



# NEWSLETTER

*Nature. People. Places.*

**Belle Isle Park**  
Annual Spring Clean-Up

**Saturday, April 23, 2016**  
8:30 am to 1 pm  
Check in @ Flynn Pavilion

Help bring Belle Isle to life for the season at our Annual Spring Clean-Up. Check in at the Flynn Pavilion to get your clean up assignment. Bring work gloves and rakes. Hot Dogs, Chips and Pop will be served at 12pm to thank volunteers.

More info @ [belleisleconservancy.org](http://belleisleconservancy.org)

A beautiful cardinal enjoying a gorgeous afternoon on Belle Isle – Photo by John Vavrek



New design for Aquarium t-shirts and tote bags

**BELLE ISLE CONSERVANCY**

## Koi Transfer

**Saturday, May 7, 2016, 10 am to 12 pm**  
**BELLE ISLE AQUARIUM & LILY POND**

Join us for a free, family-friendly event on Belle Isle! Bring a 5-gallon bucket to help transfer the koi from their winter home in the Aquarium to the outdoor lily pond.

Donations of cleaning supplies for the volunteers to keep the Belle Isle Aquarium sparkling are appreciated.

# THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Michele Hodges

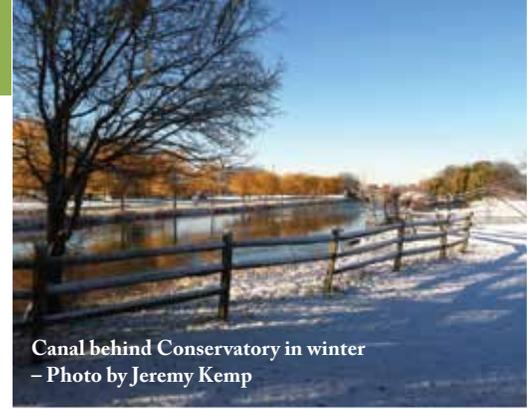


Last fall, more than 70,000 daffodils were planted on Belle Isle by the MDNR, the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory Committee and many amazing volunteers from all over the region. As Spring approaches, we can't wait to see these bulbs grow into bright bursts of color. That's what Spring is about - growth and newness. At the Conservancy, we are fully embracing this time of growth and are excited to share our 'growth updates' with you.

**Events are growing.** We must start off by sharing with you the fundraising growth we experienced at Light Up The Aquarium (LUTA), held this past December. Thanks to great members, donors, sponsors and friends like you, we nearly *tripled* our fundraising results from the previous LUTA event! This funding will allow us to continue to operate the country's oldest and most beautiful Aquarium and keep admission free to the public. We look forward to seeing more and more growth in future events, and

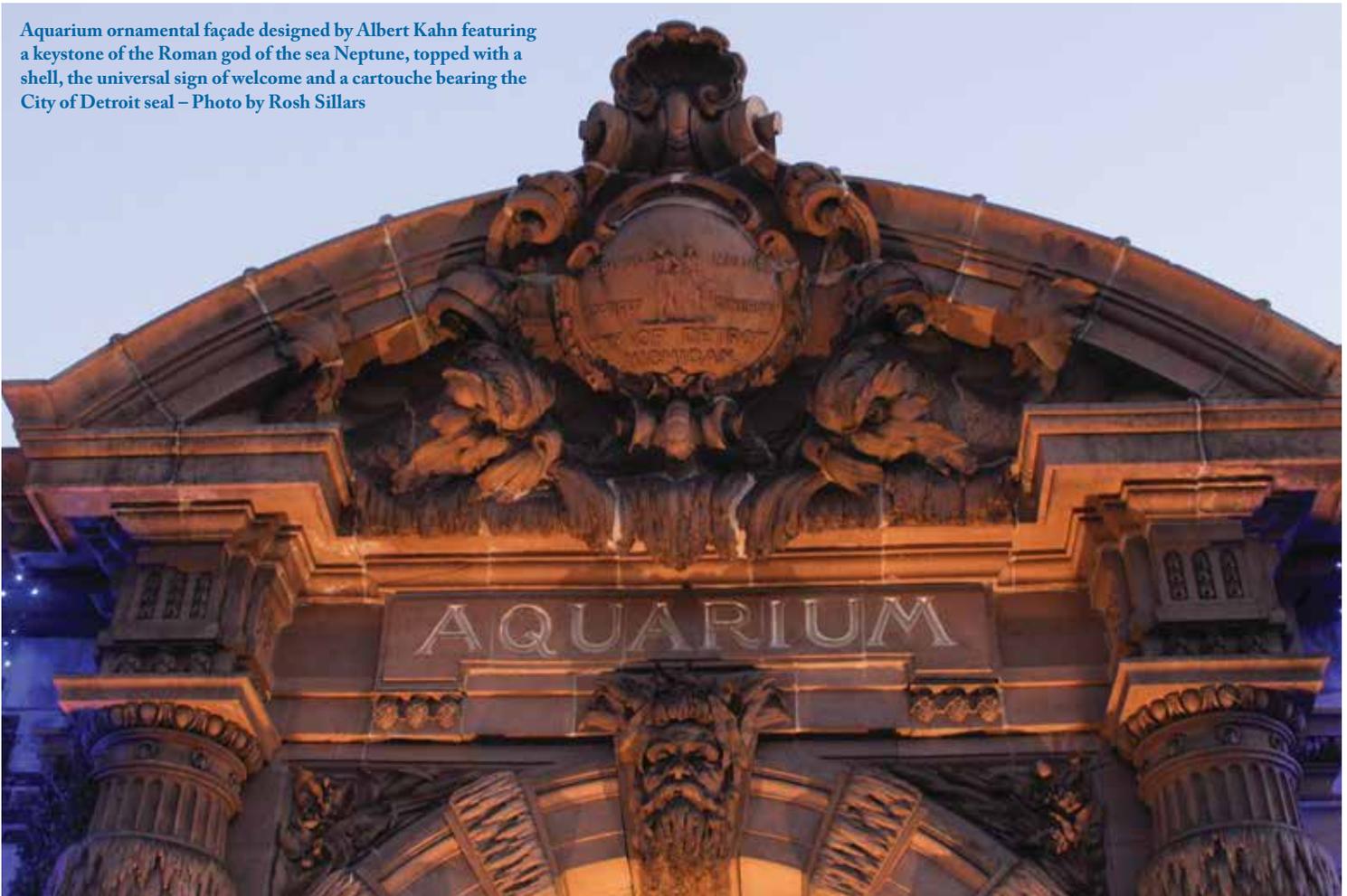
are working hard to continue the positive momentum. Due to popular demand and back-to-back years of sold out tickets, we are adding tables to increase the attendance capacity for this year's upcoming Grand Prixmiere, which will be held on Friday, June 3, 2016.

