

FOCUS

ON THORNTON TOWNSHIP



Follow Thornton Township's social media accounts on:

333 E. 162nd Street • South Holland, IL 60473

708-596-6040 • www.thorntontownship.com

FALL EDITION

Keeping O.P.M. on the Front Burner



It has been said that the trouble with government spending is that sooner or later, you run out of other people's money – O.P.M.

What I have always tried to do since first being elected Township Supervisor, is to never lose sight of the fact that all elected officials have a special responsibility to be fiscally responsible and accountable to taxpayers - the ones who have to pick up the tab.

We at Thornton Township have been responsible to taxpayers by paying assiduous attention to how their hard-earned tax dollars are allocated.

During normal times we provide thousands of food baskets to township residents each month; hundreds of weekly rides - five days a week - to seniors; provided hundreds of hot lunches weekly to seniors; have helped several hundred residents complete their GED; provided job training and placement services for nearly 300 unemployed residents; provided lawn maintenance services to 800 seniors no longer physically capable of doing the work; employed 100 high school students in the process and much more.

During this Coronavirus Pandemic, we have seen our client base of people in need of our programs and services increase by over 600% and we've helped more than 200 families avoid eviction.

We've done all this without any additional financial assistance from the Federal or county government or without raising taxes to pay for it.

There is no such thing as a free lunch, but Thornton Township might just be the closest thing to it. We haven't asked for a tax increase in more than ten years; we pay for all the services we provide for only 7 cents of every tax dollar and we've refunded more than \$4M in property taxes to homeowners since 2012.

Our accountability to taxpayers is demonstrated by the fact that we have done more with less. We're not looking for a pat on the back, because taxpayers deserve and expect no less.

Our commitment to being fiscally accountable and responsible, has made it possible for us to refund again this year, a portion of the property taxes homeowners pay to the township.

The refunds won't be large - the average being about \$50.00 - but that's your money and if Thornton Township isn't using it, it's better off back in your pocket.

So, be watching your mail box for a refund application; fill it out and send it back so we can process your refund.

Don't forget, if you received any meaningful help or assistance from government, chances are it started here at Thornton Township.

Sincerely,

Frank M. Zuccarelli
Thornton Township Supervisor



Until Further Notice:

Updated Township Information

Senior Lunches

- 1420 Huntington Dr., Calumet City
Pick-up/Curb side only
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday
11:00 am – 12:30 pm
- 14323 S. Halsted, Riverdale
Curb-Side Pick-up Only
Wednesday & Thursday
11:00 am – 12:30 pm

Senior Center

1420 Huntington Drive, Calumet City

- No exercise or dance activities
- No income tax services
- No weekly movie
- No bingo activities
- No group senior counseling

Senior Center

14323 S. Halsted, Riverdale

- No exercise or dance activities
- No weekly movie
- No group senior counseling

Youth and Family Services

14323 S. Halsted, Riverdale

- No childhood after school services

Special Services Department

333 E. 162nd St., South Holland

- No dances or regularly scheduled activities

COVID-19 TESTING SITES

- Christian Community Health Center • 901 E. Sibley in South Holland
- Illinois Department of Public Health • 3824 W. 159th Place in Markham
- South Suburban College • 15800 State Street near the gymnasium



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

Norbert Cipowski,
Trustee
Stafford C. Owens,
Trustee

Jacqueline E. Davis-Rivera,
Clerk
Cassandra W. Elston,
Assessor C.I.A.O.

Geary DePue,
Highway Commissioner

Frank M. Zuccarelli, Supervisor

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CLERK'S CORNER: JACQUELINE E. DAVIS-RIVERA



As most of you know, we are in the midst of very, very difficult times. Times like we have never seen before. Thornton Township has taken every precaution available to keep our employees and residents safe while continuing to provide needed, essential services.

It is without a doubt, necessary to vote, in person or by mail ballot. At the Clerk's office we have the necessary paperwork to provide for you to vote. Thornton Township will hold **Early Voting on October 19, 2020 until November 2, 2020**. We will also be open for the **General Election on November 3, 2020**. For further information feel free to call the Clerk's Office at **(708)-596-6040 ext.3123** or **ext.3118**. Remember one vote can make all the difference in outcome now and as it has in the past.

Our office is open Monday Thru Friday 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. our phone number is **(708)-596-6040 ext.3123** or **ext.3118**. If you have any questions or need further information, feel free to contact my office.

ASSESSOR'S OFFICE: CASSANDRA W. ELSTON



First and most importantly, on behalf of Supervisor Frank M. Zuccarelli, the Board of Trustees and myself Cassandra Elston, we pray that you and your family members are all well during this COVID-19 pandemic.

