



# DeKalb TOWNSHIP

Newsletter, Spring 2026



## FROM THE DESK OF THE SUPERVISOR

Since 2021, my office has worked intentionally and diligently to enhance the way DeKalb Township serves you. From expanding and diversifying services, to improving operational efficiency, to increasing our presence within the community, our focus has remained constant: delivering responsive, high-quality services that meet the evolving needs of our residents. We are equally committed to protecting your tax dollars. Even as we have strengthened programs and modernized systems, DeKalb Township's portion of your property tax bill has remained among the lowest over the past five years. We believe responsible government means being both service-driven and fiscally disciplined — investing wisely while minimizing financial impact on our taxpayers.



In 2026, we continue that commitment with a project that honors our past while preparing for the future. This spring, we will break ground on Peace Park, a new extension of Oakwood Cemetery. Peace Park is designed to serve multiple purposes for our community. It will provide a beautifully landscaped, serene setting for reflection and remembrance, while also addressing a growing need for additional cremation burial options.

The project will include a 100-niche columbarium, expected to be installed in fall 2026. This mausoleum-style structure will offer residents a dignified and lasting option for the interment of cremated remains. As more families choose cremation, it is important that we provide thoughtful, local options within a setting that reflects the respect and care our community values.

Peace Park will also offer meaningful opportunities for families to memorialize loved ones — through tree adoptions, bench naming rights, and commemorative paver bricks. These features not only create lasting tributes, but also allow residents to become part of the landscape and legacy of this special place. With its mature oak trees and natural beauty, Oakwood Cemetery has long been a peaceful and historic part of our township. Through Peace Park, we are building upon that foundation — creating a space that is both functional and inspiring, community-centered and financially responsible.

It is an honor to serve you, and I look forward to sharing more updates as this exciting project progresses.

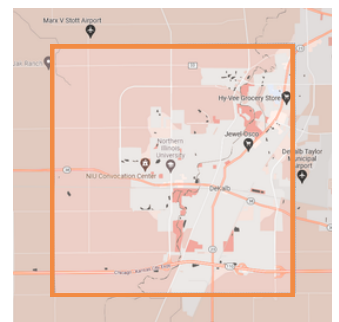
## DATES TO REMEMBER

**THE TOWNSHIP OFFICES WILL BE CLOSED ON THE FOLLOWING DATES:**

- APRIL 3  
*(afternoon only)*
- MAY 25
- JUNE 19
- JULY 3
- SEPTEMBER 7
- OCTOBER 12
- NOVEMBER 11
- NOVEMBER 26
- NOVEMBER 27
- DECEMBER 24
- DECEMBER 25

*See website for full details*

## SERVICE AREA



# 250 TREES FOR TOMORROW



## How to Request Free Trees and Shrubs from DeKalb Township

Getting started is easy. Just fill out the “250 Trees for Tomorrow Request Form”, available on the Township website, at the Township office, or via the QR code below.



**Request forms should be returned to the Township Supervisor's Office.**

For additional information visit: <https://dekalbtownship.org/residential-services/>

In honor of our nation's 250th Anniversary, DeKalb Township is excited to launch a multi-year effort to plant 250 trees throughout our community. As we pause to honor generations of sacrifice and service, we also look forward with hope to a brighter tomorrow. Planting trees today helps make our neighborhoods stronger, our air cleaner, and our community healthier for future generations.

We're kicking things off with a special tree planting event on April 21 from 9 AM - noon at Elder Care Services in DeKalb, and you're invited! This event, happening during Arbor Day week, is just the beginning of a multi-year effort to grow and strengthen our local tree canopy. If you'd like to volunteer for this event, or any of the other tree plantings scheduled for later this year, please reach out to Kimberly.

But that's not all — residents, businesses, organizations, and government groups can get involved by planting trees and shrubs in other locations across DeKalb Township. The Township will provide select varieties at no cost to those who commit to planting them within our boundaries. Trees and shrubs will be available for pickup twice a year, during the spring and fall planting seasons.

If you have questions, contact Kimberly at 815-758-8282 or visit our website for more information.



**CHICAGO REGION TREES INITIATIVE**

The “250 Trees for Tomorrow” initiative is made possible thanks to the generous support of The Morton Arboretum and the Chicago Region Trees Initiative.



## STAFF IN ACTION

Staff from the Supervisor's office regularly engage in professional development training to sharpen their skills and expand their knowledge—all with one goal in mind: serving our residents better.

Last month, team members attended the 2026 Illinois Township Management Academy, hosted by NIU's Department of Public Administration. This year's sessions explored cutting-edge topics including artificial intelligence, as well as strategies for delivering "next-level" customer service. Trainings like these inspire our staff to grow professionally and equip them with tools to make our community services even more effective and responsive.



## TOWNSHIP SEEKS NEW CLERK

The DeKalb Township Board of Trustees is seeking a qualified individual to fill a vacancy in the Clerk's office. The Board will appoint a new clerk at its May 19, 2026 meeting, and the appointed Clerk will serve the remainder of the current term, which runs through May 2029.