**Island attendance numbers are growing.** Over 3 million people visited Belle Isle Park in 2015, and the Island has seen double-digit attendance growth over last year. The Belle Isle Aquarium's 2015 attendance was up 600% since it reopened in 2012. The Dossin Great Lakes Museum has also enjoyed increases in its visitors versus this time last year. Our DPS and Hamtramck Field Trip Program will double its reach this year - in 2015, we hosted almost 800 fourth graders, and we are expecting to have 1,600 third and fourth graders in 2016. With the



Canal behind Conservatory in winter  
– Photo by Jeremy Kemp

Aquarium ornamental façade designed by Albert Kahn featuring a keystone of the Roman god of the sea Neptune, topped with a shell, the universal sign of welcome and a cartouche bearing the City of Detroit seal – Photo by Rosh Sillars



MDNR, Belle Isle Conservancy and all of our wonderful volunteers, it's no surprise that more people are visiting the Island and its assets. But, what was indeed a pleasant surprise was the growth over last year in attendance at Holiday Stroll 2015 - to the tune of 500 attendees in 2014 to 5,000 (yes, five THOUSAND) attendees in 2015!

**Our staff team is growing.** Even with all of this significant event and Island growth, huge challenges continue to lie ahead of us. With our partners at the DNR and the staff capacity we are adding at the Conservancy, we stand ready to tackle those challenges. Our newest team member, Community Engagement Manager, Brittany Sanders, has been hitting the pavement building relationships with community members, representing the Conservancy at meetings in the city, and increasing awareness of Belle Isle events and happenings. Our Volunteer Coordinator, Genevieve Nowak, has done a phenomenal job of growing our volunteer program. Last year, Belle Isle welcomed 1,717 volunteers to the island who donated 15,037 hours of their time, which translates into \$346,904. We are truly grateful for our team of dedicated volunteers and recognize them as a substantial contributor in our effort to achieve our mission; the work we do together truly could not be accomplished without them!

We are also thrilled to announce that we will be adding two new members to our team in the next few months: an Event Coordinator, who will assist us in taking our fundraisers to the next level, and an Aquarium Director, who will lead our dedicated volunteer crew in professionalizing Aquarium operations and enhancing the visitor experience.

**Our planning studies are helping us grow even more.** As we've shared with you in previous reports, the two primary planning processes, the Cultural Campus Planning Process, which focuses on the Belle Isle Aquarium and Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory, and the Strategic Planning Process, which focuses on the entire Island, are nearing completion. Both plans will help direct growth and investment priorities in 2016 and beyond. We cannot wait to share the outcomes of both of these processes with you in the near future.

**Three new fish have joined the South American Lungfish in their tank. Stop by and see the Platinum Royal Pleco or *Panaque nigrolineatus*, a herbivorous freshwater armored catfish native to Brazil, Columbia and Venezuela. An interesting fun fact is that about 60% of their diet is wood.**  
– Photo by Lori Feret



**Current BIC Staff Photo (Back row left to right: Katy Wyerman, Genevieve Nowak, Stephanie Bowen, Summer Ritner; Seated, left to right: Brittany Sanders and Michele Hodges)**

**Historic Belle Isle Casino – Photo by John Vavrek**



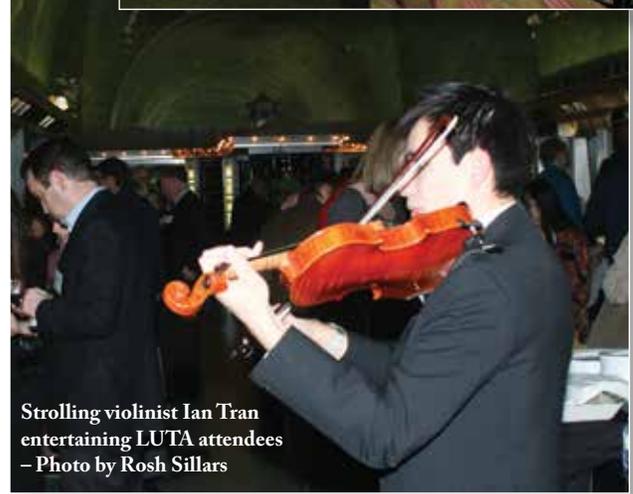
**A winter sunrise at the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory – Photo by Jeremy Kemp**

# Past Events

## LIGHT UP THE AQUARIUM, A Glass Act

The third annual *Light Up The Aquarium* fundraiser took place **Friday, December 4th** with the renovation of the green, opaline, glass ceiling tiles highlighted as the theme. Over 300 people attended this gala party which featured food from Park Grill in Grosse Pointe Park, entertainment by strolling violinist Ian Tran, the Paul Carey Trio and a silent auction. This year the silent auction utilized an online bidding process called Handbid instead of paper bid sheets. Online bidding on the almost 200 items started on Black Friday, November 24th and was open to anyone. The variety of items was fabulous with the net result from the event raising over \$30,000. This is a 'must attend' event; so, mark your calendar for our fourth annual *Light Up The Aquarium* on Friday, December 2, 2016.

