



THE BEACHCOMBER

DUNE ACRES, INDIANA

www.DuneAcres.org

April, 2026

April 1st FUN! There are three "April Fools" articles in this issue! [See if you can find them.](#) [Answers on Page 10](#)

Easter Egg Hunt

Resident Molly Hale is organizing our town's biggest kid-centered activity again this April – the EASTER EGG HUNT! Last year, almost 100 Dune Acres children and grandchildren joined in the fun at the town park. Brunch is at 11:30, with the hunt starting at noon. Full information and volunteer sign-up can be found at: <https://us14.campaign-archive.com/?u=1a8b4ed8f48420a517ed9e7ef&id=0c4cc9aed8>

Pictures of last year's event:



★ Save the Date! 4th of July fireworks will be Friday, July 3 ★

Volunteer Opportunity - Social Committee

Dear Dune Acres Friends and Neighbors,

We are stepping down from our roles as Social Committee Chairs as of January, 2026. We have had a great time planning all the town parties and events over the last 18 months and look forward to offering support in the future, but we are no longer available to facilitate. It's time for us to pass the baton and time for you to step up and volunteer! We are here for the transition. There are 4 core events:

- Spring Party – Memorial Day Weekend
- Independence Day Celebration
- Fall Party – October
- Holiday Party – December

Lead on your own or organize a group. Do it all or choose your favorite (most available) time of the year! We hope that you will rally!! Change is good! Contact dasocialcommittee@gmail.com with interest.

Very Kindly, **Melissa Cassidy, Elise Daxe and Laurie Metz**

Local Officials Respond to Wildlife Sighting

Alarms were raised as local officials responded to a concerning wildlife sighting in the Town of Dune Acres playground. National Park service staff, along with town security, warn residents that although the buck appeared playful, its behavior is not predictable.



Beachcombing - An Unusual Find

Most Dune Acres residents have beachcombed at one time or another, and discovering interesting or unusual items is always part of the fun. In January, Mark Bapst noticed a black, tube-shaped canister lying near the water's edge. Upon closer inspection, he realized it had a small light blinking on and off. A label on the outside read "Innovasea" and included a phone number and device ID. Curious about the find, Mark brought the device home and contacted the company to report it.

Two days later, an email was received from the Lake Michigan Biological Station in Zion, Illinois stating the device was part of GLATOS (Great Lake Acoustic Telemetry Observation System,) an acoustic array system utilized to track fish throughout the Great Lakes. This receiver was one of many placed along the Illinois and Indiana coastline and into the Cal Sag river system to track tagged Smallmouth Bass. Complete information on the study being conducted April 2024 to June 2027 can be found on the GLATOS website under the project name CBASS.

GLATOS requested the return of the receiver so the stored data could be recovered and used in the study, noting that lost equipment can negatively affect research results. Scientists traveled to Dune Acres to personally retrieve the device from Mark. They expressed their appreciation, crediting his actions with helping to ensure the success of their research.



Monarchs and Natives - May 3

Laura and Terry Truax are hosting a presentation at their home on May 3rd and invite residents to attend. Jim Starin of Monarch Conservation and Jonathan Macri of Healing the Earth will present. Please RSVP to lauratruax061@gmail.com with "RSVP" in the subject line.

Go Take a Hike!



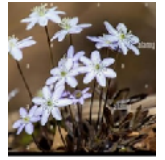
Spring is a great time to go for a hike - the birds are singing, wildflowers are starting to bloom and its a great way to get some exercise. We are lucky to have good options nearby - Cowles Bog trail, Calumet trail (paved) and nearby State Park trails. But we also have trails in our backyard. There are two parking spots at the end of Lupine Lane, leading to a network of about 3 miles of trails. These trails have been here for a long time (I spent a lot of time with my friends out there as a child over 50 years ago!). You can find a map: <http://www.duneacres.org/images/DuneAcresTrailMap.pdf>

Restoring Town Park S

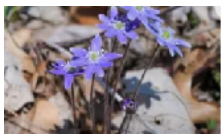
Submitted by Richard Hawksworth

If you've walked along the west end beach lately, you may have noticed changes taking place in the town park that presides above Hill Drive.

