

December 2008

Belding Bugle



CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

Greetings,

Recently a survey was sent out by the City Planning Commission asking for your input on several items. If you have not already completed this survey, you still have time to fill it out. Please take some time to fill out this important survey, as your feedback is encouraged and will have an impact on various issues facing the City. This survey is part of the update to the Master Plan, which is an important document as it provides direction on the future course of the City.

The M-44 Enhancement Project will take place next summer. Sidewalks will be installed on both sides of M-44 from Hall Street to the Veterans Memorial Bridge and a pathway/sidewalk on M-44 from Veterans Memorial Bridge to Orchard Street. This grant also includes approximately eighty-four decorative street lights from Hall to Orchard and over two hundred trees. Three years ago we received an MDOT grant of \$650,000 to undertake this project, which equates to about 65% of the project costs. Sidewalks on M-44 have been a priority of the City for many years due to the inherent safety issues. The importance of this project has increased due to the reconstruction of M-44 last year where curb and gutter were installed and a center turn lane was added, leaving virtually no shoulder area.

The city recently received an \$180,000 grant to make improvements to the Main

Street and Bridge Street intersection. This will include about nine decorative lights on Bridge Street between Congress and Depot and another three lights going east down Main Street. Sidewalk improvements will also take place in this area. This grant, which covers 90% of the cost, was made possible due to the commitment of the owners of the Belding Brothers Café to provide new jobs in the downtown area. Commencement of this project will occur next summer.

The Surface Transportation Board in Washington D.C. recently ruled that the railroad company could rail bank the rail corridor between Greenville and Lowell. In a nutshell, this means that the railroad company will not be using the railroad anymore. A Rails-to-Trails group is actively working on acquiring this corridor. Of the \$1.3 million needed to acquire the corridor, \$700,000 has been committed by West Michigan Foundations. An MDOT grant application for the balance is currently being prepared, of which the City of Belding will be the applicant. If the property is eventually acquired, there still remain significant hurdles to overcome before we ever see a trail.

Due to the condemnation of the Silk Mill (Gibson Building), many people have asked what is going to now happen to the building. The City, through the free services of Architect Gene Hopkins, prepared an Architectural Assessment of the entire building. Most of the buildings are still able to be redeveloped

and put to good use. Some of the buildings on the north side are not in good shape and could be removed. However, the historic silk mill, along with the clock tower, is still structurally sound. There are issues that need to be addressed to stabilize the building, and that is what we can work on over the next year. There are other issues that will be addressed in order to facilitate redevelopment of the property. However, nothing will change in the foreseeable future until a new developer purchases the building and makes a commitment to redevelop the property.

In July 2008 the City of Belding applied for and was awarded the designation of an Associate Level community in the Michigan Main Street Program. The Main Street Program is a comprehensive strategy developed in the 1960's by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as a national program. In 2003 the Main Street Program was adopted by the State of Michigan and is administered by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority's (MSHDA) Specialized Technical Assistance & Revitalization Strategy Team (STARS Team). The City of Belding will be participating at an Associate Level for two years, receiving intensive training, before moving onto the next level of program participation at the Selected Level.

The Main Street Program is a community-driven, methodology used to revitalize older, traditional business districts. It has been a common-sense way to address a variety of issues and problems that face

main street business districts. The Main Street Program is a Four-Point Approach™ that is tailored to meet and address local needs and opportunities in four distinct subject areas... Design, Economic Restructuring, Promotion, and Organization. The philosophy and principles behind the methodology have made it a proven success and effective tool for community-based, grassroots revitalization efforts targeting main streets and downtowns. The Main Street approach has been successful in communities of all sizes, both rural and urban, across the U.S.

In August, City of Belding representatives and DDA members began attending monthly training sessions. Beginning in 2009, the City will hold public informational meetings, with the Michigan Main Street STARS Team presenting the program to the community. Volunteers from across the community are being sought to participate in Belding's Main Street program, serving on committees established for Design, Economic Restructuring, Promotion, and Organization. The Main Street committees will work towards the goal of revitalizing Belding's Downtown and Main Street. If you have an interest in participating, or have questions, please call: 616-794-1900, ext. 213.

Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you very much for the opportunity to serve.

