

AURORA BOREALIS

Aurora's holiday lights shine bigger and brighter than ever

The Festival of Lights display continues to dazzle both adults and children each year, and now Aurora's signature winter event has expanded to be one of the largest outdoor light displays in northern Illinois.

A record 40,900 light bulbs will illuminate more than a mile of displays at Phillips Park, 1000 Ray Moses Drive, each night during the holidays. The Festival features lighted trees and displays such as Santa's Toy Factory, Old Man Winter and other seasonal favorites, but also has plenty of new additions this year after the acquisition of several light displays.

The Festival also was able to add 100 more lighted snowflakes, which are 4-feet by 6-feet, thanks to the Lake Land College's vocational welding program at the Sheridan Correctional Center. Even though the park will have more displays than ever before, brighter LED bulbs will use 86 percent less energy than regular light bulbs.

"The Festival of Lights is bigger, better and brighter than ever with these new additions to our program," said Mary Dougherty, event coordinator of the Rotary Club of Aurora, which sponsors the Festival along with the City. "We hope this free event continues to serve as a great source of community pride for Aurora."

Event organizers said nearly 17,000 cars traveled through the lights in 2011 and expect that number to grow this year. The festival is free, but the Rotary Club does accept donations that benefit local charities. For more information on the event, visit www.aurorafestivaloflights.com.

Lehnertz Avenue shines bright

For more than 60 years, the neighbors on Lehnertz Avenue have lit up their block to celebrate the holidays. Families from across Aurora are invited to come by Lehnertz Avenue from Sheridan Street past Garfield Park through Lehnertz Circle to view the area's largest coordinated neighborhood holiday lights, which features Christmas themes and "Peanut" cartoon displays.

Holiday Festival of Lights

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Festival of Lights

Phillips Park
(Smith Blvd. entrance)

5 to 9 p.m.
Sunday to Thursday

5 to 10 p.m.
Friday and Saturday

Lights shine through Dec. 26

Lehnertz Avenue

Daily
5 to 10:30 p.m.

From mid-December through early January





From the Mayor's Desk

Dear neighbor,

I hope you and your family had a memorable Thanksgiving. The temperate weather made it easy for me to cook our Thanksgiving Turkey on my Weber Kettle. It was delicious!

By now, most of you have received your first billing or two by ComEd under the electrical aggregation program residents approved through referendum in March 2012. From all reports, Aurora households are saving approximately 25 percent on their monthly bills. This will add up to significant annual savings for individual households and the community as a whole. Citywide savings are estimated to be more than \$10 million in the first year. I am pleased that the City could play a role in saving our residents significant dollars on electric bills.

Speaking of finances, the City Council is poised to pass Aurora's 2013 Budget in mid-December. For the third year in a row, the City will reduce, slightly, the property tax levy supporting our General Fund budget. While each of the various counties that make up Aurora have an impact on your final property taxes, most Aurorans should see little or no increase in the City of Aurora portion of their tax bills.

Another piece of good news, as we come to the end of 2012, is that major crime has once again been reduced this year. Major crime has fallen nearly 9 percent year-to-date compared to 2011. Ten years ago, in 2002, Aurora experienced 25 homicides, many of them gang-related. Ten years later, as I write this column, there have been zero homicides in Aurora over the first ten-and-a-half months of 2012.

Aurora is a much safer and more peaceful City than it was even a decade ago. If you bump into an Aurora police officer over the holidays, please say thanks for the excellent effort!

There is good news on the holiday front, too. The Rotary Club sponsored Festival of Lights at Phillips Park has doubled in size for 2012! You and your family can enjoy this phenomenal holiday light display from the warmth of your car until the day after Christmas (see Page 1 for details). The entire display has been converted to LED lighting, so it is now not only bigger and better than ever – it is more sustainable, too.

Enjoy the Festival of Lights and don't forget the neighborhood-sponsored Lehnertz Avenue holiday display on Aurora's near east side. It's a 61-year tradition.

Another tip for holiday fun – the lovely Paramount Theatre Broadway series, featuring "Annie." Tribune critic Chris Jones says, "...the Aurora "Annie" is on balance, better than the current Broadway "Annie" while charging less than half the New York prices...."

And do not forget to "shop Aurora." With two major malls and hundreds of retailers across Aurora, you can find all the gifts you need, conveniently and quickly.

Sincerely,

Tom Weisner
Mayor, City of Aurora

Everyone is talking about 'Annie'



at the Paramount!

"Aurora 'Annie' is, on balance, better than the current Broadway "Annie" while charging less than half the New York prices."