One of the LUTA silent auction prize tables – Photo by Rosh Sillars



Strolling violinist Ian Tran entertaining LUTA attendees – Photo by Rosh Sillars

## HOLIDAY STROLL

Our annual Holiday Stroll was a success unlike any other! We planned for around 500 visitors, but this past **December 11**, over 5,000 people came to Belle Isle to visit the Aquarium, Conservatory and Dossin Great Lakes Museum. We can thank the interest in Belle Isle and the 65 degree temperatures. We ran out of donuts and cider by 5:45 pm at the Conservatory and there were long lines to get into the three facilities. The visitors were a wonderful cross-section of Metro-Detroiters with some people coming back after years, while others were there for the first time. We were able to collect over 30 bags of toys for the Toys Tots and bears for the Michigan State Police Trooper Teddy programs. We are already planning for next year's event and hope to include the Nature Zoo and other venues. Thanks to the DNR staff, the Detroit Historical Society and the Conservancy volunteers who stayed until everyone in line was able to enjoy these great facilities.



Light show in the Fernery at the Holiday Stroll – Photo courtesy of DETROITDVOTION website, Detroit: Belle Isle After Dark



Long lines of people waiting to enter the Belle Isle Aquarium enjoying the Holiday Stroll – Photo from the BIC Facebook Page



Pile of toys and teddy bears collected in the Conservatory at the Holiday Stroll – Photo by Jeremy Kemp



Super Grover attended the Holiday Stroll at the Dossin Great Lakes Museum courtesy of Olympia entertainment and Sesame Street Live – Photo by Lori Feret



The Belle Isle Conservancy website at <http://www.belleisleconservancy.org> and Facebook Page will have for additional information on our events.



New Year Toast Photo – Guests toasting Belle Isle, the Boat Club and the New Year at the historic Detroit Boat Club January 1, 2016 – Photo by Lori Feret

### NEW YEAR'S DAY TOAST AT THE BOAT CLUB

About 250 people braved the cold to toast in the New Year at the historic Detroit Boat Club building on **Friday, January 1st**. The fare was hot dogs, bratwursts and desserts with champagne toasts to the Boat Club and Belle Isle at around 3:00 pm. Honored was Emory Wendell Clark, American team's gold medal winner in coxed eights from the 1964 Summer Olympics which was held in Tokyo, Japan. Proceeds from this event help to support ongoing work by the Detroit Boat Club Crew – Friends of Detroit Rowing on this historic building built in 1902. Be sure to attend to toast on New Year's Day 2017.



Conservatory in winter – Photo by Jeremy Kemp



Sea Grant Michigan exhibit with Mary Bohlingin at the historic Casino at Shiver on the River – Photo by Tricia Blicharski courtesy of Friends of the Detroit River

### SHIVER ON THE RIVER

Friends of the Detroit River hosted their 16th annual Shiver On The River on Belle Isle **Saturday, February 6th** from 10:00 am – 3:00 pm. Shiver is an Ecology Family Fair designed to bring people down to the Detroit River and to Belle Isle Park in the heart of the winter. It also educates people about the importance of the river and the need for effective river stewardship and its environs. The weather was cool, but due to lack of snow and ice, the snowshoe demos and USCG ice rescue demo scheduled were not able to take place. However, there were many other activities to keep the 700+ who attended busy. A Flying Pancake breakfast by Chris Cakes took place at the Flynn Pavilion with pancakes and sausages. The historic Casino building had many exhibitors, environmental displays and several engaging children's activities. Magic John's Magic Show entertained families as well as Bob Kat Caricatures. New York Life made themed ID badges for kids, and the Michigan Greyhound Connection had several of their rescued dogs there to greet people. The Anna Scripps

Whitcomb Conservatory, Dossin Great Lakes Museum, Belle Isle Aquarium, Belle Isle Nature Zoo and U.S. Coast Guard Station all awaited visitors. The Detroit Yacht Club offered tours, and rowers demonstrated inside the historic Detroit Boat Club. Marshmallows were roasting in front of the Belle Isle Aquarium. Don't miss next year's Shiver on the first Saturday of February 2017.

Jennifer Boardman from the Belle Isle Aquarium displays the new t-shirt and tote bag design at their Shiver on the River table – Photo by Vance Patrick

Shiver On The River Photo – Nate of Chris Cakes cooking pancakes at the Flynn Pavilion for the Shiver on the River crowd – Photo by Genevieve Nowak courtesy of the BIC



# Ongoing Events

Seniors having fun with a dance lesson at the Senior Power Days Holiday Luncheon at the historic Belle Isle Casino Dec. 16, 2015 – courtesy of the Senior Power Days on Belle Isle Facebook Page



## SCIENCE SATURDAYS

The Science Saturday Lecture Series takes place in the classroom of the Belle Isle Aquarium on the second Saturday of the month at 12 pm, 1 pm and 2 pm. Admission is free. For additional information, check the Belle Isle Conservancy Facebook Page and information will be posted at the aquarium prior to the date. Upcoming dates are: **Apr. 9, May 14, June 11 and July 9.**

## YOUTH EDUCATION & KIDS ARTS AND CRAFTS

The Youth Education Saturday series (3rd Saturday of the month) and the kids series of Arts & Crafts (4th Saturday of the month) at the Belle Isle Aquarium is a free, fun experience. Come down to the Belle Isle Aquarium and see what is going on.

