



# NEWSLETTER

*Nature. People. Places.*

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

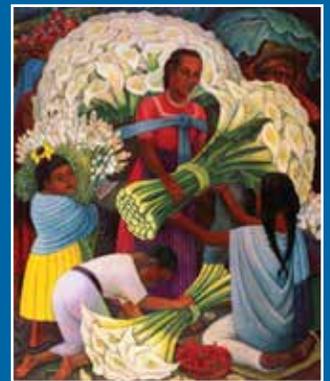
Saturday, April 25th, 2015  
8:30 am to 1 pm  
Check in at Flynn Pavilion

Join us for a morning of fun with a purpose. We will be bringing Belle Isle to life for the season with our Annual Spring Clean-Up. This year we will meet at the Flynn Pavilion for registration and site assignments. Hot Dogs, Chips and Pop will be served from 12PM-1PM.

Register at  
<http://belleislecleanup.eventbrite.com>

**THE ANNA SCRIPPS WHITCOMB CONSERVATORY  
FEATURES**

*"Indigenous Plants  
of Diego Rivera  
and Frida Kahlo's  
Native Mexico"*



**Complementing the Detroit Institute of Arts Exhibit,  
"Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo in Detroit"**

The DIA exhibit brings together nearly 70 works of art that depict the evolution of these two extraordinary artists' careers.

The Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory holds many examples of flora that can be found in Mexico which may have influenced or even inspired some of their works of art.

Indigenous plants from Mexico have a color-coded label to make them easy to find.

Immerse yourself in the environment from which these artists were influenced and drew their inspirations.

See if you can identify any plants in the conservatory that may appear in any of the artists' paintings at the DIA.

**The DIA exhibit runs from  
March 15 through July 12, 2015.**

**Koi Transfer**

Saturday, May 2nd, 2015  
10 am to 12 pm  
BELLE ISLE AQUARIUM

Join us for a family-friendly event on Belle Isle! To help transfer the koi from their winter resting spot in the basement of the Aquarium to the outdoor lily pond, bring a 5-gallon bucket. Donations of cleaning supplies for the volunteers to keep the Belle Isle Aquarium sparkling are appreciated.

# THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Michele Hodges



Youthful organizations generally find themselves functioning in a “reactive” mode, given their lack of structure, data, and effective planning tools. As they grow, mature, and become more seasoned, they can shift from this mode into one that is more proactive, deliberate, and driven by data.

It is gratifying to report the Belle Isle Conservancy has matured to the point it can enter into several significant planning processes, the outcomes of which will empower it to effectively manage resources, establish priorities and function within a decision making framework that is backed by credentialed expertise.

The two primary planning processes now underway include Cultural Campus Planning, which is being led by Albert Kahn Associates, and focuses on the Belle Isle Aquarium and Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory.

The second is an island wide strategic planning process, which has Biederman Redevelopment Ventures (BRV) at the helm. New York City's Bryant Park is BRV's signature success, so the firm is uniquely qualified to craft a future for Belle Isle.

Financial support from our donors, the Kresge, Hudson-Webber and Knight Foundations, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources has made these milestones reality. We salute each and every one of them for their exceptional commitment, and stand ready to ensure every penny is fully leveraged.

We must also thank the foundation community for enabling the Conservancy to make two critical hires, a business operations manager, and community engagement specialist. We look forward to welcoming these professionals to the team soon.

With these investments, we are strongly positioned to tackle \$330M of deferred maintenance projects, and the recommendations of the \$250M master plan. We have a long way to go, but success is on the horizon, which is something we can all celebrate, together, just as Frederick Law Olmstead would expect.



## *News from the Chair*

Sarah Earley



Welcome spring! After this winter, we're ready for some time in the outdoors, and Belle Isle is ready and waiting for you!

We've been busy all winter planning

two of the events the Conservancy hosts each year. The Grand Prixmiere will take place on Friday, May 29th on the Belle Isle race track. Chaired this year by Paula and Steve Kiefer, VP of Global Purchasing and Supply Chain for GM, the Grand Prixmiere is the Conservancy's major fundraising event. Our goal is to surpass last year's revenue of \$650,000. We're hoping for a beautiful summer evening as we gather by the Scott Fountain. The evening is already sold out.

The Grand Prixmiere would never be the success it has been without the support of the Penske Corporation, GM and the Grand Prix team. We thank them for their generosity!

On October 8th, we will host the 11th annual Polish the Jewel Luncheon in the Belle Isle Casino, chaired by Dr. Shauna Ryder Diggs. We will be honoring Ruth Glancy, one of the most tireless volunteers Detroit has ever seen as well as DTE Energy for their unflagging support of Belle Isle.

These two events, in addition to our evening at the Pewabic Pottery in June, the Garden Party in September and Light Up The Aquarium in December, raise funds for the Conservancy to support its work on behalf of Belle Isle and all our park visitors.

We are so grateful for all of you who support the Conservancy in ways both large and small. It's our pleasure to partner and collaborate with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to preserve, protect, restore and enhance Belle Isle as a public park – now and forever.

# DEVELOPMENT NEWS

Katy Wyerman, Director of Resource Development



The work of the Belle Isle Conservancy is made possible through a variety of funding sources including membership dues, donations, major gifts, fundraising events, and grants. We're thrilled to see a surge in the foundation community's support of the organization's capacity building and growth as well as restoration projects and programming on the island.



