

AURORA BOREALIS



Shining light on the City of Aurora's electrical aggregation referendum

Question: The Aurora City Council authorized the following referendum question to be placed on the March 20, 2012 General Primary election ballot: "Shall the City of Aurora have the authority to arrange for the supply of electricity for its residents and small commercial retail customers who have not opted-out of such program?"

What does this mean?: If the referendum passes, the City would purchase electricity on behalf of its residents and small businesses through a competitive bidding process from an electricity supplier other than Commonwealth Edison (ComEd). While the level of savings for Aurora residents would be based on the lowest acceptable bid, savings of about 12 to 18 percent have been obtained on electricity costs in the 18 Illinois towns that have already gone through the competitive bidding process.

Potential savings:

An example bill for a customer with a current monthly charge of \$80

Distribution (ComEd) – \$28
Supply (ComEd) – \$52
Total bill – \$80



Estimated average monthly bill with 15% savings

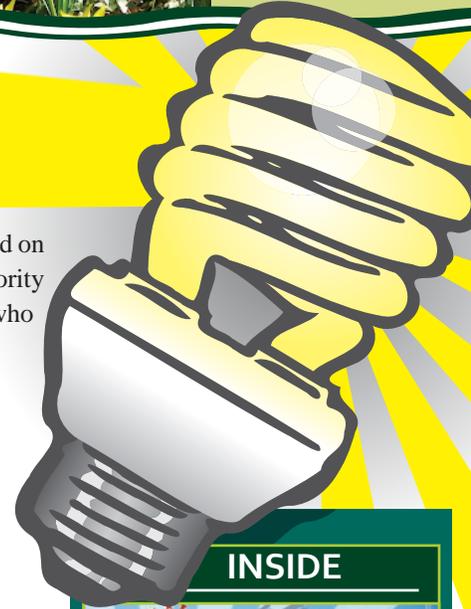
Distribution (ComEd) – \$28
Supply (Alternative supplier) – \$40
Total bill – \$68

Opting-out: Residents and small businesses may choose to "opt-out" and not participate in the City's electrical aggregation program. If the referendum is successful, two mailings will be sent to all electricity customers asking whether they wish to "opt-out" of the program. Customers electing to "opt-out" will continue to purchase electricity from ComEd, as they do currently.

Important to note: If the referendum is successful, and the City approves an electric supply contract with an alternative supplier other than ComEd, you should know:

- ComEd would continue to be responsible for the distribution of electricity. In other words, ComEd still would maintain power lines and bring power from the alternative electricity supplier to Aurora residents and small business owners.
- City electricity customers would still call ComEd if they experienced a problem with their service.
- Customers would continue to receive only one electric bill, which would come from ComEd. The cost of electricity provided by the supplier and ComEd's delivery fees would be reflected on the ComEd bill.
- The City of Aurora would receive no revenue from this arrangement.

For more info: For more information about the program, visit www.aurora-il.org or call 630-585-5266 with questions. ☎



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From the Mayor's Desk

Aurora community comes together to enhance educational opportunities

Dear neighbor,

In order to prosper in the 21st century global economy, American cities like Aurora must remain competitive.

There is little question that education plays a key role in competitiveness, and research now shows that early learning can be a huge key to success in our schools.

Recently, the Dunham Fund – a local, educationally-focused foundation created by the late John Dunham, a former Aurora industrialist and philanthropist – issued an Early Learning Challenge grant to the Fox Valley United Way. The challenge grant was intended to support the creation of an early learning collaborative that would increase learning opportunities for Aurora children, ages 3 to 5, and prepare them for success.

The City of Aurora worked closely with Fox Valley United Way to make our local school districts aware of this rare opportunity and our school district leaders were clearly listening. On Jan. 12, West Aurora School District 129, East Aurora School District 131, Indian Prairie School District 204 and Oswego Community Unit School District 308, along with the Dunham Fund and the City of Aurora, announced the foundation of SPARK (Strong, Prepared and Ready for Kindergarten), a multi-district collaborative partnership to enhance early learning in Aurora.