## AQUA-RANGER CLUB

The Aqua Ranger Club meets once each month for three months at the aquarium on the fourth Saturday of the month – the next session begins in April. Space is limited. Applications are available at the aquarium.

## SENIOR POWER DAYS ON BELLE ISLE

**Tuesday, June 28th - 6pm – 10pm – DSO Chamber Recital (tickets required)**

**Wednesday, July 20th - 10am – 3pm – Senior Health & Services Day**

**Wednesday, August 10th - 10am – 3pm – Jazz on the Isle**

2015 launched a new program through the Department of Natural Resources called Senior Power Days on Belle, a series of events for senior citizens living in the Detroit area of Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties. The 2016 series is being planned now and will include the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, jazz, exercise, art & crafts, health services and much more. Check the Michigan.gov and Belle Isle Conservancy websites for additional information or contact Stephanie Donaldson at 313-478-8257 DonaldsonS1@michigan.gov.



Seniors enjoying the Senior Power Days Health and Services Day on Belle Isle at the historic Casino building August 5, 2015 – courtesy of the Senior Power Days on Belle Isle Facebook Page

## STEWARDSHIP SATURDAYS 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Help eradicate Belle Isle's invasive plants on the 3rd Saturday of each month – **April 16, May 21, June 18 and July 16.** Check the BIC's web page for detailed activity information and to sign up for specific projects. They meet directly at the worksites and volunteers sign their waivers ahead of time to streamline the sign-in process. Please, no children under six. All children must be supervised by adults. If interested in these efforts, please contact Laurel Malvitz-Draper at malvitzl@michigan.gov.



Seniors attending the Senior Power Days Senior Safety Summit at the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory on July 8, 2015 – courtesy of the Senior Power Days on Belle Isle Facebook Page

## BELLE ISLE PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee Meetings are held once each month from 9:00 – 11:30 am and are open to the public. Dates for upcoming meetings are Thursday: **April 21, May 19, June 16 and July 21.** For the entire meeting schedule, location, agenda and additional information check the Michigan Department of Natural Resources website and click on the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee – [www.michigan.gov/dnr](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr).

## AQUARIUM & CONSERVATORY TOURS

Tours of the Aquarium and of the Conservatory for adults and students, can be arranged by contacting the BIC office at 313-331-7760. We are always in need of new docents for both groups and will train you in this rewarding venture.

## AQUARIUM OUTREACH PROGRAM

The Aquarium's Youth Education Team will be scheduling outreach programs at local schools. Outreach forms are available at the aquarium. For further information, please contact Diane Brischke at 586-777-6566 or via email at [diane\\_brischke@att.net](mailto:diane_brischke@att.net)

3rd grade classes studying marine life on location at a school with Aquarium Volunteer Diane Brischke



The Belle Isle Conservancy website at <http://www.belleisleconservancy.org> and Facebook Page will have for additional information on our events.

# UPCOMING *Events*



Daffodil Day Belle Isle Tile

Daffodils in bloom along the canal behind the Conservatory spring 2015  
- Photo by Jeremy Kemp



Daffodils blooming in the Conservatory formal garden spring 2015. - Photo by Jeremy Kemp

## DAFFODIL DAY LUNCHEON

**Wednesday, April 20th – Detroit Yacht Club – 11:00 am – 2:00 pm**

The seventh annual Daffodil Luncheon will feature keynote speaker John Gallagher, author and journalist. This event raises funds to purchase and plant daffodils on Belle Isle. With the goal of planting one bulb for every resident of the City of Detroit, so far about 200,000 bulbs have been planted around the island. Drawing families, gardeners, students, and corporate volunteers for the autumn planting, visitors enjoy the cheerful fruits of their labor in the spring. Look for the yellow and white flowers in swaths at Sunset Point, the Conservatory, Dossin Museum, and along Riverbank Road, to mention a few locations. Luncheon ticket prices begin at \$35. New this year is a specially designed tile to celebrate this uplifting project. The 4"x8" tile is available for sale for \$50. Both luncheon tickets and tiles are available at <http://www.michdivwnfga.org/daffodil.html> using the Registration Form.

## BELLE ISLE SPRING CLEAN UP

**Saturday, April 23rd – Meet at the Flynn Pavilion – 8:30 am – 1:00 pm**

Come one, come all – individuals, families and friends to the annual Belle Isle Spring Clean Up. Groups should pre-register with the BIC Office at 313-331-7760. Everyone is welcome but children need to be accompanied by a parent or adult. Onsite registration and site assignments begin at 8:30 am. Work ends at noon with hot dogs, potato chips, and drinks for the volunteers at the Flynn Pavilion from 12:00 until 1:00 pm. Please dress for the weather, wear boots and bring gloves. Rakes, picks, and garbage bags will be supplied. If you want to use your own tools, feel free to bring them. Community service credit certificates will be awarded on site.



Volunteer taking filled leave bag to collection area at 2015 Belle Isle Spring Clean Up April 30 – Photo by Jan Ellison



2015 Belle Isle Spring Clean Up crew at the Conservatory formal garden April 30 – Photo by Jan Ellison

## SPRING KOI TRANSFER

**Saturday, May 7th – Aquarium – 10:00 am – 12:00 pm**

The koi in the basement at the aquarium will be anxiously awaiting their return to the lily pond between the Aquarium and the Conservatory. Bring your family and your five gallon, new, clean plastic buckets and help the volunteers with this task. This free event is a great time for all. Hot dogs, chips and a drink will be available behind the lily pond for all volunteers and their families. Come and join us in this fun celebration!