Secondly, notices from the Cook County Assessor's Office have been mailed to all taxpayers in Thornton Township regarding the 2020 Triennial Reassessment which will affect your 2nd Installment taxes in 2021. This notice will provide you with information, such as, property characteristics, how the Cook County Assessor calculates the fair market value, the past and current total assessed value on your property and the deadline for the filing of an appeal. While the last day to file an appeal with Cook County falls on September 25th, you can file an appeal now through approximately December 1st with the Board of Review. All appeals must be filed online, paper appeals are no longer accepted.

Please know that, we at your Thornton Township Assessor's Office are striving to take every and all precautions to keep our constituents and staff safe and healthy while meeting your needs during this pandemic. We have scheduled the following Property Tax Information Sessions to provide information on the reassessment process, assist taxpayers with the filing of their appeal with the Cook County Assessor's Office and the Board of Review also provide information regarding qualify tax saving exemptions that could help to lower your tax bill. Please, if possible, bring your 2nd Installment Property Tax Bill and Reassessment Notice that you recently received by mail from the Cook County Assessor's Office. Feel free to call our office at **708-596-6040 Ext. 3140** for more information. We are here to help you in any way we can.

For more information on future workshops go to <http://www.thorntontownship.com/departments/assessors-office/>

FROM ALL OF US AT THORNTON TOWNSHIP, STAY SAFE AND BE BLESSED.

DRIVE-IN MOVIE NIGHT

Thornton Township offered the community a movie night at South Suburban College during the Labor Day weekend. It was a double feature with Minions being shown in the day time and the original Jurassic Park at night. We also gave away free bookbags, school supplies and a snack pack for each family that arrived.

Thank you to our Sponsors: Gift of Hope Network, Illinois Action for Children, Burger King, 5th 3rd Bank, Thornton Township D205 & Excel Mailing & Marketing.



Tears Stain the Page



I am the father of an 11 year old son. He is gifted with intelligence, talents, skills, good looks (thanks, of course, to his mom) and a wonderful and mature personality. I have fathered him to believe in God and himself. To embody an attitude that boldly states that he belongs no matter where he may find himself. To think positively. To embrace hard work, challenges and individual responsibility. To pursue growth and progress. To value accomplishment both big and small. To lead by words and actions. To see the good in others. To be kind and a lover of humanity, while considering and appreciating differences. I fear, however, that my time is running out.

Tears stain the page

See, though he is only 11 (and partially due to his small stature), he is currently viewed as "cute" and "special". There will be a time, in the not-so-distant future, in which society will view him differently and as a "threat". No one knows precisely when this change in perception will happen. However, I do know two things. One, like death and taxes, it will happen. And, secondly, I'm not looking forward to it.

Tears stain the page

See what I didn't tell you earlier in my description of him is that my son is Black. I'm not looking forward to having conversations with my son about strategies to increase his probability of surviving an interaction with law enforcement.

I'm not looking forward to explaining how unarmed black boys and men can be shot/killed by police while armed white boys and men can murder others and be taken into custody hours (or days later) without incident.

I'm not looking forward to explaining that anti-brutality and excessive force does not mean anti-cop. I'm not looking forward to explaining why so many "good cops" silently accept, condone, and co-sign the misbehavior of the so-called "few bad cops".

I'm not looking forward to explaining why it is easier for some people to say and believe that "...not all cops are bad" (which I agree) but much more challenging to say, believe, and act as though "...not all black males are threats" (which I, emphatically, agree).

I'm not looking forward to explaining why when an unarmed black man is shot/killed by police that the victim's character is demonized and his history is investigated before the history of the perpetrator is revealed.

Tears stain the page

I'm not looking forward to discussing the reality that some places quite simply are not safe for him to be due to the color of his skin.

I'm not looking forward to staring in his beautiful brown almond-shaped eyes and explaining the heart wrenching realities of hypocrisy, racial injustice, and inequality in our country/state/city/community.

I'm not looking forward to explaining that some people will boil down this discussion to either personal responsibility/accountability OR systemic/structural racism when both play a factor in our current and historical situation.

I'm not looking forward to explaining how buildings and businesses may be valued, by some, more than his life.

I'm not looking forward to explaining why people of color have to justify and present a case to defend our daily experience of racism. I'm not looking forward to explaining microaggressions. I'm not looking forward to explaining black tax, voter suppression,

red-lining, mass incarceration

I'm not looking forward to explaining false equivalency relative to police shooting and killing black people versus black people shooting and killing other black people.

Tears stain the page

I'm not looking forward to explaining how if "All Lives" truly mattered and we not only said it but we lived it, there would be no reason to exclaim that "Black Lives Matter".