Chris Jones, Chicago Tribune theater critic, 11/26/12

"Without a single tweak, this production easily could become a national touring edition of 'Annie.'"

Hedy Weiss, Chicago Sun-Times theater critic, 11/25/12

"The Paramount Theatre's production of 'Annie' is unquestionably a big holiday gift for audiences."

Scott Morgan, Daily Herald performing arts critic, 11/27/12

Show runs through Sunday, Dec. 30

To order tickets:

Visit the Paramount Theatre,
23 E. Galena Blvd.

Call the Box Office at 630-896-6666

Go online to www.paramountaurora.com

Home energy efficiency funds now available

Aurora homeowners are eligible for a program that helps pay for upgrades to cut heating and cooling costs by improving energy efficiency.

Property owners pay \$49 for an energy assessment to identify energy saving opportunities and then Energy Impact Illinois will pay up to 70 percent of the cost for the upgrades – up to \$1,750. Officials say homeowners can save an average of \$500 per year on their energy bills after upgrading through the program.

Funding is available through May 31, 2013. For more information, visit www.energyimpactillinois.org or contact Liz Opholt at 708-203-2559.



OnLight Aurora making connections

The City of Lights will become the City of Lightspeed as the use of Aurora’s fiber optic network will be expanded to bring more affordable high speed broadband Internet to schools, businesses and non-profits.

OnLight Aurora, an independent, non-profit task force, received a \$1 million grant this fall as part of a statewide competition to establish ultra-high speed broadband networks. Last year, Mayor Tom Weisner created the task force with business leaders, City officials and volunteers to leverage the power of the City’s fiber optic network for non-municipal use.

“To win in the information economy, we need information infrastructure that is second to none,” Gov. Pat Quinn said in announcing the grant award to Aurora in October before a crowd of 150 community leaders at the East Aurora Magnet Academy.

OnLight Aurora will use the grant to provide world-class connectivity from the network to Aurora’s public and private schools, colleges,



Mayor Tom Weisner (from left) discusses the benefits of Aurora’s fiber optic network with Gov. Pat Quinn, 8th Ward Alderman Rick Mervine and Chief Technology Officer Ted Beck. The Governor announced Aurora received a \$1 million state grant to make non-municipal connections to the network.

healthcare institutions, commercial corridors and non-profit groups.

“This grant will help OnLight Aurora continue to close the digital divide within our City by capitalizing on our fiber optic network,” Mayor Weisner said. “We know that technology has the potential to revolutionize our educational system and it is an absolute must for successful companies of all sizes. By developing the infrastructure of the future, we drive economic development, strengthen our tax base and address our community’s most fundamental needs: jobs, quality of life and global competitiveness.”

Built in 2008, Aurora’s 43-mile fiber optic network already has reaped many benefits. The City has saved money with its new voice-over-Internet-protocol phone system and video conferencing capabilities, unified its computer network across all 52 City buildings, synchronized traffic signals on busy thoroughfares and other specialized applications. 🍌

Police investigators honored for dedication to justice

Two Aurora Police detectives received one of the most prestigious honors in law enforcement for their actions that freed a former Aurora man who spent 13 years in prison for a murder he did not commit.

Investigators John Munn and Darrell Moore received honorable mentions during the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)/Target International Police Officer of the Year ceremony in October. They were lauded for reopening the case in which Jonathan Moore, who was 20 years old at the time, was convicted of murdering a 20-year-old Montgomery man in 2000.

The pair was among six officers who received honorable mentions during the Oct. 2 ceremony at the IACP national conference in San Diego. The awards recognize members of the law enforcement community for exceptional achievement in any police endeavor including extraordinary valor, crime prevention, investigative work, community relations, traffic safety, drug control and prevention, juvenile programs and training efforts.



Darrell Moore

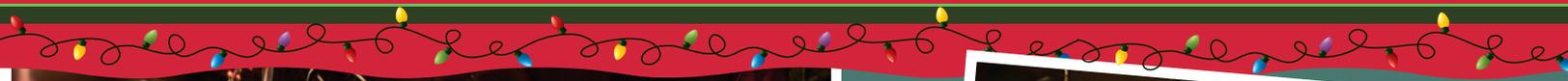


John Munn

Detective Munn has been with the Aurora Police Department since 1998. Detective Moore began his APD career in 1996.

“I’m confident that every Aurora resident shares my pride in the actions of these officers,” said Chief of Police Greg Thomas. “They demonstrate our commitment to justice and compassion for the people we serve.”