The goal of SPARK is to reach a much higher proportion of our pre-schoolers than we have in the past with early learning services available through local and state funding; to enhance awareness of parents to both the availability and the value of early learning opportunities; and to train key people, such as day care providers, in early learning methods.

District 129 Superintendent Jim Rydland spoke for all of the involved school districts when he said that SPARK “can light up our community, light up an opportunity for us to make sure we’re focusing on children and that all those children can share a bright future.” As Mayor of a city served by multiple school districts, I am very pleased to see SPARK take shape. In times when critical needs must be met with limited resources, collaborative partnerships are the most effective way to get things done.

Speaking of educational partnerships, Aurora University, which celebrates its 100th anniversary this year, is at the center of another promising collaboration.

Working with the same school districts partnering in SPARK, as well as state legislators, the City, the private sector, and multiple community organizations, Aurora University is driving an effort to create what could be called a STEM Academy (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), which would enhance education in these critical fields for area children in third through eighth grades.

Equally important, it would create a STEM curriculum for use by existing Aurora schools and select and train local district teachers as Academy faculty, ultimately sending them back to lead local STEM education efforts in their neighborhood schools.

The STEM Academy recently became one step closer to reality with the announcement of a major grant to AU from the Exelon Corporation. Aurora University has a proud century of accomplishment and has certainly been a catalyst for positive change in our community during the last decade.

These are just two examples of our community working together to better itself. The City of Aurora is proud to be part of these ongoing partnerships that continually push our community forward.

Respectfully,

Tom Weisner
Mayor, City of Aurora

Commemorate Aurora's milestone with a 175th anniversary poster

Aurora residents can mark the City's 175th year of incorporation by purchasing an official anniversary poster.

The poster, which was created by 1997 West Aurora High School graduate Neal Ormond, is an updated version of the 1937 centennial poster (which you can find on the Aurora Historical Society's website at www.aurorahistory.net). The new poster incorporates an updated version of the Goddess of the Dawn overlooking historic Aurora landmarks and the Fox River.

The poster is available at the David L. Pierce Art and History Center gift shop, 20 W. Downer Place. The 13- by 19-inch prints are priced at \$10 or \$16 for a dry-mounted copy. Both the Art and History Center and gift shop are open from 1 to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Fridays. ☘



AURORA at 175

A look back at the City's history

Editor's note: As Aurora celebrates its 175th anniversary in 2012, the Aurora Borealis will take a look back on key moments that shaped the City's history. The first in the four-part series focuses on the founding of Aurora and its early years.

Joseph McCarty, a pioneer from New York State, headed west seeking a new home. Reaching the Fox Valley, he built the first campfire in 1834 at a point near what is now known as Stolp Island in downtown Aurora.

McCarty thought the location along the Fox River was an ideal place for a new community, setting the stage for a permanent settlement called McCarty Mills for the grist and saw mills operated by Joseph and his brother, Samuel.

In 1837, the community was officially recognized by the federal government with the establishment of the first U.S. Post Office. Waubonsie was an early favorite to name the town after the Indian chief that inhabited the area before settlers. However, there was a Post Office in Illinois with that name. Residents selected the village's name to be Aurora, which in Roman mythology means the Goddess of the Dawn.

The Village originally existed only on the east side of the Fox River. The McCarty's sold their west side claim a year earlier to Zaphna Lake,

who along with his brother Theodore, proceeded to develop the settlement that came to be known as West Aurora. The two towns remained separate entities until uniting under the City of Aurora in 1857.

However, fierce mistrust remained in those early years between both former communities, including not agreeing upon which side of the river should house Aurora's government buildings. Stolp Island became the neutral territory, where the Post Office, City Hall and Public Library were built.

Construction on the original City Hall (located on the current site of the Stolp Avenue parking garage) took place from 1859 to 1866. The project took longer than expected due to cost overruns and disruption of the economy from the Civil War.