I'm not looking forward to explaining that anti-racism does not mean anti-white.

I'm not looking forward to explaining that people will purposely conflate matters to distract from the truth. Or that people will use these real issues and either politicize them or chalk them up as "fake news".

I'm not looking forward to explaining, qualitatively, why accused black youth may be characterized by the media as "thugs", "gang members", or "criminal" while accused white youth are described as "teenager", "child", "good kid...bad decision" or "sick".

Tears stain the page

I'm not looking forward to explaining the difference between peaceful protesting vs rioting vs looting. As well as the different types of people, motivations, and agendas participating in each.

I'm not looking forward to explaining why the systemic change that we seek won't happen over night; but rather, the process of change will be painfully incremental while still having to endure and suffer through multiple re-traumatization.

I'm not looking forward to explaining the heavy—but necessary—burden of having to educate the many allies that have had their eyes open and are eager to learn and have an impact.

Tears stain the page

Though, I'm not looking forward to having these conversations, I would be irresponsible as a father to not. Under these circumstances, ignorance is not bliss. Rather, it can be fatally dangerous. It is heartbreaking to contemplate current times and how we have to prepare young minds for the ugly realities of our existence and strategize on how best to navigate the turbulence. What's more, deciding when it is time to have these difficult conversations and intuitively knowing that the time is past due. Lastly, it is excruciatingly painful to know that my white colleagues don't have to have these same conversations with their children. This is, yet, another hidden benefit of privilege. Please understand, I do not begrudge my white brethren being born into circumstances where it is not necessary for them to have this conversation with their children. I just wished it was the same for All people. But, alas, it is not.

What happens when the last tear falls... and stains the page?

Dr J.L. Weems, Psy.D.

Since 2003, Dr. Weems has been the Director of Youth and Family Services for Thornton Township. He is an expert in executive leadership and integrative health and wellness services and provides consultation, globally. Licensed as a clinical professional counselor in the State of Illinois, he possesses a doctorate in Clinical Psychology from the Illinois School of Professional Psychology (2000).

Youth and Family Services

Counseling during a pandemic

Since late March 2020, Thornton Township's Youth and Family Services has continued to provide counseling/therapy services free of charge to residents of the Township in a safe and confidential way. As per usual, we have responded (real-time) to the needs of our residents by pivoting from traditional in-person counseling services to virtual services via phone and various telehealth platforms.

Though this option had been available before COVID-19, most of our clients were not comfortable with the idea. Well, the pandemic and subsequent stay order caused both our clients and clinicians to re-consider. We have noticed, as the research suggests, that telehealth helps with the stigma associated with counseling/therapy. It removes obstacles (e.g., childcare and transportation issues) from the equation and promotes increased treatment compliance. All of these benefits lead to better health outcomes for our clients, their families, and our communities.

Here are some direct quotes from clients currently utilizing our services:

"Counseling gives me someone to help get through struggles. Having that has made a huge difference for me living alone."

"I feel like I am getting better at managing my fear. I don't feel scared all the time now."

"Even if I don't feel safe going out I don't have to give up my counseling service because the calls come to my phone every week."

"There are people in our community who are completely on their own. I would say anyone having a hard time should reach out."

There are many people in the Township struggling with a multitude of issues, including stress and trauma from current and historical events. We encourage any and everyone to contact us to schedule an intake appointment at **708-596-6040 ext 3155**.

Thornton Township Welcomes New Community Resident Liaison



Greetings Thornton Township residents. I would like to introduce Paula Counts the new Thornton Township *Community Resident Liaison*. The Community Resident Liaison role was borne out of my desire as Supervisor to strengthen connections with the residents of the Township. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the Township, similar to many other businesses, to rethink how we "touch and connect" with the people we serve.

The **Community Resident** team is currently creating a *Well-Being Check Call* Program. It is a resource to you or your family to just make sure 'all is well' with a person who may be living alone and would like to be checked on. It is also a program designed to be a friendly call to people that may be feeling isolated and wish to connect with someone in a safe and friendly manner. Calls can be set up for a particular time and frequency as determined by the person or a family member.

The **Community Resident** program also serves as a *Customer Service* resource. It's intended to provide general information on Township services and how to access various programs. This program will also give residents a "safe place" to voice their concerns or complaints and comment on how we are serving the community. To contact Customer Service: phone **(708) 596-6040, ext. 3213**; email: connectwithus@thorntontwp.com or go to www.thorntontwp.com/customerservice.