This is the second time in three years that Aurora Police officers were recognized by IACP. Detective Mike Nilles won the Officer of the Year award in 2008 for leading an investigation that resulted in charges being lodged in 22 murders that were committed in Aurora since the late 1980s. 🍌



Winter Lights



Aurora ushered in the holiday season with the Winter Lights Holiday Walk, which was a free, family-friendly event featuring art, music, lights, refreshments and the lighting of the City's official tree Nov. 16 in the downtown. The 2012 Miss Merry Christmas and Jack Frost winners were Ciana Alfaro and Grayson McCue. The 43-foot blue spruce will be lit during December at North Island Center, 8 E. Galena Blvd.



Citizens play major role in burglary and theft reduction

The Aurora Police Department is issuing its number one wish during this year's holiday season – increased community vigilance to stem the number of residential and vehicle burglaries.

Through early November, Aurora Police found that almost 25 percent of the homes and 62 percent of the vehicles burglarized this year were unlocked. These statistics underscore the importance of securing homes and vehicles to take away the opportunity for burglars to victimize you.

While the Aurora Police employ aggressive patrol, statistical analysis, communication with neighborhood groups, and specialized covert operations to address burglaries, they remind you of a 3-pronged approach you should follow to minimize the chances of becoming a victim.

Prevention is as easy as taking a few extra seconds to make sure your home's doors and windows are locked anytime you're away. The same goes for your car or truck with the added responsibility of stashing anything of value

in the trunk or taking it with you.

Awareness means looking out for behaviors of people that should raise red flags. They include unknown people walking onto properties peering into windows, checking doors, including vehicle doors, to see if they are locked; or walking down the street with items like televisions, laptops, or other valuables.



The reporting component is simple too. If you see suspicious behavior in your neighborhood, call 911. By staying on the line with the emergency operator, you can help guide officers to the exact area where response is needed. You should be prepared to give detailed descriptions of suspects including physical characteristics, clothing, vehicle information, and directions of travel.

By teaming with the police to prevent burglaries, you're keeping not only your property safe, but sending the message to criminals that Aurora is an engaged community in the fight against crime. 🍓

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 last in this four-part series focuses on Aurora's growth, which started by expanding its borders in the 1970s.

After spending much of the past century as a railroad manufacturing powerhouse, Aurora was in a state of transition entering the 1970s as many of the train shops closed as sprawling highways emerged.

Another big change on the horizon was annexation. Aurora's most eastern border at the time was Farnsworth Avenue, but City officials had big plans to spur both residential and commercial development. In 1973, much of the DuPage County section of Aurora was incorporated, pushing Aurora's borders to Route 59.

The expansion also included land targeted for a new shopping mall, which had been in the works since the late 1960s along Route 59. Construction

started in 1973, and the Fox Valley Mall would open more than 150 stores to excited patrons two years later.

Indian Prairie School District 204 was formed in 1972 with the merger of three elementary school districts. After a referendum was approved, construction began on a new high school, Waubonsie Valley, which would open in 1975 to 293 students.

With the addition of a new mall and schools, the next three decades saw unprecedented growth for Aurora, primarily on the Far East side with the Fox Valley Villages and other subdivisions coming online. The population of 74,200 in 1970 more than doubled by 2000, and it continued to surge to officially make Aurora Illinois' second largest city. The 2010 population totaled 197,899.

Today, Aurora has grown to 46 square miles in Kane, DuPage, Will and Kendall counties and is served by six public school districts. The City is home to many corporate tenants, shopping, recreation and entertainment options. 🍌

Senior Focus: Home rehabs

Home repairs often can be a costly venture, especially for seniors on a fixed income. However, the City of Aurora and its partners may be able to lend a helping hand.

The City secures federal Community Development Block Grant funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for home repair programs. After obtaining the funding, the City has selected two non-profit groups to manage the programs.

"Safety First" provides emergency repairs for electricity, plumbing, heating and air conditioning, porch and roof projects up to \$5,000 for income eligible families. The effort is managed by the Joseph Corporation.

"While this program is open to a range of families, we primarily serve seniors who are on a fixed income such as social security or a pension," said Dennis Wiggins, Joseph Corp. executive director. "We help about 50 to 55 families a year with various emergency repairs."

For more information on "Safety First," call the Joseph Corp., 32 S. Broadway Ave., at 630-906-9400 or visit its website at www.josephcorporation.org.

Another program the City funds with Block Grant money is Rebuilding Together Aurora's "Safe at Home," which is designed to provide small safety and accessibility repairs for seniors and homeowners with disabilities. Previous projects have included installing flooring, grab bars, taller toilets; replacing tubs with showers; and widening doorways, lighting and wheelchair ramps.