The first electric street lights were installed in 1881 and were touted – although never confirmed – as being the first electric street lights in the world. An electric sign was later placed at the City Hall entrance saying Aurora was the “City of Lights,” which became the City's official slogan still used today. ❁



Honoring Hispanic Heritage

Dr. Eva Serrano, an assistant professor at Aurora University and director of the school's Latino initiatives, won the Peter J. Perez Award for her dedication to improving the Hispanic community. Pictured with Dr. Serrano is Kane County Sheriff Pat Perez, Peter's son. The Aurora Hispanic Heritage Advisory Board also recognized students from kindergarten through college excelling in the classroom as part of its annual Community Breakfast celebration held in January.

City balances budget, reduces tax levy

Even though happy economic times have not returned, the City of Aurora's 2012 budget forecast is more sunny thanks to cuts and other cost-containment measures.

Budgeted revenues for City services are expected to decline by about 6 percent in 2012, but steps taken by City leaders the past two years to reduce expenses have translated to more financial stability. Those cuts have included eliminating 182.5 full-time equivalent positions, cutting non-essential services, implementing pay freezes, instituting furlough days and negotiating wage concessions from various union groups.

The City's budget planning will result in a savings for homeowners on the City's portion of their tax bill.

“The budget cuts have eased the burden on residents and businesses by reducing the total amount the City collects in property taxes to the lowest level since 2005,” Mayor Tom Weisner said. “As a result, Aurora taxpayers should pay less for City services once again in 2012.”

For 2012, City officials anticipate maintaining current workforce levels without furlough days or wage freezes. City employees have been asked to take on a bigger portion of their health care costs to provide additional relief for taxpayers.

Despite limited resources, the City has prioritized spending to focus on enhanced public safety, upgrading infrastructure, strengthening the economic tax base and establishing Aurora as a regional technology and environmental leader. The City also plans to resurface about 47 lane-miles of arterial streets in 2012 and has already started construction on replacing the Downer Place bridges in downtown Aurora.

Stay connected

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Aurora community lights a SPARK for increased early childhood programs

The Aurora community demonstrated a strong commitment to the importance of improving early childhood education opportunities to help children succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

In January, the Aurora Early Childhood Learning Initiative announced the \$500,000 launch of a multi-district early learning program for Aurora. The joint venture is being led by the Fox Valley United Way, the Dunham Fund, City of Aurora, East Aurora School District 131, West Aurora School District 129, Indian Prairie School District 204 and Oswego Community Unit School District 308.

"I am consistently impressed with our community's commitment to working together to create a brighter future for the children of Aurora," Mayor Tom Weisner said. "There is no greater goal than to equip our children with the tools they will need in life."

While Aurora families on the East side have taken advantage of the One Hope United's Early Learning Center last fall, the community need for additional resources remained City-wide. Children who enter kindergarten without key readiness skills – social, self-control, early literacy, math and vocabulary – are likely to remain academically behind their peers throughout their school years. Many of these children are at high risk of not completing high school as teenagers.

Although local school districts have expanded their early education opportunities, a large percentage of Aurora preschoolers remained unserved.

The Aurora program is called SPARK: Strong, Prepared and Ready for Kindergarten. A big part of the program's role will be to help school districts and other early childhood providers coordinate their efforts.

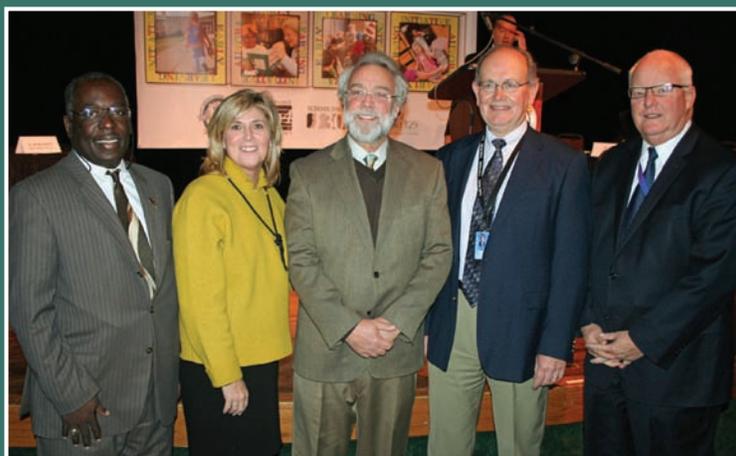
The Aurora SPARK model is patterned after a national United Way early childhood program, Success by 6, which operates in more than 350 communities across the country.