The **Community Resident** is designed to utilize contemporary technologies that will respect the risk that the virus presents. Virtual communication using phone, email, text messages, video chats, Zoom gatherings, or even Facebook Live are different ways we'll stay in touch with you. We will be actively soliciting and updating resident contact information to ensure that communication with you is timely and current.

I along with the Board of Trustees working with all Township departments seek to continue to better serve the communities for whom we work. It is hoped that this new initiative will provide an improved client experience in our relationship with the Township residents. Please let us know. We'd love to hear from you.

The Community Resident team is excited to work with the community and be a resource to help the Township better serve you. The Community Resident team can be contacted in the following ways:

- E-mail: connectwithus@thorntontwp.com
- Phone: **708-596-6040, ext. 3213**
- Text: **708-571-6107**
- Web: www.thorntontwp.com/customerservice

I encourage you to be added to our resident database and to get regular updates about Township services and be recognized for special days in your life. To sign up please go to: Connectwithus@thorntontwp.com You may also call **(708) 596-6040, ext. 3213** to sign up for this service and to receive regular updates on Township activities. Or you may use the camera on your Smartphone and/or tablet to scan the attached QR code to electronically upload your information. It will take you to an electronic form to fill out and submit to us.

Please help me welcome Paula E. Counts and the Community Resident Liaison team. They are looking forward to hearing from you! It is our desire to serve.



Senior Luncheon Program

The Thornton Township Senior Luncheon program continues to thrive serving hundreds of seniors meals. Throughout the pandemic, the popular program moved from dine-in and carry-out to drive-thru to accommodate the orders due to COVID-19. The program is just one of many senior services provided by the township, which includes 17 municipalities throughout the south suburbs. The program was originally designed to provide food and social interaction for seniors in the township.

For those who could not dine-in, there was also a carry-out option and seniors paid a nominal fee. Seniors, aged 60 or older, who reside in the township, are entitled to the luncheon program.

Currently, both Calumet City and Riverdale combined serve more than 700 lunches per week; a dramatic increase from before COVID-19. The continuation of the lunch program comes from the heart of service that the township has for the seniors and the township's willingness to extend any services possible for the community. It is another example of the township's motto of People working with People.

"We understand that food is essential during this pandemic and we wanted to make sure our seniors did not fall through the cracks," said Frank M. Zuccarelli, Thornton Township supervisor. "Our seniors are important to us and we appreciate them using our services and we are here to help them in any way we can."

The lunches are hosted on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at The Thornton Township Senior Center in Calumet City located at 1420 Huntington Drive. The Thornton Township Riverdale Senior Youth and Family Services Center, located at 14323 S. Halsted St., hosts luncheons on Wednesdays and Thursdays. The drive-thru services take place from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Each lunch is \$1.50. Lunches often go quickly so we suggest seniors come as close to 11 a.m. as possible.

"Our seniors never have to leave their car. They just drive-thru and pick up their lunch," said Marcia Brown, who helps manage the program. "Seniors can pick up their meal as long as they're a resident of Thornton Township and possess a Thornton Township ID. They just drive right through, just like at a McDonald's or one of your fast food restaurants."

Calumet Bakery, 18349 Torrence Ave in Lansing, IL provided the township with free donuts out of the kindness of their heart for our senior luncheon program with pastries as part of the meal. It gives the seniors something extra. Each of the three days of lunch service, Calumet Bakery donates nearly 300 donuts for the seniors. This has been going on since March. As a small gesture of thanks, the seniors wrote thank you notes to Kerry and the Calumet Bakery staff stating just how grateful they are for the acts of kindness during this difficult time of separation.

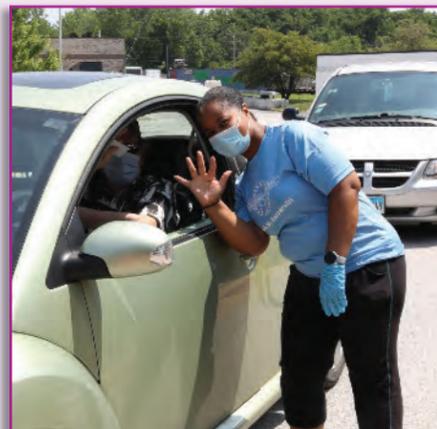
"We have many communities that appreciate everything the township does for them and it is our pleasure to help our residents," said Brown. "We enjoy seeing the smiling faces of our residents when we are able to interact with them when we are handing them their lunches."

Brown said that seniors love maintaining their routines so they were excited when the township announced they will continue their luncheon program. She said while the seniors miss the social interaction of the dine-in luncheon program, they appreciate that the township has continued the luncheon program in a drive-thru format.