Spring Koi Transfer May 2, 2015

## GRAND PRIXMIERE

**Friday, June 3 – 6:30 pm – 9:30 pm**

Racing onto the scene in 2012 as the official launch party of the Chevrolet Detroit Belle Isle Grand Prix, the Grand Prixmiere is an unforgettable evening of scrumptious food, big auction prizes and entertainment. This summer chic gala brings Grand Prix race supporters together with Belle Isle Park supporters to celebrate the island gem. Held on the race track with the Scott Fountain as a backdrop, the Grand Prixmiere is a spectacular, sold-out evening that is one of Detroit's most talked about events.

The Shinola Clock was front and center in the 2015 Grand Prixmiere tent as an auction item



May 29, 2015 Grand Prixmiere evening



Grand Prixmiere photos by Joe Wilssens

## RENAISSANCE EQUESTRIAN DREAM TRAIL RIDE

**Saturday, June 18th**

The Renaissance Equestrian Charity Dream Trail Ride plans to return to Belle Isle again this year. In 2015, a severe storm hit the area and high winds forced the cancellation of the trail ride. Come down to the island and greet the horses and the riders as they travel around the island starting at Woodside Drive.

Renaissance Equestrian Dream Trail Ride June 22, 2014 – Photo by Jason Paluchniak



## EDUCATION PROGRAM IS OFF WITH A BANG

Amy Emmert, School Program Director  
Belle Isle Aquarium and Conservatory



**Amy Emmert explains the Gar poster to a group of students at the Aquarium**

2016 started off with a bang for the GM Foundation supported Detroit Public School and Hamtramck Public School Field Trip Programs, which run January through mid-May on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. In January, we hosted over 200 students from Hamtramck. Detroit Public School students started arriving in February. We are on track to host over 1,200 students this year at the Conservatory and Aquarium. This year the program focuses on 3rd grade in the Conservatory and 4th grade in the Aquarium. Both programs include hands-on exploration of the institutions while emphasizing topics drawn from the grade specific national standards. The Conservatory program has added a new hands-on activity that has proven a huge success with both students and volunteers. At the end of the 3rd grade tour, students are asked to apply their knowledge and create their own plant. If you are interested in volunteering for these programs, please contact Amy Emmert at [emmerta@belleisleconservacny.org](mailto:emmerta@belleisleconservacny.org).

**Docent, Kennard, Duda, with Ralph J. Bunche Preparatory Academy students in the Conservatory**



**Volunteer Barbara Osher holding student work in the Conservatory Show Room**



**Science Lab Students from Ralph J. Bunche Preparatory Academy learning in the Conservatory**



**Third grade student work on display in the lobby of the Conservatory**



## Mapping The Island

Andrew McDowell, IS ECC Chair, Landscape Architect, SmithGroupJJR,  
[andrew.mcdowell@smithgroupjjr.com](mailto:andrew.mcdowell@smithgroupjjr.com)  
Laurel Malvitz-Draper, IS ECC Member, Natural Resource Steward, DNR,  
[MalvitzL@michigan.gov](mailto:MalvitzL@michigan.gov)



**Volunteers working on a Stewardship Saturday on a fall workday in 2015**

The BIC's Island Stewardship Environmental Conservation Committee (IS ECC) partnered with the Department of Natural Resources to host Belle Isle's Natural Resource Roundtable. This event was held on Thursday, April 14th, 2015, in order to provide all natural resource stakeholders an opportunity to share knowledge, ideas, and updates related to their work on Belle Isle.

In recent years there has been a focused effort to start mapping some of Belle Isle's natural resources with the objective to formulate and then implement a management plan produced by the DNR. The development of both the map and the plan are substantial resources that will help guide stewardship activities on the island. We look forward to sharing more details as the plan develops. Some notable projects include a tree survey and tree management plan in the formal areas of the park (funded by the US Forest Service, managed by the DNR, survey and plan completed in 2014) and the mapping and treatment of invasive species (grant awarded to the Friends of the Detroit River and BIC, plus additional projects funded by the DNR – all are currently on-going).

Upcoming Stewardship Workdays can be found on the calendar posted online on the Belle Isle Conservancy's website <http://belleisleconservancy.org/calendar/>

We look forward to a successful year as stewards for Belle Isle's natural resources.

**Volunteer cutting an invasive plant on a Stewardship Saturday on a fall workday in 2015**





## VOLUNTEER HELP NEEDED AT ROTARY NATIVE GARDEN

Melvadean Pearson

Native Rotary Garden in early fall 2015 – Photo by Lori Feret

Welcome to the third season of the Rotary Native Garden on Inselruhe Avenue in front of the future Welcome Center building on the island (the historic Police Station). This volunteer effort headed by the Rotary Club of Detroit and with the support of Rotary's District 6400, which includes 47 clubs plus several garden clubs, and the BIC is now an established garden thanks to hundreds of community volunteer hours. Now that the backbreaking works of clearing turf, initial fierce weeding, planting and replanting have taken place, come join us for the low maintenance aspect of the garden. We have all tools necessary; however, if you are an avid gardener, please bring your favorite tools and join in the conversation and the camaraderie. Also, please bring a smile!

Learn the beauty of native plant species and how they improve soil and aid beneficial insects. See our schedule below.

We are now moving to a joint endeavor with the DNR to establish a sign outlining the species within this 3,800 square foot garden. Virtually everyone who passes on workdays asks a myriad of questions about these plants because they are so beautiful. **All workdays will be from 9am to noon the first and third Saturdays, and every Tuesday from April to November.** Gardening will depend on weather conditions. This is the schedule we created so you can make plans to join us. **Many hands make quick work.** Please come out to help with our garden. Bronson Gentry is our garden manager and instructor. Thank you for your continued support.

