
<b>LARRY LAWRENCE</b>	15YRS	YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES
<b>ALICE DAVIS</b>	15YRS	YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES
<b>PAMELA CUDJO-KELLY</b>	15YRS	CLERK
<b>MICHAEL ORNELAS</b>	20YRS	SENIOR SERVICE
<b>PAULA LAVEN</b>	20YRS	SENIOR SERVICE
<b>RICHARD ZIAK</b>	30YRS	MAINTENANCE



# Breast Cancer Awareness Month

**W**hile breast cancer rates have been stable overall in recent years, they have increased slightly in African American women. In order to get the message out about early detection, Thornton Township sponsored a "Get Your Pink On" Breast Cancer awareness event attended by more than 500 people. Using the backdrop of the final regular season football game between Thornwood and Thornridge high schools, the township organized interactive photo shoots, giveaways and motivational signs about breast cancer awareness. The township also participated in the Thornwood vs Thornridge women's volleyball game senior night.

"We want people to get these regular screenings and make sure they are healthy overall. We don't want you to just wait for something to happen before you check your health," said Frank M. Zuccarelli, Thornton Township supervisor.

Breast cancer starts when cells in the breast begin to grow out of control. These cells usually form a tumor that can often be seen on an X-ray or felt as a lump. After increasing for more than 20 years, breast cancer incidence rates in women began decreasing in 2000. Breast cancer remains the second leading cause of cancer death in women with only lung cancer kills more women each year.

"We understand how important of an issue this is not only in October but all year around," said Zuccarelli.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among American women, except for skin cancers. About one in 8 or (12%) of women in the U.S. will develop invasive breast cancer during their lifetime. This year alone, about 246,660 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed in women and about 40,450 women will die from breast cancer, per the American Cancer Society.

Thornridge and Thornwood students from District #205 volunteered with Thornton Township officials to educate people about breast cancer and post photos on social media with inspirational words.

"It's very important to educate people on breast cancer awareness because it is a disease taking loved ones away and causing people to suffer," said Zaire Jordan, 15, a junior at Thornwood. "I'm glad so many fundraisers and events are being created because I think it helps when people know that we care about them and that they are not standing alone."

Zuccarelli believes the key to sustaining good health is preventative programs because early detection saves lives. In an effort to keep the community healthy overall, Thornton Township offers blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose screenings as well as light to moderate aerobic workouts by a certified instructor every weekday.



## Thornton Township Onesies

**I**n honor of the holiday season, Thornton Township gave an early Christmas present to its littlest residents. About 300 free onesies were given to families at various township events.



# Thornton Township's

Thornton Township won Illinois Township of the Year for many reasons and that includes our great employees who



**Jacqueline Rivera**  
Clerk



**Kierra Lewis**  
Clerk's Office



**Pamela Cudjo-Kelly**  
Clerk's Office



**Delia Medina**  
Community Relations



**Beverly Tomczak**  
Assessor's Office



**Lachez Thomas**  
Assessor's Office



**Lakesha Baker**  
Assessor's Office



**Ernst Lamothe Jr**  
Community Relations



**Jill Manning**  
Special Projects



**Edward Lareau**  
Special Projects



**Evelyn Majkowski**  
Switchboard Operator



**Sharon G. Hudson**  
Senior Services



**Michael Ornelas**  
Senior Services



**Joanie Conley**  
Senior Services



**Kitty Begonia**  
Senior Services



**Marcia Walker-Brown**  
Senior Services



**Robert Hunt**  
Finance Department



**Guadalupe Gonzalez**  
Finance Department



**Vivian Ross**  
Finance Department



**Jessica Garza**  
Finance Department



**Brunu Sheppard**  
Administration



**Danielle Whitted**  
Administration



**Xavier Woods**  
Administration



**Zachary Fulson**  
Security Specialist

# Dedicated Employees

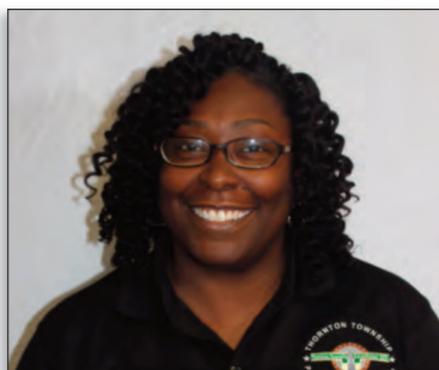
work hard to serve the community. Over the next few FOCUS issues, we want to introduce you to our fantastic team.