Calling it a "100 percent positive response," Brown said the program has received "nothing but accolades." She added the seniors love being able to drive-up to receive their meals, without having to leave their vehicles.

For more information about the Thornton Township Senior Luncheon Program, visit <https://bit.ly/3gTZLCp>, or call **708-596-6040, Ext. 3190**.

- Township cards and RTA ID cards: Photos are taken Monday through Friday at South Holland, Riverdale and Calumet City.
- Bunco Dice Game: Bring your dice skills from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. on Thursdays at our Calumet City Senior Center.
- Podiatrist: A podiatrist is available once a month by appointment at the Calumet City Senior Center.
- Monday, Oct. 19: Flu shots will be given at Calumet City. Call for more information.
- Monday, Oct. 26: Flu shots will be given at Riverdale. Call for more information



During the C-19 pandemic Thornton Township employees have provided 700 lunches each week to seniors thru curbside service.

General Assistance

Illinois Governor JB Pritzker visited Thornton Township during the pandemic to laud the work of its food pantry and talk about expanded COVID-19 testing in the south suburbs. Pritzker joined Thornton Township Supervisor Frank M. Zuccarelli as they both handed out food boxes to community residents. Thornton Township is serving more than 10,000 free meals each month to residents. The township is home to one of the largest food pantries in the area and stateside.

"As a township our first responsibility is making sure our residents have all the services they need. Food is essential and we will continue being that resource for them especially at a time when other options are not available. This just shows the powerful force that township government can be in our community's everyday life," said Zuccarelli.

Pritzker also announced South Suburban College has been chosen as a COVID-19 testing site by the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA). The testing tents were set up near the college's Fitness Center, utilizing the spacious parking lot and secluded roadways for drive-thru testing.

"I was glad to visit our newly-relocated south suburban state testing site this morning in South Holland, and I thank the Illinois National Guard and South Suburban College for standing it up so quickly," said Pritzker. "Widespread testing is central to our strategy to beat this virus and restore our state, so if you're experiencing any symptoms or are more at-risk, please visit a site near you. It's on all of us to protect our communities." The Township Food Pantry has seen record numbers serving the community since the spring.

Food Assistance Center

- April increased individuals served 495% over 2019
- May increased individuals served 407% over 2019
- June increased individuals served 534% over 2019
- July increased individuals served 826% over 2019



- August increased individuals served 63% over 2019

Last year from April through August, the township served 6,032 households and 16,979 individuals. During that same time span this year, we have served 9,900 households and 42,345 individuals.

New partnerships

The Cook County Sheriff Department has assisted with food deliveries and food distribution. The township has also partnered with a Mobile Dental Lab that is giving free dental screening and services for the community. In addition, Christian Life Center in Tinley Park has brought weekly volunteer groups to assist with food box packing.

Change in service

Supervisor Zuccarelli quickly assessed pantry operations and then worked with the staff to overhaul operations overnight to provide full drive-through services. He quickly assessed general assistance voucher distribution and client check-in and changed the entire process overnight. Clients have their monthly vouchers brought to their homes by the General Assistance Field Investigator. All General Assistance staff received laptops to make remote work possible so that services were not disrupted. We served 3,675 residents between October and May for the LIHEAP Program resulting in \$1,957,743 being paid on utility bills throughout the township

Storm Recovery

Thornton Township advocated on behalf of area renters that were without power to get the Illinois Housing Department Authority to extend the application period for Emergency Rental Assistance and receive an extension. We provided pop-up pantries upon community request in Phoenix and South Holland. We also connected with County and State Emergency Management Officials to help facilitate a Multi Agency Resource Center. We continue to be there for the community.



Governor J.B. Pritzker and Thornton Township Supervisor Frank M. Zuccarelli recently helped distribute food boxes to township residents.

You Can't Work, You Can't Pay Rent

As the Coronavirus has bankrupted hundreds of small businesses and forced larger companies to lay-off thousands of workers, the unemployment surge has sharply increased the number of evictions throughout our nation and Thornton Township.

Hundreds of our neighbors, through no fault of their own, have lost their jobs. Some temporarily, too many permanently and, without incomes they are all at risk of losing their home.

This is not just an economic issue; it is very much a health concern as well.

Each stage of the eviction process has the potential to increase Covid-19 transmission. Tenants who are evicted have a reduced ability to practice social distancing and in such circumstances how do you comply with "shelter in place" orders.

While Governor Pritzker and Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart should be commended for their efforts to halt evictions—at least temporarily—what is desperately needed is a more long-term solution, especially for those communities that were already poorer and economically depressed.

In addition to an immediate freeze on all evictions, the state legislature should prohibit the imposition of any late fees or charges that tenants could not avoid during the pandemic.