Please contact Mebby the day before if you are planning to attend: Melvadean.Pearson@gmail.com or call 248-376-8220.

Native Rotary Garden in late summer 2015 – Photo by Lori Feret

### VOLUNTEER WORKDAY SCHEDULE:

Month	Saturday Work Days	Tuesday Work Days
April	2 & 16 (Opening the Garden)	5, 12, 19 & 26
May	7 & 21	3, 10, 17, 24 & 31
June	18 only	7, 14, 21 & 28
July	16 only	12, 19 & 26
August	6 & 20	2, 9, 16, 23 & 30
September	3 & 17	6, 13, 20 & 27
October	1 & 15	11, 15, 18 & 25
November	5 (Closing the garden)	1



# BELLE ISLE'S FAMOUS ICE TREE FOUNTAIN

Lori Feret

Belle Isle Ice  
Fountain March  
1914 – Photo  
courtesy of the  
Burton Collection



Ice Fountain, Washington Boulevard, Detroit – old postcard dated 1914

Have you ever driven along Riverbank Drive and wondered about the teepee-like wooden frame that stands just west of the beach. This is the framework of Belle Isle's Ice Tree or Ice Fountain, whichever you wish to call it. It has been missing from the island since 2013, but in prior years, the framework was stuffed with discarded Christmas trees. A hose would run up the center of the frame with a sprayer at the top. Water continually sprayed over this, and as it froze, a beautiful ice fountain emerged.

For decades, families came to Belle Isle to view the ice tree sculpture and take family photos by it. This tradition dates back over a century. There are photos showing its various forms from 1914 through 2012.

This was not the only Ice Fountain in the City of Detroit. A second one existed at the park on Washington Boulevard and sat across from the old Cadillac Hotel around 1900. Somewhere in Detroit's history this Ice Fountain was discontinued leaving only the one on Belle Isle to the citizenry.

Man-made sculpted Ice Tree Fountains seem to be primarily a Michigan trend. Apparently, ice fountains exist in Boyne City, Gaylord, Torch Lake, as well as one just south of Holland. There are others in Omaha, Nebraska;

Choctaw, Oklahoma; Indianapolis, Indiana and Letchworth State Park, New York. However, none that I found have existed over 100 years.

We are hoping to return this tradition to Belle Isle in the near future. Jeremy Kemp, Head Horticulturist at the Conservatory recently created one in the lily pond using the Conservatory's Christmas Tree. Perhaps we could also add this one to our tradition.

The frame from the Belle Isle Ice Fountain sits on the shore just west of the beach waiting to be used again – Photo by Jan Ellison



February 2008 - The Belle Isle Ice Fountain gets a visit from a family preparing to take a photo – Photo by John Vavrek



Save the *Date*

**THE GARDEN PARTY – Tuesday, September 13th 5:30-7:30 pm at the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory.** Special plans are underway to celebrate the 10th anniversary of The Garden Party. This will be a spectacular evening at the Conservatory and Gardens with cocktails, hor d'oeuvres and entertainment. Don't miss it!

**POLISH THE JEWEL – October 2016, date and location pending.** Another great Polish The Jewel Belle Isle Legacy Luncheon is in the works to raise funds for island improvement projects. We are already starting to work on gathering donations for another spectacular silent auction.

**LIGHT UP THE AQUARIUM – Friday, December 2nd at the Aquarium.** Plans are underway for the 4th annual Light Up The Aquarium fundraiser to benefit the Belle Isle Aquarium. We are looking for donations for another fabulous silent auction.

**HOLIDAY STROLL – Friday, December 9th at the Conservatory, Aquarium and Dossin Great Lakes Museum.** A fun holiday season family event is already in the planning stages by the BIC, DNR and the Detroit Historical Society. There will, of course, be holiday lights, decorations, donuts, hot cider and the Deep River Choir – Be sure to attend!



The Belle Isle Conservancy website at <http://www.belleisleconservancy.org> and Facebook Page will have for additional information on our events.

May 1958 Conservatory Spring Flower Show with the overlook from the Aquarium behind – BIBS historic slide



# REOPENING THE PAST

Jan Ellison

In 1904, the Belle Isle Aquarium and Horticulture Building opened to appeal to the Victorian Era’s fascination with the study of the natural world. The buildings, designed by renowned architect Albert Kahn, had among the original design features a staircase linking the horticultural and aquarium areas. This stairway allowed guests to transition from the underwater-like world of the aquarium to the bright floral displays of the conservatory.

After many decades, the staircase was replaced with a balcony, and in the 1970’s, after the movie *Jaws* spurred a widespread interest in sharks, a large shark tank was built, closing off the balcony and bifurcating the structure into seemingly two buildings. This divide foreshadowed troubles to come when the building was treated as two separate institutions, allowing one to survive while the other temporarily closed.



Conservatory & Aquarium pass through as it looked in April 1938 – Photo courtesy of Vance Patrick



Conservatory Spring Flower show May 1958 showing a view from the overlook – BIBS historic slide

Today, the Belle Isle Conservancy - through the support of the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory and the Belle Isle Aquarium Committees and a consortium of east side garden clubs - has begun an effort to remove the barrier and restore the stairway. Funds raised in 2014 at The Garden Party on Belle Isle supported a kick-off project to start an architectural study with plans and specifications to restore this feature. A \$24,000 Community Local Government grant was received from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority/State Historic Preservation Office. It will be matched by the Conservancy and the City of Detroit at \$16,000.

Requests for proposals were solicited and Vance Patrick, Jan Ellison and Summer Ritner met with Janese Chapman and Timothy Boscarino of the City of Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board to evaluate bids. We are awaiting approval from Lansing for work to begin. The final plans and specifications are due August 25, 2016.