Over the past several years, Dune Acres has worked to restore this 7.5-acre black oak savanna with grant funding through the Lake Michigan Coastal Program. Work included thinning the canopy to invite sunlight back to the forest floor, removing invasive brush like bittersweet and barberry, and planting native sedges and wildflowers. These efforts, combined with specialized seeding, will bring back the full richness of a restored savanna.



Why does this matter? Black oak savannas are naturally open and sunny—early settlers called them a “prairie with trees.” When invasive species and excess tree canopy take over, the wildflowers and wildlife that depend on open light begin to disappear. By restoring this balance, we are protecting the delicate ecology of the dunes and the scenic beauty that makes our community unique.



The project is also part of a broader, decade-long initiative to link the east and west sides of town via an off-road hiking trail. This spring, Mark Taylor is clearing a “habitat corridor” that will eventually allow residents to enjoy a continuous trek from Town Hall to Hill Drive. While the hike to the top of the park is rugged, the panoramic views of Lake Michigan are spectacular.

Many thanks to Sandy O'Brien and EcoRealm, Mark Taylor, the many volunteers who joined our cleanup days, and our present and past town clerks for their patient stewardship of this project. Their efforts reflect a tradition of conservation that has shaped Dune Acres since its earliest days. It's a reminder that we aren't just maintaining a town. We are tending a legacy, and preserving a gift to the future far larger than ourselves.



Park Improvement Committee Recommends New Playground

Parks Commissioner Shawn Fitzpatrick and the Park Improvement Committee delivered a formal presentation to the Town Council in March following months of research and deliberation. Reviewing last fall's resident survey results, prioritizing community needs, and developing a Phase I improvement budget led to the committee's recommendation to construct a new playground.

With an estimated cost of \$198,000 — including demolition, project contingency, installation, fall-protection surfacing, and a design intended to blend with the town's natural surroundings — the proposal represents a major capital investment for Dune Acres.

The Council asked the committee to provide additional information on long-term maintenance requirements and to explore all available cost-saving measures for presentation at the April meeting. With Town Council approval, a portion of the project would be funded through Town resources. The committee would also seek grant support from DACIF and conduct a community fundraising campaign to meet the remaining financial needs.



Several Committee Members Meeting at Town Hall

TOWN CLEANUP - April 25th!
Brush Pickup - April 27th
Yard Waste Dumpster at Tennis Courts - April 21-29

Welcome New Residents!

Submitted by Dana Shepard Treister

DESIRÉE and MATT De LEON and 2-year-old Felicity have been enjoying their **6 West Road** home since last August. Matt grew up in Chesterton, and Desirée hails from Munster. Both sets of parents are frequent visitors.

Desirée is a product designer and Matt a computer programmer with Simply Safe Dividends, a website with portfolio-tracking tools and research for individual investors, co-founded by Matt.

Outside of work, Matt is a black belt in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and enjoy training regularly. Desirée enjoys art of all kinds and was once a finalist for Instagrammer of the Year for her series of miniature drawings around everyday objects (<https://www.instagram.com/dcoosyle/>) -- she lost to "Doug the Pug"...

Having lived in Atlanta (the "city in a forest") for a decade while Desirée pursued a PhD in neuroscience at Emory University, the De Leons chose to move closer to their Northwest Indiana families, once they had started their own. Desirée and Matt are thrilled to be settled into such a beautiful location, and look forward to meeting more other Dune Acres families!



DONNA and JOHN SNYDER purchased **18 West Road** in 2020 and started clearing ground two years ago. Last November their Zero Energy Ready Certified home, designed by John, and built to PHIUS Passive House standards, was move-in ready. The Snyders continue to envision projects that will even further transform their new house into a home!



John's 33-year engineering and management career with Proctor & Gamble included installing Charmin and Bounty manufacturing equipment in factories across America. Having retired early, and in need of a Covid-shutdown project, John designed and built the Snyders' current Ohio home - with the help of five friends! Honored to have that home win a Zero Energy Ready National Innovation Award, LEED Platinum certification, and PHIUS Passive House design certification, he was primed to move on to the Dune Acres project.