Next, the United States Senate needs to pass immediately a re-instatement of the original Covid-19 relief package that provided \$600 each week to those unemployed who lost their jobs through no fault of their own. So, call your Representative in Congress and the U.S. Senate and urge them to pass a renewed relief package.

Thornton Township has certainly been limited in what it can do to ease the crisis in evictions. But we have worked tirelessly on a daily basis, with limited financial resources, to coordinate and pull together various programs, made available through state and county agencies, to help as many township residents avoid eviction as possible.

We are pleased to report to you that during this pandemic, we have helped more than 200 township families to avoid eviction and remain in their homes.

Whether it's providing nutritious food boxes to more than 4,000 families each week through our township pantry; weekly transportation services for hundreds of seniors for essential travel to doctor's offices, pharmacies, grocery stores or other critical services, Thornton Township will continue to step up in helping as many of our neighbors as possible.

Believe it! Thornton Township *is* doing more with less.



Thornton Township
will be accepting applications for the
2020 Christmas Program
For Toys and Food Baskets on
October 19, 2020 – October 23, 2020

By logging on to
Thorntontownship.com
or by calling
(708)596-6040 x3205

NEW Way to Sign-Up

**Must be a Thornton Township Resident
Required Documentation is Mandatory Upon
Toy/Food Pick-up.**

- ✓ **Photo ID** - Current State of Illinois Drivers License or Illinois State ID with current township residence.
- ✓ **Proof of Residence** - One of the following matching the address on the Photo ID.
 - Utility Bill (Water, Gas or Electric: August or September 2020)
 - Homeowner's or Renter's Insurance – Current date
 - Bank Statement (August or September 2020)
 - Credit Card Statement (August or September 2020)
 - Medical Card – Current date
- ✓ **Proof of last 30 days of Income** –Bring all that apply for each member of the household.
 - Unemployment Benefit Payment Stub
 - Current Income Verification from Department of Human Services (Public Aid) or Notice of Decision with TANF (*not Food Stamps only*)
 - Social Security Award letter
 - DCFS Award Letter
 - and/or the most recent check stub for the past 30 days from your Employer
- ✓ **Birth Certificate for each member of the household.**
 - Child's birth certificate with you as Parent or Legal Guardianship document
 - Children qualifying for gifts must have a birthdate after January 1, 2007

- × Toys/Food will not be distributed without the above information.
- × This program is based on income and residence of Thornton Township only.
- × The dates above are the only dates that applications will be accepted.
- × Gifts will not be held past scheduled pick up. **No Waiting List.**

Open your camera and scan here to
complete the Toy and Food Application.



Open your camera and scan here to
complete the Food Only Application.



South Suburban College President Dr. Lynette D. Stokes

appointed to Illinois Community College Board



The Illinois Community College Board announced last week the appointment of South Suburban College President, Lynette D. Stokes to its board. Dr. Stokes was one of just two new statewide appointments along with Dr. Larry Peterson, former President of Shawnee Community College, whom upon confirmation from the Senate will serve terms through June 30, 2021.

"It is truly an honor to be chosen by the Illinois Community College Board and a privilege to represent South Suburban College and my colleagues statewide during this critical time," said Dr. Stokes. "I would like to thank the ICCB for the opportunity, as well as Governor J.B. Pritzker and Deputy Governor of Education Jesse Ruiz for their tireless efforts on behalf of education. They understand the critical role of community colleges, such as South Suburban College, in providing equitable opportunities to our community. I look forward to getting to work over the next year to address the challenges of the times and to advocate for our students."

Having worked in public service for over 20 years, Dr. Stokes joined SSC in June 2013 as the Vice President of Academic Services and was named President on October 1, 2018. She has the distinction of being the first female President in the college's 91-year rich history.

Dr. Stokes has served as an advocate of youth in the child welfare system, taught elementary and community college education, and worked for equal rights organizations. Wanting to fulfill her desire to make a positive impact on the education of adult learners, Dr. Stokes earned her doctorate degree in Educational Leadership and Organizational Change at Roosevelt University in 2004.

This academic credentialing, coupled with the skills she gained while working at the then Operation PUSH, Community Mental Health Council and Ada S. McKinley Community Services, provided the foundation to propel her career into higher education as Dean of Adult Education and Dean of Instruction at City Colleges of Chicago, where she served for nearly 12 years prior to moving to South Suburban. In addition to serving as a presenter for several professional development events in Higher Education and Child Welfare, Dr. Stokes is the 2005 recipient of

- Roosevelt University's Most Outstanding Dissertation of the Year;
- the 2009 recipient of the Kathy Osterman Award for Outstanding Supervisor given to public service employees in the City of Chicago;
- and 2014 recipient of the Chicago Defender's Women of Excellence Award.
- In 2018 she was honored with the Egretta Education Award for Excellence in Education and the Illinois Committee on Black Concerns in Higher Education (ICBCHE) Trailblazer Award.
- In 2020 Dr. Stokes was awarded the MLK Excellence in Education Award by the Southland Ministerial Health Network.