How the SPARK will be lit

- Ensure families are aware of the importance of early learning and connect them with programs and services
- Coordinate efforts among Aurora school districts in early childhood programs and childcare providers to maximize both impact and efficiency
- Improve and expand early childhood education and care program opportunities in Aurora

"The ultimate benefit of this program is to produce a better educated and better prepared workforce that will help meet the future needs of our employers," said Mike Meyer, Fox Valley United Way CEO.

For more information about Aurora's Early Learning Initiative or to make a donation, call the Fox Valley United Way at 630-896-4636. ☘



Helping announce the joint venture earlier this winter are (from left to right) District 131 Superintendent Jerome Roberts, District 204 Superintendent Kathy Birkett, Mayor Tom Weisner, District 308 Superintendent Dan O'Donnell and District 129 Superintendent James Rydland.

Start of spring means yard clean-up season not far behind

With spring around the corner, it is time to start thinking about yard work and marking your calendar for the City's free yard waste collection during the first two weeks in April. Yard waste and unbundled brush (specifics on both programs are below) should be placed at the curb by 6 a.m. For more information, visit www.aurora-il.org or call 630-256-INFO.

Yard waste

Residents can dispose of an unlimited amount of yard waste for free in 30-gallon Kraft paper bags without using a sticker during the first two weeks in April (April 2 to 13) on their regular garbage collection day. Bags must not exceed 60 pounds. Starting Monday, April 16, a garbage waste sticker must be attached to the bag. Yard waste mixed with garbage or yard waste placed in a garbage can or plastic bag will not be collected.

Unbundled brush

Branches and limbs that are ½ inch to 4 inches in diameter and 2 to 4 feet in length can be placed at the curb without a waste sticker. Brush should be placed in neat piles in the same direction with the cut side of the limbs facing the street. Unmanageable piles will not be collected. Brush that is less than ½ inch in diameter is considered yard waste. Brush is collected for free April through November. Brush resulting from commercial tree trimming jobs will not be collected.

Get the latest information on the Downer Place bridge project

Construction is underway on the Downer Place bridges, and the City has plenty of ways to help you navigate through downtown Aurora. The City's website, www.aurora-il.org, will provide you with a detour route, parking details and other information on the bridge project. Other ways to keep on top of the construction progress include:

- **Email updates:** You can receive email updates by visiting the City's website. Under the "Get Your City News" box, click the "Email Updates" link and sign up.
- **Social media:** Updates will be provided on the City's Facebook and Twitter accounts, which can be found on the City's website.
- **Customer Service Center:** Call the City's Customer Service Center between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday at 630-256-INFO.
- **ACTV:** Tune in to Aurora Community Television on Comcast Ch. 10 or AT&T U-Verse Ch. 99 to view updates on the scrolling news bulletin boards.



The Aurora community sent off the Downer Place bridges in style Feb. 3 with a "Last Blast on the Bridge" ceremony. A flash mob performance was given by the Aurora Central Catholic High School dance team (above). Local dignitaries, including Second Ward Alderman Juany Garza (left), spoke to a large crowd on the bridge about the project.



Don't miss out on your chance to purchase a rain barrel

The City of Aurora and The Conservation Foundation will be joining forces again to promote environmental stewardship by selling rain barrels this spring.

The 55-gallon plastic containers are designed to collect water from rooftop gutters, which can then be used to fill watering cans or buckets. Why would you want a rain barrel? Rain water stored in barrels help:

- Reduce the amount of storm-water runoff and the amount of pollutants that are picked up and carried to storm sewers, creeks and the Fox River;
- Conserve water used from underground aquifers; and
- Hydrate plants and gardens better because the naturally soft water is devoid of minerals, chlorine, fluoride and other chemicals.