Donna's work with a Cincinnati real estate developer was put on hold for a more important career as a full-time mom for the Snyders **three "incredible" children**, who are helping our world as a doctor, a teacher and a Christian worker in the Middle East. The Snyder family includes two "amazing daughter-in-loves" and their three grandchildren who bring great joy to their lives.

Donna served on the board for the Cincinnati Christian School and also lead Vacation Bible Study and other church committees, as well as attending to the needs of aging parents and in-laws. John enjoys teaching Sunday School to their church's 50-member-strong class of senior adults.

While their primary residence will remain in **Hamilton, OH** – having spent summers in John's family's lake home in Grand Mere, MI – it is a dream come true for the Snyders to have their own lake home in Dune Acres to enjoy together as a family.



Chief of Security Abducted by Aliens

Dune Acres Security Chief Roger Goode said, “It started like any other midnight shift.” All he remembers is a strange object appearing over Cowles Bog. He went missing for three hours before waking up on the guardhouse roof covered in green slime.

Town Officials Election Process

Many residents have asked for an overview of how town officials are elected in Dune Acres: How are Town Council members and the Clerk-Treasurer chosen? Why hasn't there been a town election in recent years? When is the next opportunity to run for office?

Dune Acres elections follow the same rules as other Indiana municipalities. They are governed by Indiana Code and administered locally by the Porter County Board of Elections and Registration. The Town has three at-large Town Council positions and one Clerk-Treasurer. At-large means each council member represents the entire town, rather than a specific district.

For most of Dune Acres' history, town offices have been nonpartisan. So, there are no party primaries, and candidates do not run under party affiliation. Town elected officials serve four-year terms. In the last two election cycles, all candidates ran unopposed, so no election was held. This occurred in November 2019 (for the term commencing January 1, 2020), and again in November 2023 (for the term commencing January 1, 2024). The next municipal election will be held in November 2027. Interested candidates must meet residency requirements and file the required declarations and disclosures with the county by July 1, 2027.

Town Council members have served without compensation for more than 100 years. The Clerk-Treasurer's annual salary is set every year by ordinance and is currently \$21,000. When a town election is conducted, the Town shares in the costs associated with placing town offices on the ballot.

Spring Hiking in the Dunes, circa 1910, photo by William Richardson of West Road, Dune Acres

(Reprinted with permission of the Flora Richardson Foundation)



Meet the Guard

Meet Mark Harnew, who has been working on the security team at Dune Acres since the summer of 2024. Mark saw the position posted on the sign when hiking the Cowles Bog trail in the beginning of that summer, and thought it would be an exciting opportunity. His favorite part of the job is welcoming people home and being outside in the summer.

When Mark is not at the security gate, you'll find him in the classroom. He teaches world history and government at Wheeler High School in Valparaiso, IN. Mark is the Social Studies coach for academic team, and also coached the We the People civic team. He has been teaching high school and middle school for 17 years.

In his free time, Mark likes to spend time with his family and friends, play trivia, watch sports (Buffalo Bills and Chicago White Sox are his favorites), and travel and visit national parks (Zion National Park in Utah is his favorite, though he has a soft spot for Indiana Dunes National Park).



Emergency Services in Dune Acres

Dune Acres has contracted emergency services with the Town of Porter Fire Department for more than 25 years. Under the direction of Fire Chief Lewis Craig, Jr., Porter provides fire suppression services (brush and structural), emergency medical assistance, motor vehicle accident response, search and rescue, and dive rescue. The department also has staff and equipment on site for the Town of Dune Acres' Independence Day fireworks display. Mutual aid from neighboring departments is requested when needed.

Under the current 4-year contract, Dune Acres will pay the Town of Porter \$22,869 in calendar year 2026. Data on 2025 call-outs to Dune Acres is as follows:

- ◆ Medical; assist EMS crews: 21
- ◆ Smoke Detector Alarm, no fire: 1
- ◆ Unauthorized Burning: 1
- ◆ Smoke Scare, odor, no fire: 1
- ◆ Public Service (parade and fireworks crew/equip):

When residents call 911 for medical emergencies, both Northwest Health Hospital and the Porter Fire Department are dispatched. (Northwest Health is contracted by Porter County to provide an ambulance to communities that do have one.) If Porter Fire arrives first, they begin assistance and treatment until the ambulance arrives.