SSC is a community college located in South Holland, Illinois serving 21 communities including parts of the Chicago Southland and northwest Indiana. SSC provides a variety of support services and leadership opportunities to its students in addition to a wide range of academic program options. For more information about SSC, please visit www.ssc.edu.

Pinning Ceremony Held for Associate Degree Nurse Graduates



South Suburban College recently honored the 2020 graduates of the College's Associated Degree Nursing (ADN) Program with a special socially distanced ceremony. The graduates received their nursing pins from Dr. Tasha Williams, Vice President of Academic Services, and Dr. Linda Brown-Aldridge, who completed her first full academic year as the Dean of Nursing at SSC.

This year, seven students successfully completed the ADN program. One of the graduates, Shautavia Meeks-Gill, has already passed National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) for Registered Nurses (RN). Her fellow graduates are awaiting their test dates. The students were given the opportunity to attend the mid-year conference of the National Student Nurses Association (NSNA) in October 2019. With their attendance included the membership in the NSNA, which inspired the students to establish a local chapter at SSC.

"The graduates' dedication, hard work, and resilience is inspiring, especially with the challenge of COVID-19 during the spring semester," said Dr. Brown-Aldridge. "The faculty and staff worked hard with the students to provide the needed support for their success during the pandemic."

When she joined SSC in spring of 2019, Dr. Brown-Aldridge brought more than 30 years of experience working in hospitals and schools in many roles including nursing, teaching, administration and serving as the Chief Nursing Officer at Provident Hospital. She has worked hard with Dr. Williams and her team to position the

revitalized program for significant growth. The program admitted 42 new first year Nursing students for the Fall 2020 Semester, the largest class in several years.

"I am dedicated to growing this nursing program to address the health disparities and nursing shortage for our community," added Dr. Brown-Aldridge. "The decision to come to SSC was life changing for me. Working with the great administration, faculty, staff and students this past year has been very rewarding and fulfilling."

Dr. Brown-Aldridge was also recently appointed to the University of Chicago Ingalls Memorial Community Advisory Council (CAC). UC Ingalls Memorial recently announced the creation of its first CAC to seek community input on health issues of importance to its primary service area and surrounding communities. Following a rigorous review process, Ingalls leadership selected 15 council members to serve.

The next admission cycle opens October 1 st 2020 to March 1 st 2021 for the class to begin Fall 2021. SSC's ADN Program is a two-year Associate in Applied Science program that provides learning experiences directed by faculty in local hospitals and health agencies to focus on the direct nursing care of patients of all ages. Upon completion of the program, graduates are eligible to sit for the NCLEX.

Fall classes will be offered in virtual, online and blended instruction methods beginning August 17, 2020. For more information about the ADN program, please visit ssc.edu/success or call (708) 596-2000, ext. 2260.

Continued Success for ZAP

A longstanding program from Thornton Township continues to help seniors, while also offering employment for young adults. The Zuccarelli Assistance Program or ZAP, started by Thornton Township Supervisor Frank M. Zuccarelli, allows those 16-years and older the opportunity to get paid for mowing seniors lawns, age 60 and older, who live in one of the 17 municipalities included in the township.

The program, which started in 2004, runs from April to the end of October. Teens start training in the spring. Stan Brown, manager of the Zuccarelli Assistance Program, said the service is a great community asset because it helps seniors who don't have an able-bodied person in the house to maintain their lawns.

"These young employees are essential workers and they answered the call to come out there in all types of weather to help our seniors. Without them, there is no program," said Brown.

There are up to 1,100 seniors served a week, about 220 lawns a day, Monday through Friday using 75-125 employees. Crews have the opportunity to cut between 10-17 lawns per day. The program has received a positive response, adding it was great that Zuccarelli came up with the idea for ZAP because once seniors get to a certain age, they are unable to cut their grass or service their lawns.

"The seniors love it. It gives both the seniors a chance as well as the and youth a chance to connect. How many times does a senior get to connect with a young person if they don't have any kids around?", he said. "And some of these the youth get to connect and communicate with these the seniors. The Both seniors and enjoy it and the youth enjoy it," he said.

Zuccarelli said while the program helps seniors maintain their property, it is way more than that.