Sincerely,
Randall S. DeBruine
City Manager

P O L I C E D E P A R T M E N T

The past summer and fall seasons presented the police department with some challenges in city parks. The department used full time and reserve officers to patrol the parks to keep crime to a minimum, especially malicious destruction. Some arrests were made but it did not make the problems go away. We are now asking for some help with policing the parks.

Many communities across the country have volunteers working with the police department to make their communities safer. In Belding, our dedicated volunteer police reserve are active and assist the police department by providing security for community events and public relations activities. The reserve unit also performs bicycle patrol in the parks.

Community involvement can greatly improve the safety of a city and this has been a proven fact across the country. To improve our quality of life and safety in the city the department would like to start a Citizens Patrol organization. This organization would be an extension of the eyes and ears of the police department. The main mis-

sion would be to patrol the parks to reduce crime.

The volunteer would be non-confrontational, reporting suspicious activities and crimes in progress. As a trained observer, the volunteer would provide a description of suspects or vehicles and any other information to the responding patrol officer.

Qualifications:

- 21 years of age or older
- Belding resident
- No felony record
- No misdemeanor arrest in the last two years
- Submit to a background investigation
- Commit to completing the mandatory training
- Be available to participate in the program.

Please contact the Belding Police Department for additional information, application and 2009 training dates. Application available on the web at www.ci.belding.mi.us.

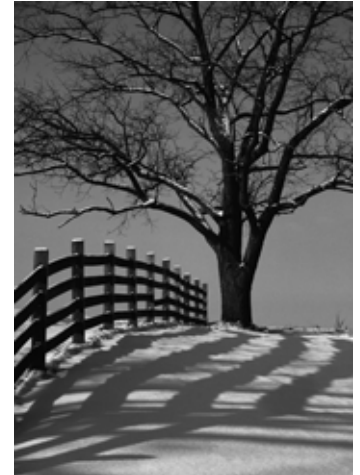
In the future the police department will also be looking at instituting the Neighborhood Watch Program to further expand community involvement.

No Parking on city streets from 2:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. from November 1st through March 31st. The signs are posted on the major streets entering the city.

Take some time to review your winter driving tips:

- Keep a safe distance from the vehicle ahead of you.
- Clear all window surfaces of ice and snow.
- Carry a shovel and a winter survival kit in your vehicle. Articles in the kit should include a blanket, non perishable foods, water and a flashlight.
- If you're stuck in deep snow and you stay with the car, keep the tailpipe clear of snow, roll your windows down to let fresh air in and keep lights on so that you can be seen. If it appears to be an extended period, run your engine for a short time each hour.

Please keep sidewalks clear of ice and snow and remove accumulation within 24 hours of the ice storm or snowfall.



If you're going away for an extended period of time, please contact the police department directly or visit us on the web at www.ci.belding.mi.us. Click on the police department for a vacation house check form.

Please have a safe and joyful holiday season, and prosperous New Year.

F I N A N C E D E P A R T M E N T

Credit Card Payments

The City is now accepting credit card payments through Official Payments. This service is available online at www.officialpayments.com or by telephone at 1-800-272-9829. The service accepts Discover, American Express, MasterCard and Visa and can be used to make utility billing and tax payments. This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The jurisdiction code to use

is 7090. Official Payments does charge a 3% convenience fee for this service. You will receive verification of the payment through Official Payments.

Winter Taxes

2008 winter taxes are due on Monday, February 16, 2009. All taxes for 2008 must be paid by February 27, 2009 at the city. Taxes will be turned over to the county on March 1, 2009 for collection. At the county, additional fees and

penalties will be charged, in addition to the original tax bill.

Park Reservations

It is time once again to start thinking about those family reunions, graduation open houses, or any other event that would involve the use of the park pavilions.

Beginning January 2, 2009, requests for reservations for the use of the pavilions at Central Riverside Park, East

Riverside Park and Lightning Bend will be accepted for the 2009 season. A reservation form is available at the front counter of City Hall or on the website at www.ci.belding.mi.us.

The dates fill in very quickly, so get your reservation in early!