Dune Acres Data Center Construction Begins Soon

The Dune Acres Town Council has approved construction of a multi-level data center in the former soccer field. Construction will start May 1st! Pictured at left is a rendering of the new facility.

Local Business Spotlight: There's a New Vet in Chesterton

Dr. Chris Brahos opened Great and Small Animal Clinic last summer, a culmination of many years of hard work and dreams. That mission appears to be resonating. Dr. Brahos has been recognized by *The Times of Northwest Indiana* as one of the region's Top 20 Under 40 — an award honoring individuals who demonstrate outstanding leadership and play a key role in the region's growth across various sectors. Dr. Brahos is a Chesterton native and 2016 graduate of Purdue University College of Veterinary Medicine. He has practiced all levels of veterinary medicine, from emergency to shelter to general practice.

Great and Small is a full-service animal hospital dedicated to treating all types of pets with the care they deserve. In addition to dogs and cats, Dr. Brahos treats “exotics” - rabbits, reptiles and birds.

The Clinic was intentionally designed with both pet comfort and owner convenience in mind, offering a welcoming environment.



Dr. Brahos examines Kona McKinley



The practice covers a wide spectrum of veterinary needs. From routine annual exams to more serious medical conditions, the team is equipped to handle it all under one roof. Wellness checkups at the clinic include physical examinations, review of preventative treatments, and discussions about any behavioral or health changes owners may have noticed at home. The clinic also handles vaccinations, surgical procedures, and dental care.

In addition to veterinary care, the clinic offers veterinary boarding for dogs and cats. Located at 1200 W 1050 N in Chesterton you can make appointments online at greatandsmallac.com or by phone (219) 728-3647. Hours are 8:00 - 5:00 Monday, Tuesday, Friday and 10:00 - 7:00 Wednesday.

Other Local Veterinary Resources

There are a number of great veterinarians in the area. Here are just a few that are close by and/or offer some weekend or evening hours:

Ark of the Dunes: Located in Chesterton. Offers weekday appointments. Phone: (219)-926-9797 website: <https://www.arkofthedunesah.com/>

Hero Pet Animal Hospital: Located in Westville. Offers walk in visits - no appointment needed but you might need to wait. They also have Saturday morning hours, 8:00-1:00 Phone: 219-515-4376 , website: <https://heropetanimalhospital.com/>

Michigan City Animal Hospital: In addition to weekday appointments, they offer Saturday morning appointments and a Sunday urgent care from 1:00 - 7:00. Urgent care is similar to human urgent care - for things that can't wait until Monday but are not at the level of an emergency visit. Phone: 219-872-4181, website: <https://www.mcanimalhospital.com/>

And if you need emergency care, **Emergency Veterinary Care Center** is located in Westville, available 24/7 for emergencies: Phone: (219) 785-7300 website: <https://evcc.com/>

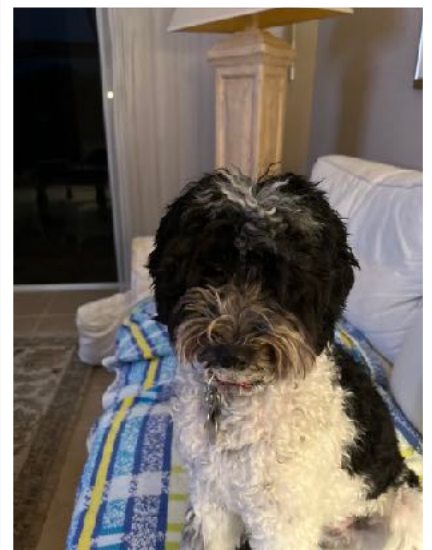
Dogs of Dune Acres

We had so many submissions it took two pages to show them all!