"It provides about one hundred high school students with summer employment opportunities; brings young people closer together with seniors and instills the value and importance of community service," he said.

Zuccarelli said it is his goal for Thornton Township to provide meaningful services to people in need.

"When you look at all the services Thornton Township provides – people oriented services, that make a real difference – you realize that we provide great value for very little cost," he said. "In fact, less than ten cents of every tax dollar homeowners pay, goes to the Township for all the services we offer. We are doing way more with less and we will also be refunding a portion of unused property taxes again this year to homeowners. I'm very proud of that."



Kyle Rochelle, 21, Dolton

How many years have you been part of the program?

5 years

What do you enjoy about the ZAP program?

I enjoy the fact that even though we come from different backgrounds, we come together as a team to help the community.

Why do you think this is an essential program?

There are a lot of seniors that wouldn't be able to afford lawn care and would be worried about paying fines if their grass was too tall. We get to step up and offer a hand and you can tell they are appreciative of everything we do.

What have you learned from being one of the main team leaders of the program?

It has taught me one of the best things you can do as a leader is lead by example. Not everyone is born having a good work ethic, but when people see how hard I work, it sometimes makes them work harder. Your individual work matters.

What advice do you have for others who may want to be ZAP employees?

This job isn't for everyone. It is a lot of hard work, heavy lifting, and there are days where it is incredibly hot, but it is all worth it. You get to help people and that is what is the most important part of the job.

Rachel Sanders, 21: Harvey

How many years have you been part of the program?

4 years

What do you enjoy about being a ZAP employee?

I like working with people and I enjoy doing the job.

Why do you think it is important to help the community?

What goes around in life comes around. We need each other and we should be happy to help anyone in need.

Rebekah Sanders, 21: Harvey

How many years have you been part of the program?

4 years

What is something that is difficult about the job?

It has to be the heat. You can get exhausted pretty quickly when it is 90 degrees, but it goes with the job and the job has to be done. You are out there all day.

What do you enjoy about the job?

I like the fact that we help seniors and we work together great as a team. It's fun being part of something like this where you can make a difference. Plus anything

we can do to take some stress out of the lives of our seniors in the community and see them smile is a good thing.

Joshua Gardner, 25: South Holland

How many years have you been part of the program?

4 years

What has this job taught you about yourself?

I have learned that there is no limit to the good work that I can do for the community. People don't realize the great impact that you can display when you think of others.

What do you enjoy about helping others?

If God gives you the ability to help other people then that is the first thing you should think about. We are all part of the community and our job is to uplift each other. There are a lot of seniors who truly appreciate the help you give them.

Ryan Johnson, 24: Riverdale

How many years have you been part of the program?

4 years

What do you enjoy about this program?

I get just as much out of the experience as they do. They ask me how I am doing and they care about how my life is going. You don't always get people who really care when they are asking you how your day is going? I do this job with joy.

Why do you think people should help the community?

We have the logo on our shirts that says the township motto which is: "People Working with People." We believe in that because it is just the right thing to do.

Danny Fields, 33, Dolton, Team Leader

How many years have you been part of the program?

16 years

What do you enjoy about being a leader?

I like the fact that you can teach people not only how important hard work is but you can go out in the community and make a real difference. This is a program that you need a high GPA to be involved when you come in so it teaches a lot about responsibility.

What makes this program important?

There are seniors who have lost their husbands or their grandchildren can't come and help them cut their grass. They are really on their own. We are able to step in and be the help they need.



It's On You Now!

Recently, President Barack Obama warned us not to “*let them take away our democracy.*”

Yet, that could very well happen.

If you ‘pack’ the courts in a political way – as is being done now – you create minority rule.

These courts would take away the Affordable Care Act – health coverage for millions of Americans; ignore issues addressing use of excessive force; eliminate the right of labor unions to organize and, uphold state laws that disenfranchise millions of voters.

There doesn't have to be a violent, dramatic event for our democracy to end. There just needs to be quiet progress where rules are exploited; where the rules are bent and finally, where the rules are broken.

This is going on *now* with efforts to suppress voter registration and turnout; to impede the delivery and collection of mail-in ballots and the false warnings of massive voter fraud.

Benito Mussolini, the World War II dictator of Italy talked about how democracy can end by taking away one protective law at a time. He said, “*If you pluck a chicken one feather at a time, no one notices.*”

President Barack Obama's warning is very real and he's asking all of us to sit up and take notice.

So please, **make sure you're registered to vote** and make sure you and everyone you know votes. It's all on you now.

For more information on registering to vote and early voting,
call the Township Clerk's Office at:
(708) 596-6040, ext.3123 or 3118