This opening comes after Clerk Joan Watson-Protano announced her resignation at the February 17, 2026 Board meeting, due to plans to relocate. To be considered, applicants must be legal voters and residents of DeKalb Township, having lived in the Township for no less than one year. A full description of the Clerk's duties is available upon request.

Those interested should submit a letter of interest by Friday, May 1, 2026, to Mary Hess, Supervisor at DeKalb Township, 2323 S. 4th Street, DeKalb, IL 60115, or by email to [supervisor@dekalbtownship.org](mailto:supervisor@dekalbtownship.org). Additional information will be provided once a letter of interest is received. Questions can also be directed to Mary Hess at 815-758-8282 or via the email address provided above.



## BIRTHDAY BASH

The DeKalb Township celebrated 175 years of serving township residents on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Current and former staff members, current and former elected officials, and members of the general public gathered to commemorate the event. Thank you to all who joined us in celebration!

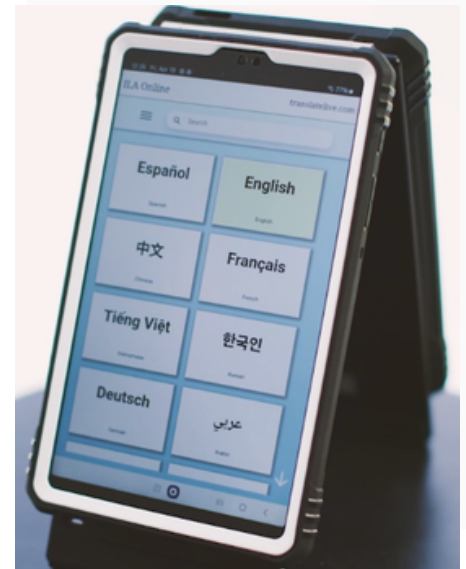
# BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

Communication is at the heart of what we do at DeKalb Township, and we're always looking for ways to make information more accessible to our residents. From social media platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, Nextdoor, and YouTube to expanded information on the Township website, we leverage multiple channels to share news, updates, and resources. In 2024 we launched our Resources page, a robust section of our website that grants residents easy access to information about community resources, events and services.

We also work to break down employment barriers through our weekly job postings and access to free professional job coaching services. These help residents to connect with work and career opportunities. Additionally, we recognize that language should never be a barrier to

access, so the Township added a website translation function in 2023, which allows content to be read in fourteen different languages. More recently, staff learned how to communicate seamlessly with non-English-speaking residents through translation tablets.

Improving the quality of life for residents means addressing the obstacles that get in the way—whether that's access to information, employment, or simple day-to-day communication. By embracing new tools and technology, we're breaking down barriers and making it easier than ever for everyone in our community to stay informed and engaged.



## NEW LAW CHANGES SNAP RULES

On July 1, 2025, a new law was signed that made significant changes to the federally-funded state-administered SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) program. These changes went into effect in January 2026. Under the new law, most SNAP recipients will need to prove that they work or volunteer for a total of 80 hours per month, or participate in certain trainings or education. Failure to comply with these new requirements will result in recipients being "blocked" from receiving SNAP benefits for three years.

But that's not all this new law did. The law also made changes in SNAP eligibility on account of immigration status, excluding many immigrants who are legally present in the United States and those who previously qualified under humanitarian protections.

For more information about changes to SNAP under this new law, visit <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/> or scan the QR code above.



## NEED VOLUNTEER HOURS?

The DeKalb Chamber of Commerce Leadership Academy, Class of 2025/2026 will host a volunteer fair on Thursday, April 9<sup>th</sup> from 3 - 5 PM at the Egyptian Theatre in DeKalb.

Representatives from various local organizations will be present to share community service opportunities.

**Additionally, DeKalb Township is seeking volunteers for community tree planting events in 2026.**

# HUMAN SERVICE FUNDING

Under Illinois Township Code, The DeKalb Township Board of Trustees allocates funds on an annual basis to various local human service providers. The non-profit organizations who receive this funding provide vital services to our residents and are key to keeping our community members healthy. The programming provided through Township funding ensures that all residents of DeKalb Township have access to comprehensive services. These organizations are currently receiving Human Service Funding:



## COMMITTEE ON YOUTH GRANTS AWARDED

The DeKalb Township Committee on Youth (COY) recently awarded two local organizations with funding for youth-focused projects. COY focuses on supporting programming and services that combat and prevent juvenile delinquency as well as initiatives that provide for the well-being of underserved and underprivileged youth and their families residing in DeKalb Township.