DIAL - A - RIDE

With school in session, the demand for the Dial-A-Ride bus service increases. Please allow a little extra time to arrive at your appointments. We do our best to accommodate everyone, so they can get to their destinations on time. If you decide you do not need the bus after you call, please call to cancel so we do not make any unnecessary stops. As always, be ready when the bus arrives

so others do not have to wait. If you have relatives or friends that use the Dial-A-Ride bus service, how about purchasing tickets or tokens, as they make great Christmas gifts. A ticket sells for \$20.00 for 10 adult rides. Senior/disabled tickets are \$10.00 for 10 rides. Student tickets are \$15.00 for 10 rides. Tokens are sold at the same price. Our bus fares are still \$2.00 for adult

rides, \$1.50 for students, \$1.00 for senior/disabled, and children 3 or younger, when riding with an adult ride free. If requested, Dial-A-Ride can provide you with a brochure, which includes additional information about our service. Information can also be obtained by contacting our dispatch center weekdays between the hours of 6:30 am until 5:30 pm, and Saturdays between 9:00 am until 1:30 pm.

BELDING HOUSING COMMISSION

With the onset of winter and the holiday season before us, Belding Housing Commission sends a reminder to the community of the availability of its Community room for family gatherings and social events. The space is adequate to accommodate 110 people and is equipped with kitchen facilities for meal preparation and service. Interested parties may call the office to inquire about availability and rental fees.

Seasonal cold weather will soon bring its normal assortment of challenges for daily living, but for some, these challenges may be increasingly difficult. It is no secret that bad loans and high interest rates, record unemployment, extreme utility and commodity costs underscore the current economic crisis. The home-

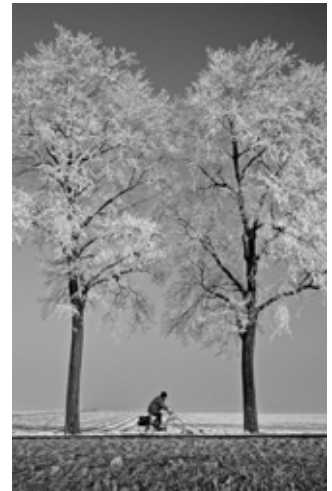
less population and those in extreme need are by definition expanding, and doing so rapidly, to the extent our human service agencies are being stretched to capacity. Nevertheless, the local food pantries, Belding Area Community Emergency Fund, United Way, Eight-Cap, Goodwill, Commission on Aging and local churches continue to provide much-needed assistance despite dwindling resources. Donations and assistance are needed for these charitable organizations to continue to meet the challenges of the season.

The 2008 Capital Fund Program for Belding Housing Commission is underway, with the focus of this year's program being energy efficiency. Improvements are taking place at

Taft Court, Hilltop Court and Woodhaven this year. Funding for these improvements is provided by grants from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The housing commission also continues to explore potential avenues for delivering housing and services to residents in the community, and to convey the need for affordable homeownership and rental opportunities to our elected officials in Washington.

Rental information for Belding Housing properties can be obtained from the office, located at 41 Belhaven Street, Belding - 616-794-1740. Belding Housing Commission is an Equal Housing Opportunity Agency.

Happy Holidays to all!



CODE ENFORCEMENT

Animal Ordinances state that all dogs must be licensed and vaccinated, if over four months old. No more than 2 dogs and 2 cats are allowed, with no farm animals permitted within city limits. There is a leash Ordinance in effect. An effort will be made to apprehend the at-large dogs and cats, and they will be taken to the Shelter in Ionia, where they will be held for no longer than five days. Unless claimed, they may be placed for adoption after the five days expires.

Parking Ordinances do not permit

parking of any kind in the front yard of any residence. No parking of any commercial vehicles exceeding one ton is permitted in any residential districts.

Building permits are required for any structure over 200 square feet. A **Zoning permit** is needed for most types of construction, as well as any fences. Check with the Zoning and Building Department at 794-1900, Ext 209.

Most forms pertaining to construction are available for download on the internet at the city website, www.ci.belding.mi.us.

City Ordinance states that **sidewalks** are to be kept clear of ice and snow. You may be liable if someone is hurt due to the slippery conditions in front of your residence.