Clockwise, from upper left:

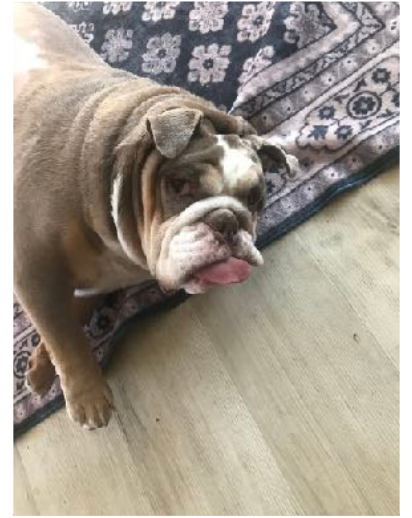
- **Steve** with Al Pamintuan;
- **Lola Bousky** in the sand;
- **Bao** with Song Chen and Marjie Nielsen;
- **Blue** with John McGinn;
- **Finnegan Roberts**;
- **Link Fitzpatrick** (sadly, Link passed away last week);
- **Zoey, Rick and Petey Demkovich**;
- **Rizzo Verzoni** enjoying the beach.





Clockwise from upper left:

- **Cecil** with Tom & Carol Cornwell
- **Albert & Griffin** Kudrna
- **Sandy** Tennant
- **Frank** Tennant
- **Babka** Treister
- **Batman** McKinley
- **Buddy** Yetnikoff
- **Cliffie** with Sherry Carlson



Site Remediation Continues at NIPSCO's Bailly Station

A major environmental remediation project is currently underway at NIPSCO's Bailly Generating Station, portions of which lie within the Town of Dune Acres' municipal boundaries and the Indiana Dunes National Park.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) charged NIPSCO with several cleanup mandates. The most recent phase of work—focused on removing accumulated coal ash (coal combustion residue) from two impoundment areas—began in July 2025 and is scheduled for completion by fall 2026. Residents hiking the Cowles Bog Trail can view the remediation activity near the South Shore tracks and along the far western pathway.

Soil contaminated with coal ash has been excavated and transported to NIPSCO's Schahfer Generating Station landfill in Wheatfield, Indiana. This accounts for the numerous dump trucks many residents observed last summer traveling along Route 12 and south on Indiana 49. Now that coal ash has been removed, native dune sand and topsoil from an EPA-approved borrow pit is being imported for site restoration. Re-vegetation with native species will follow, along with joint NIPSCO/EPA monitoring for a period of five years.



The final remediation plan mandated by the EPA followed an extensive public input process. Thanks to the engagement of Dune Acres residents and the broader Duneland community, removal of hazardous materials—rather than containment—was required in areas with significant contamination.

Construction of NIPSCO's Bailly Generating Station began in 1959, with the coal-fired facility fully operational in 1962, supplying electricity to the northern half of Indiana. Its coal operations were retired in 2018, and it now functions as a natural gas "peaker plant," distributing electricity during periods of high demand. The two tall smoke stacks visible from Mineral Springs Road are not in use. NIPSCO's future use of the site remains undecided.

Pictured at Right: Former Dune Acres resident Anne Murphy stands in front of the painting she donated that is now displayed at the clubhouse. Anne and her husband Jerry lived at 3 Linden from 1997 to 2019. The painting was commission from local artist Tim Gray in 2002 for their dining room. Anne now lives at StoryPoint senior living community in Chesterton. She still participates in some Dune Acres social events and loves reading the Beachcomber!



April 1st FUN! Answers

Page 2: No two-headed deer have been spotted

Page 5: Roger was not abducted by aliens

Page 6: No data center in Dune Acres!

The Fine Print: *The Beachcomber* is a grass roots publication not officially affiliated with either the Town of Dune Acres or the Dune Acres Civic Improvement Foundation, Inc. (DACIF). All content is believed to be reasonably accurate and reliable but not "guaranteed"! Any information, news, creative contributions, articles, reports, corrections, suggestions, Letters to the Editor, art work, photos, comments and otherwise (and volunteers!) are welcomed and encouraged to help sustain this publication.

Email contribution to saralmckinley@gmail.com or jbpst10@gmail.com Please use "Beachcomber," in the subject line.