This Funding cycle, the Committee on Youth proudly awarded Rooted for Good and Project H.O.P.E. with COY grants to support two initiatives that aim to help youth in distinct ways. Rooted for Good will use this funding to provide hygiene packages to children in need in order to increase child health, improve self-esteem, decrease isolation, and decrease the risk of bullying. Project H.O.P.E. will use this funding for their SIMBA & SIMSA youth programs which help at-risk youth develop safe communication and self-expression strategies, while creating and maintaining a positive vision for their relationships, education, careers, and lives.



COY's next application deadline is September 1, 2026.

For more information, visit: <https://dekalbtownship.org/committee-on-youth/>

# UPCOMING TOWNSHIP EVENTS

**Early Voting at DeKalb Township: MARCH 2 - MARCH 13, 8:30-4:30, 7 days a week**

## MARCH

- 25** **I-PASS/ICASH** @ DeKalb Township, 9 AM - 2 PM
- 26 & 27** **AARP Smart Driver Course** @ DeKalb Township, 9 AM - 1PM

## APRIL

- 21** **Community Tree Planting Event** - 250 Trees for Tommorrow Launch @ Elder Care Services, 9 AM - Noon

## MAY

- 1** **Senior Car Clinic** @ Kishwaukee College, 9 AM - 11 AM
- 6 & 7** **AARP Smart Driver Course** @ DeKalb Township, 10 AM - 2 PM
- 16** **Spring Shred & Recycle Event** @ Kishwaukee Family YMCA, 9 AM - 11 AM

## JUNE

- 10** **Citizen's Utility Board Presentation** @ DeKalb Public Library, 6:30-7:30 PM
- 17** **Citizen's Utility Board Utility Clinic** @ DeKalb Township, 5:30-7:30 PM
- 24** **Mobile DMV** @ DeKalb Township, 10 am - 2 pm

Please see our events calendar or resources page for event flyers and additional details.

## AUGUST

- 6** **Wise & Well Senior Summit** @ DeKalb County Farm Bureau
- 27 & 28** **AARP Smart Driver Course** @ DeKalb Township, 10 AM - 2 PM

## SEPTEMBER

- 17** **I-PASS/ICASH** @ DeKalb Township, 2 - 6 PM

## OCTOBER

- 3** **Fall Shred & Recycle Event** @ Kishwaukee Family YMCA, 9 - 11 AM

**FREE Legal Aid is also available the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month from 12-4 PM.**

## GET NOTIFIED

Want to be the first to know about new services and events? Sign up to receive text alerts and/or email communications aimed at keeping you in the loop.

Register in our lobby or on our website, <https://dekalbtownship.org/events/>

SCAN



## NEW THIS YEAR

In January 2026, the Township began hosting monthly, no-cost legal consultations for income-eligible residents and senior citizens at DeKalb Township, through a partnership with Prairie State Legal services.

Held on the third Tuesday of each month from 12:00 to 4:00 p.m., the service connects residents with assistance for civil legal matters such as eviction, nursing facility discharge, denial or reduction of public benefits, and employment issues, including unemployment claims.

Eligibility is based on income, age, legal status, and other factors. Advance appointments are encouraged, though walk-ins are welcome as availability allows.

For more information, or to schedule an appointment, call 815-758-8282.

## ADVANCE CARE DIRECTIVE WORKSHOPS

For the second year in a row, DeKalb Township hosted free Advance Care Planning sessions in January, helping residents document their healthcare wishes before a medical crisis occurs.

During these one-on-one sessions, participants received guidance from a trained medical professional as they completed their Power of Attorney for Healthcare, Living Wills, and POLST forms

The program was offered in collaboration with Northwestern Medicine's Advance Care Planning team. Individuals who were unable to take part in these sessions but wish to complete any of the forms mentioned above are invited to contact the Township for support.



## 2026 BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE

### MONTHLY MEETING SCHEDULE

JANUARY 20  
FEBRUARY 17  
MARCH 17  
APRIL 21  
MAY 19  
JUNE 16

JULY 21  
AUGUST 18  
SEPTEMBER 15  
OCTOBER 20  
NOVEMBER 17  
DECEMBER 15

### 2026 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

APRIL 21  
Annual Town Meeting: 7 PM  
Township Board Room,  
2323 S. 4<sup>th</sup> St. DeKalb, IL

Board meetings are held at 6 PM in the Township Board Room,  
2323 S. 4<sup>th</sup> St. DeKalb, unless otherwise noted.

Follow us on Social Media:



## ELECTED TOWNSHIP OFFICIALS



2323 S. 4<sup>TH</sup> ST.  
DEKALB, IL 60115  
DEKALBTOWNSHIP.ORG  
OFFICE HOURS: 8:30-4:30  
*Se habla el espanol*



Office of the Supervisor,  
Mary Hess  
815-758-8282  
Office of the Assessor, Rich Dyer  
815-758-5454  
Office of the Highway  
Commissioner, Craig Smith  
815-758-5658

**TRUSTEES**  
Dale Thurman  
Nancy Bradlo  
Greg Akers  
Katherine McLaughlin

**CLERK**  
Joan Protano