For more information, including how to purchase your rain barrel, visit www.aurora-il.org.



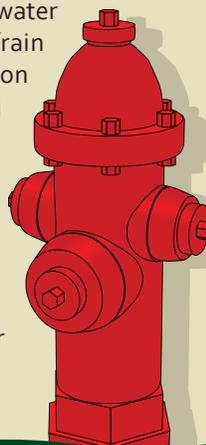
Before you wash those clothes

The Aurora Fire Department will be flow testing fire hydrants in May and June to make sure they operate properly in the event of an emergency.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?: The water is SAFE to drink, but run faucets for 30 seconds or longer if discoloration appears. The hydrant testing may produce rusty water capable of staining clothes. Residents should refrain from doing laundry between 8 a.m. and noon Monday through Thursday during the testing period.

IF YOUR CLOTHES ARE STAINED?: Laundry stained by rusty water should not be dried. The AFD and Water Production facility offer free chemical treatment to remove these stains.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Call Customer Service at 630-256-INFO or visit www.aurora-il.org.



Aurora Spring Events!

MARCH

Saturday, March 10 Electronics recycling

9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Customer Service Center,
3770 McCoy Drive

State law now bans electronics from being sent to landfills. Aurora offers twice-monthly collection sites for you to conveniently dispose of old or unwanted electronics, this time on the Far East side. For a complete list of accepted items, call 630-256-INFO or visit the City's website at www.aurora-il.org. Residents with ground-level floors can also schedule a front-door collection appointment (maximum 10 items) by calling the City's vendor, Vintage Tech Recyclers, at 630-305-0922.

Saturday, March 24 Electronics recycling

9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Central Garage Facility,
720 N. Broadway Ave.

Last year, residents on average turned in about 30,000 pounds of unwanted electronics at each collection event. Take advantage of this free program, this time in downtown Aurora. For a complete list of accepted items, call 630-256-INFO or visit the City's website at www.aurora-il.org. Vintage Tech Recyclers also offers permanent collection sites throughout the year at Habitat for Humanity ReStore, 4100 Fox Valley Center, and the Community Thrift Store, 315 E. Indian Trail Road.

Thursday, March 29 Waubonsee in Aurora: A Shared History

6 p.m.

Multi-purpose room at Waubonsee
Community College, 18 S. River St.

Tying in with the City's 175th anniversary celebration, the night will start with a new exhibit on the community college's presence in Aurora since 1966. At 7 p.m., the discussion will shift to other

aspects of Aurora's history such as the Weaver's Loom, the story of Pigeon Hill and the community's Hungarian-Romanian immigrant population.

APRIL

Saturday, April 14 Electronics recycling

9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Customer Service Center,
3770 McCoy Drive

Friday, April 27 Arbor Day

1 p.m.

To be determined

Residents attending the Arbor Day ceremony will be eligible to pick up a free tree sapling, while supplies last. More details about the Arbor Day celebration will be posted on the City's website, www.aurora-il.org, in the coming weeks.

Saturday, April 28 Steps to Homeownership seminar

9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Quad County Urban League,
1685 N. Farnsworth Ave.

Free workshops will be offered on homebuyer counseling, improving credit scores, down payment assistance and City of Aurora-owned homes for sale. The first 20 attendees will receive \$20 food vouchers from Cermak Foods in

Aurora. For more information, call the City's Neighborhood Redevelopment Division at 630-256-3320.

Electronics recycling

9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Central Garage Facility,
720 N. Broadway Ave.

El Dia de los Ninos

1 to 5 p.m.

Aurora Transportation Center
east parking lot, near Spring
and Lincoln streets

"The Day of Our Children" is full of storytelling, reading and activities for the whole family. The event is sponsored by the Aurora Hispanic Heritage Advisory Board, East Aurora School District 131, West Aurora School District 129 and the City. For more information, visit www.aurorahispanicheritage.com or call the City's Special Events Division at 630-256-3370.