"Falls are one of the leading causes of injury-related deaths with seniors and are largely preventable through home safety modifications," said Amy Altenbern, Rebuilding Aurora's executive director. "With more than 12,000 seniors in Aurora, these repairs save elderly residents thousands each year."

"Safe at Home" repairs also are limited up to \$5,000. For more information about the program, call Rebuilding Together Aurora, 1460 N. Farnsworth Ave., at 630-585-7510 or visit www.rtaurora.org. 🍌

Salute to our heroes



The City of Aurora honored our local military men and women with a Veterans Day procession down Illinois Avenue Nov. 11. A ceremony was appropriately held on Veterans Island to recognize the commitment our soldiers have made to our country.



Visit Santa!

Children bring your holiday wish lists. Parents bring your cameras.

Free event
noon to 4 p.m.
Dec. 8-9, 15-16, 22-23

David and Karen Stover Visitors Center at Phillips Park

Sponsored by the Friends of Phillips Park



Expecting something new for the holidays?

Recycle those old electronics

Find a list of accepted items, dates and locations at www.aurora-il.org or 630-256-INFO.

Aurora twinkles with magic!

DECEMBER

Through Dec. 26
Rotary Club Holiday Festival of Lights
5 to 9 p.m. Sunday to Thursday
5 to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday
Phillips Park, 1000 Ray Moses Drive
The City of Lights will be even brighter as the holiday spirit shines at Phillips Park. Bring your family and friends through more than one mile of light displays featuring Santa, his reindeer and other holiday favorites. The festival, sponsored by the Rotary Club of Aurora and the City of Aurora, is free but donations will be accepted that will benefit local charities. The lights shine nightly through Dec. 26. For more information, visit www.aurorafestivaloflights.com.

Saturday, Dec. 8
Electronics Recycling
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Customer Service Center, 3770 McCoy Drive

Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 8 and 9
Visits with Santa
Noon to 4 p.m.
David and Karen Stover Visitors Center at Phillips Park, 1000 Ray Moses Drive

Friday, Dec. 14
Winter Garden of Youth Art opening reception
5 to 7 p.m.
David L. Pierce Art and History Center, 20 E. Downer Place
The 15th annual Winter Garden of Youth Art spotlights the artistic talents of Aurora students ranging from kindergarten through high school. The artwork, which will be displayed through Jan. 25, will feature a variety of mediums chosen by teachers and school faculty members. Admission to the reception and gallery is free. For more information, including gallery hours, visit www.aurora-il.org.

Saturday, Dec. 15
Electronics recycling
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Central Garage Facility, 720 N. Broadway Ave.

Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 15 and 16
Visits with Santa
Noon to 4 p.m.
David and Karen Stover Visitors Center at Phillips Park, 1000 Ray Moses Drive

Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 22 and 23
Visits with Santa
Noon to 4 p.m.
David and Karen Stover Visitors Center at Phillips Park, 1000 Ray Moses Drive

Wednesday, Dec. 26
Kwanzaa Celebration
4 to 7 p.m.
Prisco Community Center, 150 W. Illinois Ave.
Come join a celebration of family, community and culture at the 11th annual Kwanzaa celebration. The event, which is sponsored by the African-American Men of Unity, features inspirational speakers, food and entertainment for youth and adults.

JANUARY

Saturday, Jan. 12
Electronics Recycling
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Customer Service Center, 3770 McCoy Drive

Monday, Jan. 21
A Special Tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr.
6:30 p.m.
West Aurora High School, 1201 W. Galena Blvd.
The MLK Planning Committee and the City of Aurora will be holding a special tribute honoring the life of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The youth-focused evening will include performances from Aurora high school students and local choirs, dance and professional actors. Doors open at 6 p.m.

Friday, Jan. 25
Hispanic Heritage Advisory Board Community Breakfast
7:30 to 9 a.m.
Gaslite Manor, 2485 Church Road
The Aurora Hispanic Heritage Advisory Board (AHHAB) will honor students who have achieved excellence in academics, athletics and leadership. Young artists, writers, and Hispanic residents making a difference in the community also will be recognized. Tickets are \$20 with a portion going to the AHHAB's



Holiday Tree Collection

Mark your calendar for the week of Jan. 7

Place trees at the curb on your normal garbage collection day

Trees must be free of plastic bags, decorations and tree stands

Wreathes and garland will not be collected for recycling and must be stickered as garbage



scholarship fund. For more information, visit www.aurorahispanicheritage.com or call the City's Community Services Department at 630-256-3400.