The Planning Commission meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Depot. The Zoning Board of Appeals meets as needed. The public is welcome to attend. If you have questions regarding upcoming business, please call 794-1900 Ext. 209 to speak with the Zoning Administrator.

BELDING AREA ART COUNCIL CLASSES

Classes will be held at The Artbeat Gallery, 100 W. Main Street, Belding unless indicated below.

January:

Rags To Rugs - Learn to weave and make your own 2x3 ft. rug using old sheets, tablecloths or any rags. Loom will be supplied. Class meets Monday, Jan. 19 from 6:30-9 p.m. Cost: \$30.00. To register call Tami McNee at 794-1571.

Vocal Lessons- Students 9 & up will learn vocal range, breath control, pitch and work on developing their own unique style! Cost: \$10.00 for a 30 minute private lesson. Contact Julie Stephens at 225-8755 to schedule your time.

Drawing Basics- Students will learn the basics of drawing 3-D objects on a 2-D surface using pencil, charcoal, white charcoal and pen & ink. Class meets Jan. 14, 21, 28 and Feb. 4. from 12 - 2 p.m. Cost: \$35.00. To register call Debbie Bell at 794-1021.

Beginning Guitar- Students will learn to: read music chords, and strumming styles. Geared for ages 7 & up. Thirty-minute lesson. Cost: \$10.00. Contact: Julie Stephens at 225-8755 to schedule your private lesson.

Dynamic Dance Studio- Gain discipline, strength and balance learning to work as a team while expressing yourself through the art of dance! Classes include: Preschool Combo (3&4 yrs.), Ballet and Ballet Pointe, Competitive Team (13 & up), Kinder Combo (5&6 yrs.), Petite Combo (7&8 yrs.), Junior Combo, Adult Tap, Mini Tap (5&6 yrs.), Petite Tap (7&8 yrs.), Junior Tap (9-11 yrs), Intermediate Tap, Non-competitive Hip-Hop, Junior Jazz and Teen Jazz, Mini Competitive Team, Petite/Junior Competitive Team, Petite Gymnastics, Mini Gymnastics, Junior Gymnastics, Jazz Contemporary, Baby Boogie (1.5-2.5 yrs.). To register or for more information on class dates and times call 616-794-7303 or email dynamiddance@aus.net. Classes taught at Dynamic Dance Studio, 110 W. High St., Belding.

February:

Fun Cakes - Discover how fun cake decorating can be! Students will learn how to decorate two different cakes per class. Ages: 12 & up. Class meets Tues., Feb. 3 & Thurs., Feb. 12 from 6:30-8:30. To register call Debbie Bell 794-1021 Cost: \$30.00 plus materials.

Rags To Rugs - Learn to weave and make your own 2x3 ft. rug using old sheets, tablecloths or any rags. Loom will be supplied. Class meets Sat., Feb. 7 from 6:30-9 p.m. Cost: \$30.00. To register call Tami McNee at 794-1571.

Mosaic Mirror - Students 12 & up will learn to create and take home a mosaic decorative mirror. Class meets Feb. 16 & 23 from 6:30-9 p.m. Cost: \$25.00 includes materials. Register by February 8 by calling: Jan Whitbrodt 1-989-831-4913 or 1-989-330-4539.

Vocal Lessons - Students 9 & up will learn vocal range, breath control, pitch and work on developing their own unique style! Cost: \$10.00 for a 30 min. private lesson. Contact Julie Stephens at 225-8755 to schedule your time.

Pastel Drawing - This class is designed for Adults at all skill levels. Students will learn pastel techniques that they can apply to make a beautiful drawing. Class meets Wed., Feb. 11, 18 & 25 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Cost: \$30.00. Bring soft pastel set and pastel paper to class. To register contact Debbie Bell at 794-1021 or dbell38@hotmail.com.

Beginning Guitar - Students will learn to: read music chords, and strumming styles. Geared for ages 7 & up. Thirty-minute lesson. Cost: \$10.00. Contact Julie Stephens at 225-8755 to schedule your private lesson.

March:

Watercolor Landscapes - Students will create watercolor landscapes with step by step instruction. You will need 140# watercolor paper, small, med. & large brushes and watercolor paints. Class meets Wed., March 11, 18, & 25 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Cost: \$30.00.