MAY

Friday, May 4 From the Ground Up, A History of Architecture in Aurora

Noon to 4 p.m. Wednesday to Friday

David L. Pierce Art & History
Center, 20 E. Downer Place

The exhibit will be on display through Friday, Aug. 17. For more information, visit www.aurora-il.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1910, Aurora residents were ordered to take a bath once a week. The Aurora Health Department and Police Department said residents who violated the rule would be arrested since the unwashed were considered a menace to health. Property owners were notified their places would be inspected each week to make sure the rules were enforced.





Swing into spring

As winter begins to fade away, golf season must be approaching.

Die-hard golfers already have been playing at the Phillips Park Golf Course, 1001 Hill Ave., during the past few months (weather permitting).

Later this spring, golfers also can take their best shots at the Fox Valley Golf Club, 2500 N. River Road, North Aurora.

Call 630-256-3760 to check on course availability. Get more information on the golf courses or book tee times online this spring at www.aurora-il.org.



Sunday, May 6 Motorcycle Sunday

9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Phillips Park, 1000 Ray Moses Drive

The 12th annual event, which attracted more than 1,000 people last year, will have something for every motorcycle enthusiast. The free event will feature a 60-mile motorcycle rally, live music, a bike blessing, bike shop and food vendors, safety presentations and people's choice bike contest. The 60-mile bike ride begins at 1 p.m. For more information, visit www.motorcyclesundayaurora.com.

Friday, May 11 Aurora Sports Festival

9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Main site is Phillips Park,
1000 Ray Moses Drive

The City celebrates May as National Physical Fitness and Sports month by inviting middle school students with grades of either an "A" or "B" in physical education to participate in "Olympic-style" sports and recreation competitions. For more information and other site locations, visit www.aurora-il.org.

Monday, May 28 Memorial Day Parade

Ceremony starts at 11:15 a.m.;

Parade steps off at noon

Downtown Aurora

Aurora will remember all those who gave their lives for our country during a parade and ceremony. With the Downer Place bridge construction taking place in the downtown, check out the City's website at www.aurora-il.org closer to the event for the new parade route.

JUNE

Saturday, June 2 Electronics recycling

9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Customer Service Center,
3770 McCoy Drive

Farmers Market

7:30 a.m. to noon

Aurora Transportation Center,
233 N. Broadway Ave.

The Aurora Farmers Market makes its 2012 debut and will be celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. The market, which will be held each Saturday through October, features farm-fresh produce, a variety of flowers, food demonstrations, knife sharpening and more. For more information, visit www.aurora-il.org.

Saturday, June 9 Farmers Market

7:30 a.m. to noon

Aurora Transportation Center,
233 N. Broadway Ave.

Louche Puce Market

9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Downtown Water Street Mall next
to City Hall, 44 E. Downer Place

The outdoor European-style vintage and collectable market will be held in the heart of downtown on the second Saturday of each month through September. Just a reminder, the Downer Place bridges will be closed. Visit the City's website at www.aurora-il.org to learn more about downtown parking. For more information on the market, contact Jeannie Norris at norrisjeanne@gmail.com.

Aurora Green Fest

10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Prisco Community Center,
150 W. Illinois Ave.

Aurora Green Fest is a free city-wide eco-fest showcasing the latest environmental ideas and technology. The event has expanded to more than 50 vendors featuring environmental products, services, money saving tips, live music, food, speakers and hands-on children's activities. A new exhibit this year will be the electric and high-efficiency car show. For more information, visit www.auroragreenlights.org.

Saturday and Sunday, June 9 and 10 Aurora Paddlesports Festival & Art in the Park

Festival starts at 9 a.m. and Art in
the Park is from noon to 5 p.m.

Phillips Park, 1000 Ray Moses Drive

The Paddlesports Festival is a two-day canoeing and kayaking event featuring plenty of activities both on water and land for beginners and experts alike. Patrons can take free boating lessons and check out vendor demonstrations and skill competitions. If you're looking for a land-based alternative, you can visit the Art in the Park event featuring live music, an art sale and show as well as refreshments for purchase. For more information, visit www.aurorapaddlesportsfestival.org and www.aurora-il.org.