# WHAT IS HAPPENING *Around*

## A BRIGHTER FUTURE UNDERWAY

Jennifer Boardman

Pardon our dust while restoration projects at the Belle Isle Aquarium are underway! Thanks to a grant from the William Davidson Foundation, the iconic green, opaline glass, ceiling is being restored by Conservation and Museum Services of Detroit. Before the ceiling can receive overdue TLC from the restoration experts, the glass must first be carefully washed with a mixture of vinegar and water to remove over 111 years of grime. Aquarium volunteer, Chris Meister, uses a scissor lift to raise himself 25 feet in the air to wash the glass and make the dome sparkle.

A generous donation from Joy and Allan Nachman funded the return of pendant lights to the Aquarium gallery and center dome. Pendant lights are visible in early photographs and postcards of the Aquarium interior but they were removed at some point, and never replaced. Aquarium volunteers took the old photos to W. F. Bohnet Electric Company in Lansing who did a wonderful job of replicating the pendant lights while using state of the art LED bulbs and dimmers so that we can Light up the Aquarium all year long!

Come down and see the restoration in progress while you enjoy the Aquarium's wide array of exhibits!

White plaster marks areas of ceiling tile restoration. Three of the four pendant lights are installed in the Aquarium dome  
– Photo by Vance Patrick

Aquarium Co-Chair Jennifer Boardman observes volunteer Chris Meister washing the ceiling in preparation for restoration  
– Photo by Vance Patrick



A closer look at one of the new pendant lights  
– Photo by Chris Meister



Our upside-down jellyfish, *Cassiopea*, have three new babies. In the photo, they are to the right of the adult. Look for them in the alcove at the back of the Aquarium. – Photo by Lori Feret



# Belle Isle

## New Plants New Life

Jan Ellison



*Medinilla magnifica* blooming in the Conservatory Show House  
– Photo by Jeremy Kemp



White rocks in Cactus House plant beds shows off the smaller specimens – Photo by Lori Feret

Enhancements continue at the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory under the DNR and its Conservatory staff. New specimens purchased by the Belle Isle Conservancy (BIC) have added a much needed diversity to the collection. The removal of overgrown yews in front of the windows facing the gardens allows light to pour in enhancing plant growth as has judicious pruning. A donation of “Ant Plants”, from Matthaei Botanical Gardens, is on display in the lobby’s refurbished orchidarium. We have also added more plants to the Carnivorous display to the delight of kids of all ages.

The DNR consulted with Arboricultural Services regarding the eventual removal of the large palms, and newer varieties have been planted so there will not be big “holes” in the Palm House. The Cactus House has seen the greatest transformation this year. Some specimens were removed to make way for the addition of several new cactus and succulents, some donated and others purchased via BIC. Pebbles were added to the beds enhancing the plants by making them “pop”.

This winter, the DNR had 12 hot water heaters installed throughout the facility as a temporary fix until funds can be found to install an entirely new radiant heat system. A back-up generator has been funded by the Davison Foundation and should be installed by April. Over 100 pieces of glass were replaced in December and January, and the plywood windows are scheduled to be replaced this spring.

Staff has been working outside this winter getting ready for the installation of an arboretum between the formal gardens and Lake Tacoma. They removed brush and distressed trees to make room for the \$40,000 donation of specimens from the Walters family along with an equal match from the DNR. This will totally rejuvenate this area making it an inviting place to visit and relax while watching the freighters and the world go by. In addition, staff is getting ready to further enhance the new beds in the corners of the sunken gardens on either side of the Levi Barbour Fountain. Look for these wonderful improvements to unfold this summer.

The BIC Conservatory Committee, docent volunteers, and Head Horticulturist, Jeremy Kemp, have been busy creating additional signage for the Conservatory. With the addition of so much new plant material, it was time to upgrade. We are going with Plants Map, a system that will have interactive tags accessible from a Smart Phone. After extensive study and research we sent our list to Plants Map, and the signs are now installed. The information on each plant will be loaded onto their system by our volunteers and should be up and ready for use by this summer.

We would like to welcome Emily Erdman to the Conservatory staff as an assistant Floriculturist. Emily completes the compliment of four staff members to help with the Conservatory and gardens.

Come visit the Conservatory often. It is always changing and always a treat and respite from the outside world. The Conservatory is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 am to 5 pm. There is no admission fee.

Ant Plants in the Orchidarium, Lobby  
– Photo by Jan Ellison



Josephs Coat in the Cactus House – Photo by Jan Ellison



New Plants Map signs at the Conservatory will soon be scannable by Smart Phones for information  
– Photo by Jan Ellison



## It's Amazing... It's Beautiful...

Jan Ellison

## BUT OH SO STINKY!



**Corpse Flower or Voodoo Lily**  
(*Amorphophallus konjac*)  
– Photo by Jeremy Kemp

The last week of February, the Belle Isle Conservatory featured an *Amorphophallus konjac* in the Show House. It is commonly known as the Voodoo Lily, Corpse Plant, Sacred Lily of India, Devil's Tongue or Elephant Yam. The plant is native to subtropical and tropical eastern Asia, ranging from Japan and China south to Indonesia. Growing from a large corm or tuber it has a single stalk with an amazing purple flower. It is used in its native area to create flour and jelly known as konjac and also is used as a substitute for gelatin in vegan dishes.

This wonderful and amazing plant is often called a Corpse Flower for the potent and unsettling fragrance emitted by its dramatic solitary bloom. In an effort to attract flies for pollination, this Voodoo Lily does, indeed, simulate quite accurately the essence of rotting flesh. Visitors were amazed by the beauty of this specimen and disarmed by its smell. Fortunately, the stench only lasts a few days. People came on their lunch hours and all weekend long to view this unusual flower.