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April:

Rags To Rugs - Learn to weave and make your own 2x3 ft. rug using old sheets, tablecloths or any rags. Loom will be supplied. Class meets Monday, April 20 from 6:30-9 p.m. Cost: \$30.00. To register call Tami McNee at 794-1571.

Beginning Guitar - Students will learn to: read music chords, and strumming styles. Geared for ages 7 & up. Thirty-minute lesson. Cost: \$10.00. Contact Julie Stephens at 225-8755 to schedule your private lesson.

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ALVAH N. BELDING MEMORIAL LIBRARY

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES, BUILDING COMMUNITY

NOTICE OF HOLIDAY CLOSINGS: The Belding Library will be closed for the holiday season Dec. 24 - Dec.28 and Dec. 31 - Jan 4. The library will be open during regular hours on Monday & Tuesday, Dec. 22&23 and Dec. 29&30. Regular library hours resume on January 5. Items may be returned in the drop box when the library is closed.

LIBRARY CANDLELIGHT RECEPTION: The Friends of the Belding Library will host their annual Candlelight Reception on Monday evening, December 1, 2008, at 8:00 p.m. Entertainment will be provided by the 8th Grade Musicians and refreshments served. Everyone is invited!

2009 BOOKED-WITH-FRIENDS PROGRAM SERIES

Booked with Friends programs are held on the third Thursday of each month, except the February program.

For reservations, please call the library (616-794-1450) the week before the program. Cost of lunch is \$3.00.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2009 - 12:00 NOON - PERSONAL MEMOIRS OF WORLD WAR II EXPERIENCES by veterans Adair and Lila Simmons. Adair will tell about his wartime experiences and Lila will share stories from the viewpoint of a nurse during their time in the Air Corp. Hear these accounts from members of the "greatest generation".

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2009 - 12:00 NOON - TALL HAT AND TALL TALES - Come and share in the bicentennial celebration of Abraham Lincoln's birthday as Rev. Steve Charnley, Greenville, uses anecdotes and tales to take us back to Abe's mischievous boyhood through the struggles of young adulthood, culminating in his leadership during the turbulent times of the Civil War. *Note: This program is a Tuesday, not a Thursday, program.*

THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2009 - 12:00 NOON - ECO-GREEN BURIAL— Rev. Darrell Brown and his wife, Rev. Tracy Therrien, of Faithful Visions Church in Muir will present information about green burial as a natural end-of-life option. They have donated 10 acres overlooking the Maple River north of Muir as the first green cemetery in Michigan.

THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 2009 - 12:00 NOON - LEARN GARDENING TIPS FROM BELDING GARDENEERS - Members of Belding Gardeneers will share gardening tips to inspire you this gardening season as well as tell about the many projects undertaken by the club. Join us and get ready for spring

"ON THE SAME PAGE IN IONIA COUNTY" sponsored by the Ionia County Library Association. All interested readers are asked to read the same book during the winter months and discuss it with their friends and neighbors. The book title will be announced at the library in early January. The Belding Book Discussion Groups will be discussing this title on Thursday, February 26, at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. Readers may attend either of these discussions or one of the other discussion sessions scheduled at any of the other Ionia County Libraries. Bookmarks with these dates and times will be available at the Belding Library in January. Readers who cannot make any of these scheduled meetings are encouraged to form their own discussion group. The idea is to get everyone reading and discussing the same book county wide. It will be a great read for the long winter!! A special countywide, culminating event is being planned and will be announced in January.

YOUTH SERVICES AND EVENTS

Call 794-1450 or stop at the circulation desk to register for any of the following programs

WIGGLY WEDNESDAY FOR CHILDREN 3-5 YEARS will be held 10-11 a.m. each Wednesday, November 5 through December 17. Weekly programs will resume on January 14, 2009. Participants will hear stories, do crafts and play games. Parents or caregivers are encouraged to attend the last half hour to help with the crafts.

FRIDAY FRIENDS FOR CHILDREN 18-36 MONTHS will be held 11-11:45 a.m. each Friday, November 7 through December 19, 2008. Weekly programs will resume January 16, 2009. Participants will enjoy stories, songs and friends each week. An adult must accompany each child during the program.