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The Summer Issue of the Aurora Borealis will mail at the end of May. Deadline for space reservation is May 18th.

El Borealis de Aurora invita negocios hispanos para que se anuncien en este boletín. Se habla Español y nuestros precios son razonables.

the STRATHMORE company

2ND2NONE 5K RUN & WALK

Sunday, APRIL 29, 2012
RACE LOCATION:
Phillips Park Family Aquatic Center
828 Montgomery Road
Aurora, IL 60505

Race Start - 8:00 a.m.
Online Registration:
www.2nd2None5K.com

Benefitting Aurora Food Pantry & Communities In Schools
Be a part of the race that feeds children at risk of hunger over the summer.

ONLINE REGISTRATION CLOSES - FRIDAY, APRIL 27
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Child Pass (Ages 2 to 12)	\$49	\$59
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*Valid after 4 p.m. weekdays and all day on weekends and holidays.

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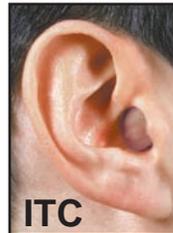


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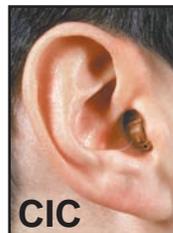
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Ward 2: Juany Garza

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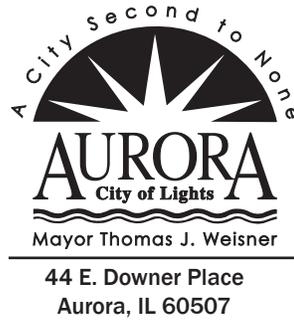
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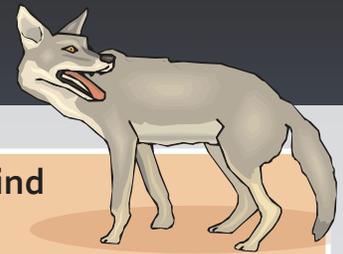


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Coyote Education 101: Stay informed



Aurora residents need to be familiar with some new neighbors becoming more prevalent in their neighborhood: coyotes.

Coyotes are a common wild animal in Illinois, but the population has seen a large increase during the past two decades, especially in the Chicago area. Typically, coyotes reside in wooded areas, however, there have been more frequent sightings in residential neighborhoods in recent years.

Aurora's Animal Control Division received 53 phone calls for coyotes in 2011 and 25 calls through the first eight weeks this year. Calls have been reported on the City's far Southeast side where homes are adjacent to rural or wooded areas and the West side. Increased sightings are not unusual because coyotes' mating cycles result in younger animals leaving their family territories and venturing out on their own. Coyotes are more nocturnal animals but may be more visible during the daytime in spring and summer.

In the wild, coyotes primarily feed on rabbits, rodents, birds, fruit, and insects; thus helping control these types of populations where they inhabit. While most coyotes are leery of people and tend to stay clear of humans, they can still be a danger, especially to young children. It is also not unusual for the animals to attack dogs and other pets. However, the majority of attacks could be prevented or reduced by following some simple safety rules (see right).

If people or their pets are attacked by a coyote within Aurora's City limits, call the Animal Control Division at 630-256-3630.

Keep these tips in mind

Do's

- Keep your property clear of brush piles and construction debris. Coyotes are attracted to cluttered areas.
- Carry a walking stick if you happen to be walking in an area populated by coyotes.
- If you come in contact with a coyote, make loud noises, throw an object or spray a hose in the direction of the animal.
- Use trash cans that have tight clamping lids.

Don'ts

- Avoid feeding coyotes. Leaving pet food outside or bird feeders, which attract small rodents, are unintentional food sources.
- Leaving pets or small children unattended where coyotes are present – especially at night – is dangerous, even in a fenced yard.
- When walking your dog, do not let a coyote get in between you and your pet. Use a short leash.
- Do not run from a coyote, even if it is sick or wounded, because it may become aggressive.