**Voodoo Lily in all her smelly glory**  
– Photo by Jan Ellison



**Michael Kloian waits by his Voodoo Lily to greet visitors to the Conservatory Show House Feb. 27, 2016** – Photo by Jan Ellison

A special thanks to Terri Koller for lending out this prize performer to the Conservatory. It originally belonged to her uncle, Michael Kloian, a World War II veteran, who discovered it in a garden near Harper and Chalmers in the 1970s. Once through blooming, Terri plants it in her garden to replenish the bulb. They visited their flower on February 27th, and Mr. Kloian talked to crowds of visitors about his unusual plant.

## Belle Isle Conservancy Appreciates

## Its Volunteers



**Aquarium volunteers Connie Leannis, Chris Meister and Elizabeth Nitz enjoying the party**

In the spirit of giving thanks, on **November 19th, 2015** the Belle Isle Conservancy held its first volunteer appreciation event at the Rattlesnake Club. The celebration paid homage to the substantial donation of time and commitment from our exceptionally dedicated team of volunteers. The evening provided attendees with the opportunity to be honored and to mingle over light fare and cocktails.

Island-wide, in 2015, Belle Isle Park welcomed 1,717 volunteers who donated 15,037 hours of their time, which translates into \$346,904. Although one evening could never provide enough thanks

to the dedication we receive, we truly look forward to carrying on this tradition of good food and even better company in celebration of our amazing team of volunteers on Belle Isle!



**Conservatory volunteers enjoying the party – Mary Nebel, Adrienne Gregory, Jan Ellison, and Donna McCosh; Michele Hodges is in the back row**



**Aquarium volunteers Diane Brischke and Gloria Brischke enjoy festivities at the Rattlesnake Club**

# DNR BELLE ISLE ANNUAL SUMMARY

Submitted by Ami Van Antwerp, Communication Coordinator Michigan DNR-Marketing & Outreach Division

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources takes great pride in the work, investment and partnerships it has forged since Belle Isle became Michigan's 102nd state park in 2014. In 2015, the DNR continued to make significant strides in the work that is being done to restore and enhance Belle Isle Park for all visitors. Here are few highlights:



**The DNR Stepping Stones 6-week summer outreach program started in 2014 and continued in 2015 where DNR Staff teach youth outdoor skills and nature education**

## Belle Isle survey shows strong customer satisfaction

A recent visitor survey was conducted on Belle Isle to gauge visitors' reasons for coming to the park, as well as measuring their perceptions of and satisfaction with park programs, amenities and service.

According to the results, 84 percent of respondents who have been to the park within the past year felt welcome, and 90 percent were satisfied with their experience. The survey also examined respondents' awareness of the park, reasons for visiting, and opinions on maintenance, management and

the Recreation Passport vehicle entry requirement. The survey was administered by Morpace Marketing Research & Consulting.

## Attendance

There were more than 3.5 million visitors to Belle Isle Park in 2015. Of particular interest, there was a 32% increase in attendance during the summer months since last year. In addition, attendance increased for all of the major island attractions: Belle Isle Aquarium (+53,925), Belle Isle Nature Zoo (+18,742), Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory (+16,801), and Dossin Great Lakes Museum (+5,536).

## Investment

Between November 2013 (when the initial lease agreement was signed between the City of Detroit and the DNR) and September 30, 2015 (the end of the state fiscal year), Belle Isle has received a total investment of \$19.9 million. The investment in 2015 was \$8 million, which included \$4.8 million (state expenditures), \$1.4 million in grant funding, \$1.35 million (Belle Isle Conservancy efforts) and \$346,903 (monetary value of volunteer hours). These volunteer efforts are greatly appreciated.

**Pedi-cab rides were also provided by a DNR selected vendor in 2015.**



## 2015 Improvements

In 2015, the DNR made significant improvements to operations, maintenance and capital projects,



**The DNR coordinated and supported free swim lessons run by the BOLL Family YMCA and funded by the General Motors Foundation in July and August of 2015. The class at the Belle Isle Beach covered rules, basic open water swimming safety, and how to properly fit a life jacket.**

such as equipment and restroom repairs, giant slide operation expansion to five days a week (May to October), heating system upgrades, installation of accessible two boat/kayak launches, development of a new visitor contact station and hazardous tree and invasive species removal.

And, work on the island is not completed. Priorities for 2016 will include investment in critical structural repairs, a number of reroofing projects, enhancing recreational and athletic facilities, improving island-wide sidewalk accessibility and pedestrian/bike circulation, construction of a trail head for the Iron Belle Trail, improvements to shoreline fishing and fishing pier and the installation of a new universally accessible playground.

**Canoe, kayak and bicycle rentals returned to Belle Isle at the Flynn Pavilion in 2015 when the DNR selected the Riverside Kayak Connection as the watercraft/bike/snow sport rental vendor – Photo by Lori Feret**



**Another vendor selected in 2015 by the DNR provided Horse and carriage rides in front of the Aquarium and Conservatory – Photo by Lori Feret**



# BOARD MEMBERS:

## Board of Directors

The Belle Isle Conservancy is governed by a 19-member board of directors, including two appointees from the City of Detroit and one from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

- Sarah Earley, Chair**  
Community Volunteer
- Ethan Vinson, Vice Chair**  
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- Genevieve Nowak**  
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Community Engagement Manager  
and Detroit Revitalization Fellow
- Stephanie Bowen**  
Administrative Assistant

# MISSION:

*Protect, preserve, restore and enhance the natural environment, historic structures and unique character of Belle Isle as a public park for the enjoyment of all—now and forever.*

BELLE ISLE CONSERVANCY  
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 Like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter  
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 for more news, events, updates and more!

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