Saturday, Jan. 26
Electronics recycling
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Central Garage Facility, 720 N. Broadway Ave.

FEBRUARY

Saturday, Feb. 9
Electronics Recycling
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Customer Service Center, 3770 McCoy Drive

Friday, Feb. 22
Dinosaurs, the Art and Science of Paleontology opening reception
5 to 7:30 p.m.

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

A special reception will be held for this larger than life art exhibit on the hunt for dinosaurs from Rob Shula, who has participated in more than 20 major paleontology excavations. The show will include paleo-illustrations, excavation site maps and natural history themed art. Patrons also will hear an explanation of fossil restoration and will get an up close look at dinosaur bone specimens. For more information, visit the City's website at www.aurora-il.org.

Saturday, Feb. 23
Electronics recycling
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Central Garage Facility, 720 N. Broadway Ave.

Thursday, Feb. 28
African-American Heritage Awards Breakfast

7:30 to 9 a.m.

Gaslite Manor, 2485 Church Road

The Aurora African-American Heritage Advisory Board will be presenting the 2012 Outstanding African-American Award at its annual celebration. The award is given to an Auran who exhibits leadership, volunteerism and service to the African-American community. Tickets are \$20 with a portion going to the Henry Cowherd Scholarship Fund. For more information, call the City's Community Services Department at 630-256-3400.



The great outdoors

Grab those skates and sleds for some winter fun at Aurora's parks this winter.

Phillips Park

Sledding hill and ice rink located near the Aquatic Center, 828 Montgomery Road

Garfield Park

Ice skating at 817 Forest Ave.

Facilities open sunrise to 10 p.m. and are weather dependent.

DID YOU KNOW?

Aurora became the first municipality in Illinois to require motor vehicle registration in 1906. That same year, Aurora's own Monarch Automobile Co. produced a 1-cylinder car that would sell for \$500. Aurora's Motor Works was perfecting its own car, the Aurora Runabout, which would sell for \$650 in 1907.

City Holiday Hours

City Hall and all city buildings

Christmas

Offices will close at noon Dec. 24 and reopen Dec. 26

New Year's

Offices will close at noon Dec. 31 and reopen Jan. 2

Police and Fire Departments will be open





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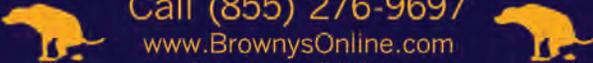
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Spring-Summer-Fall-Winter



Safety first

With the busy holiday season already upon us, safety may not be at forefront of everyone's to-do list. The City of Aurora offers you the following checklist to ensure you have a happy holiday and a safe winter season.

Fire safety

- ✓ Check the water levels in your holiday tree daily to make sure it does not dry out.
- ✓ Take down live trees, even if they are well-watered, after four weeks.
- ✓ Make sure outlets are not overloaded with decorations, extension cords or power strips.
- ✓ Inspect outlets and switches if they are warm or hot, which could mean unsafe wiring exists.
- ✓ Space heaters should be placed on a level surface out of the reach of children and pets.
- ✓ Candles should be placed on sturdy, uncluttered surfaces away from children and pets and at least 12 inches away from anything that can burn.

Winter safety

- ✓ Don't park on any street after a snow fall of 2 inches or more until it has been plowed.
- ✓ Use common sense and refrain from leaving a warming car unattended – locked or unlocked
- ✓ Keep fire hydrants cleared of snow so they can be accessed quickly in an emergency.
- ✓ Do not shovel snow into the street when cleaning driveways.
- ✓ Drive safely; busy primary streets are plowed first before residential roads are cleared.
- ✓ Check your mailbox posts for signs of deterioration (The City is not responsible for damage resulting from snow being plowed on to the parkways.)



Your Elected Officials

Mayor Thomas J. Weisner

630-256-3010

mayoroffice@aurora-il.org

Aldermen's Office

630-256-3020

At-Large: Robert O'Connor

At-Large: Richard Irvin

Ward 1: Abby Schuler

Ward 2: Juany Garza

Ward 3: Vacant

Ward 4: Rick Lawrence

Ward 5: John "Whitey" Peters

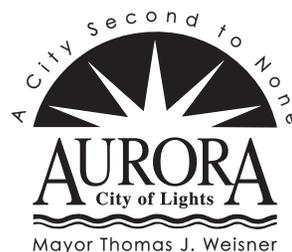
Ward 6: Mike Saville

Ward 7: Scheketa Hart-Burns

Ward 8: Rick Mervine

Ward 9: Allan Lewandowski

Ward 10: Lynda Elmore



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Aurora, IL 60507

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