BABY TIME FOR INFANTS 1 - 17 MONTHS will be held 10-10:20 a.m. each Friday, beginning January 16. The program uses music and nursery rhymes appropriate for infants. An adult must accompany the child during the program.

FAMILY STORY TIMES will be held 6:30-7:15 p.m. the second Thursday each month, November - April. All ages are welcome. Come enjoy stories and activities related to a different theme each month as a regular family outing. Science is the theme for November; Christmas is the theme for December. Themes for upcoming programs will be announced later.

Something new for teens:

Teens 14-18 are invited to join a Teen Advisory Board that will meet the third Thursday of each month from 2:45-3:15 p.m. With the help of the Youth Services Librarian, Cindy Hughes, this group will discuss and develop creative activities for teens in the library. They will be asked to give their input about books and ways to promote teen library use. Volunteer opportunities will also be discussed.

Look for these favorite programs returning in 2009:

LEGO CONTEST for Father/Son, Father/Daughter, or any adult male with a school-aged boy or girl in K-8th grade is welcome to participate. If interested, attend the kick-off meeting at 6:30 pm on Thursday, January 22, 2009. This is great winter fun for the family!

FANCY NANCY PARTY for Mothers and Daughters 3-10 years of age will be held Saturday, March 21, 2009. Look for more information to be announced in early March. Start a family tradition.

Come in and meet the new Youth Services Librarian, Cindy Hughes. Cindy, a native Belding resident, began her position with the Belding Library on October 15. She is at the library Wednesday - Friday and some Saturdays and is always eager to assist children and parents with their library needs.

WE'RE ON THE WEB
WWW.CI.BELDING.MI.US



PRSR STD
US Postage
PAID
Belding, MI
Permit No. 77

120 S. Pleasant St.
Belding, MI 48809

Phone: 616-794-1900
Fax: 616-794-0091

U.S. Postal Customer
Belding, MI 48809

4th Annual Lights in the Park
Saturday, December 6, 2008 from 6-8 p.m.

The Silk City Nature Trail will be lit with candles from the corner of Ashfield and Park Streets, down throughout East Riverside Park.

Stop by and visit the Silk City Nature Association for some Holiday Cheer!

Sponsored by the Silk City Nature Association.

HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

2nd Annual Home for the Holidays

A community holiday celebration will be held on Saturday, December 6, 2008 at the Covered Village Mall from 12 noon to 5 p.m.

Decorated trees will be on display to earn your vote through a child's unwrapped toy (donated to Toys for Tots), a non-perishable food item (donated to local food pantries) or a small cash donation for community charities. A winter coat drive will benefit local children. A Silent Auction will benefit local charities.

Enjoy cookie decorating, live entertainment, refreshments, and make a card for The Troops.

Santa will be present from 1-3 p.m. to greet children. The Tree Lighting Ceremony will take place at 4 p.m.

The Belding Emergency Fund will hold a pancake breakfast from 9:30 a.m. to noon at the Belrockton. Donations will be accepted.

Belding Museum Celebrations

Community Christmas Trees
You're invited to visit the Belding Museum on Sunday, December 7th, from 1-4 p.m. Our holiday display will feature Christmas trees that have been decorated by Belding Area Schools students and various organizations from our community. The trees are a delight to see, decked out in handmade or unique ornaments to reflect each group's personality.

Breakfast with Santa
Please join us for "Breakfast with Santa" on Saturday, December 13th from 9-11 a.m. at the Belding Museum. Santa will arrive ready to hear your Christmas wishes while you enjoy a warm pancake breakfast, special treats, and a tour of the museum decorated in its holiday finest! All adults must be accompanied by a child! Event is free. Donations gladly accepted.

Belding Area Schools and the Belding Museum - Partners in Education

New Year's Eve Celebration

To celebrate the New Year, a spaghetti dinner will be held at the Belrockton on Wednesday, December 31, 2008. Hors d'oeuvres will be served at 5:30 p.m., with dinner and entertainment following. Tickets are limited to 100 and will be available for purchase at city hall at a cost of \$15.00.

The fireworks will take place at 8:30 p.m. at Central Riverside Park. Following the fireworks, please join us at the Belrockton for cake and punch, free of charge.