**Stacha Fulson**  
General Assistance



**Lakeela Jennings**  
General Assistance



**Tannika M. Hughes**  
General Assistance



**Jaisyn Passmore**  
General Assistance



**Stephanie Wiedeman**  
Tax Refund Department



**Donna Bradford**  
Tax Refund Department



**Loral Monson**  
Tax Refund Department



**Donna Jones**  
Tax Refund Department



**Chakira Woods-Cooks**  
Tax Refund Department



**Terry Harris**  
Tax Refund Department



**Corlene Pittmon**  
Tax Refund Department



**Isaiah Franklin**  
Information Technology



**Leon-Claude Messi**  
Information Technology



**Allen Rogers**  
Information Technology



**Sandra Tracy**  
Human Resources



**Sonia Gutierrez**  
Human Resources



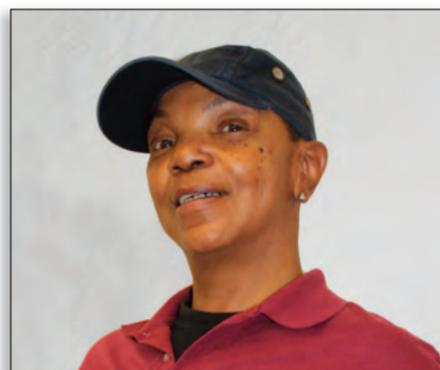
**Sheila Kyte**  
Human Resources



**Dwayne Thrash**  
Maintenance



**Zacarias Castillo**  
Maintenance



**Cheryl Brown**  
Maintenance



**Alfonso Lewis**  
Maintenance



**Richard Ziak**  
Maintenance



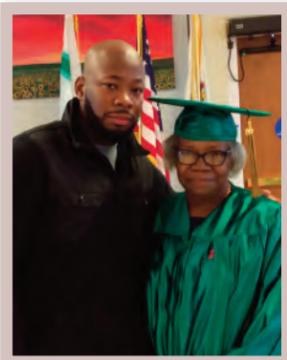
**Cecil Franklin**  
Maintenance



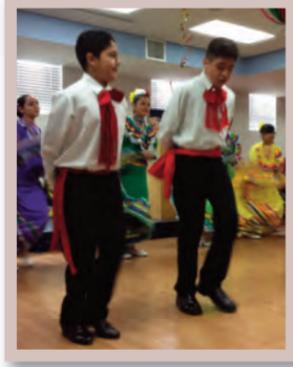
**Derek Packard**  
Maintenance

# 2016 Thornton Township

We at Thornton Township enjoy creating program and activities for the communities. With multiple programs happening every week, we give our residents of all ages a chance to experience a good time. Here are just a few of those moments.



# Remembering The Year



# Thornton Township's All The Buzz...

Even before we won Illinois Township of the Year, our great residents were nice enough to sing our praises on social media. Here are just some comments that have been shared over the past months on Facebook.

Frank you make me so proud for all the work that you do.  
- Vickie Lynn Jankovich

Congratulations on your well-deserved award.  
- Jesse Elston

Thornton Township does a great job. Thank you all.  
- Cynthia Zagone

You deserve the Township of the Year award.  
- Michelle Martello

We as residents are fortunate to have a knowledgeable team at Thornton Township that is brimming with life experience and compassion working together for our good.  
- Marketta Fuller-Steele

Great work is done at the township by all.  
- Christine Macniak

Good job Frank to you and all your staff.  
- Eddie Martinez

What you do for us here is tremendous and we appreciate it.  
- Garry Fromlarc

Keeping doing the great work serving the people.  
- Michael A. Smith

Thornton Township job well done.  
- Dawn Fox



[www.thorntontownship.com](http://www.thorntontownship.com)

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**LOVE & UNITY CONQUERS HATRED & VIOLENCE**

A MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY CELEBRATION

**Monday, January 16, 2017**  
Free Admission - Refreshments

Featuring performances by students from Thornton Township High School District 205

Doors Open at 9:00am / Program Begins at 10:00am  
SOUTH SUBURBAN COLLEGE - KINDIG PERFORMING ARTS CENTER  
15800 SOUTH STATE STREET, SOUTH HOLLAND, IL

**Thornton Township Wishes You**

Thornton Township Established 1850

Blue Island, Burnham, Calumet City, Dixmoor, Dolton, East Hazel Crest, Glenwood, Harvey, Hazel Crest, Homewood, Lansing, Markham, Phoenix, Posen, Riverdale, South Holland, Thornton

**Happy Holidays & a Prosperous New Year**