**Aquarium Exterior After Completion of Window Restoration Work - Photo by Lori Feret**

On the capacity building front, we're adding an operations manager to our team this spring and undergoing two planning processes this year – a cultural campus plan focused on the Aquarium and Conservatory and an organizational strategic plan. We were also funded to go on a fact-finding trip to New York City, where we met with our counterparts at Central Park and Bryant Park, gaining a vast amount of knowledge of best practices for parks and conservancies that can be applied to Belle Isle Park.

Visitors can expect to see the Aquarium sparkle with more improvements to the building within the next two years. A generous grant award is enabling the Conservancy to fix the sidewalk, restore the

Photo by Jeremy Kemp



façade, repair ceiling tiles, and renovate the bathrooms. The same grant is providing support to invite the community to unique music and cultural events at the Aquarium. Stay tuned for a line-up of programs this fall.

We've just wrapped up our first year of the new 4th grade field trip program to the Aquarium and Conservatory. The field trip program offers a rich and engaging learning experience that aligns to the science curriculum in the classroom. Students and teachers from Detroit Public Schools and Hamtramck Schools have provided very positive feedback, and we're looking forward to continuing the program next year.

All this is possible thanks to great support from long-time partners like the Kresge Foundation and the GM Foundation, and new supporters like the William Davidson Foundation, Knight Foundation, Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, and the DNR.

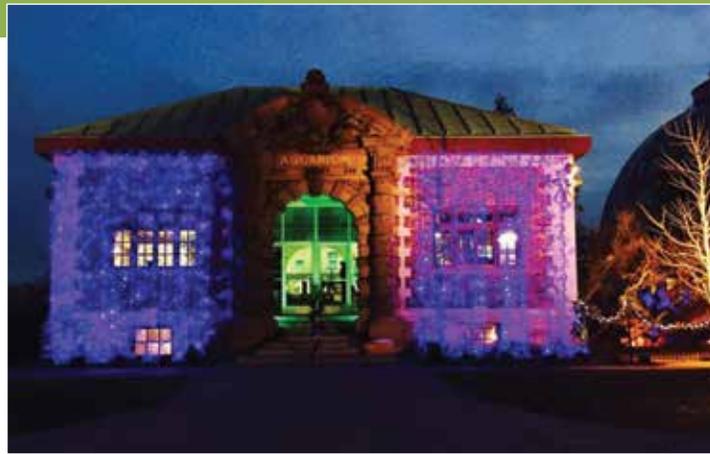


**Ronald Brown Academy kids learning about decomposers at our worm farm with Docent, Ellen Devine, photo by Amy Emmert**

The recent spike in grant awards indicates that there is strong interest and solid support from the community to invest in the park's sustainable and thriving future, and that future looks bright!



# Past Events



Light Up The Aquarium - Aquarium Exterior with Holiday Lights

## LIGHT UP THE AQUARIUM (LUTA)

The Aquarium was aglow for the 2nd annual 'Light Up The Aquarium' fundraising event on **Friday, December 5, 2014**. Festivities kicked off at 5:30 pm with a VIP champagne preview followed by event start at 6:30, running under 10:30 pm. An unveiling of the new stingray exhibit added excitement. Hors d'oeuvres, beer and wine were provided in the 110 year old Albert Kahn designed structure with the fish watching the guests bidding on the vast array of silent auction items. A jazz ensemble and violinist Ian D. Tran provided entertainment. This year, proceeds benefited the maintenance and continued operation of the aquarium.

## HOLIDAY STROLL

The Holiday Stroll took place **Friday, December 12, 2014**, at the Aquarium, Conservatory and Dossin Museum. 500 plus visitors were treated to Dutch Girl Donuts and mulled cider at the Conservatory while listening to the inspiring music of the Boll Family YMCA's Deep River Choir. Visitors were wowed by holiday decorations throughout the Conservatory and moved to the Aquarium whose entrance was awash in blue lights. Ian D. Tran entertained visitors there with his violin solos, and the fish enjoyed hosting happy faces for the evening, a generally dull time for them. The Dossin presented winter-themed crafts and treats for kids and their families. This annual event will be held again this year on Friday, December 11 from 5 to 8 pm.

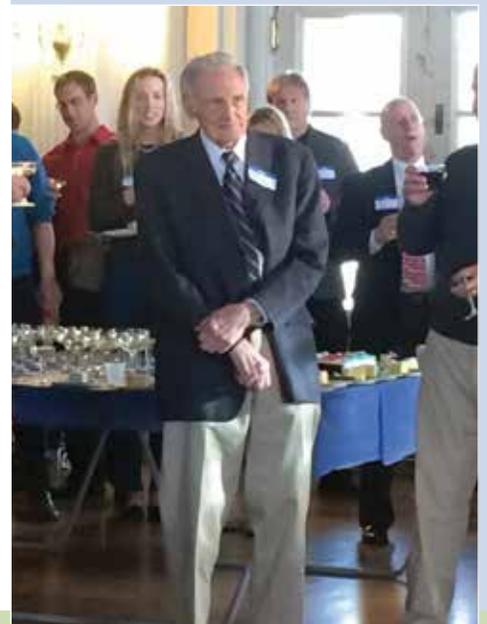


Holiday Stroll - Boll Family YMCA's Deep River Choir performing - Photo by Adrienne Gregory

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

At 3:00 pm **Thursday, January 1, 2015**, champagne glasses were held high in the second level atrium to toast in the New Year at the historic Boat Club on Belle Isle. This tradition has been a celebration for this rowing group that is going into its 176th year and is kept alive by the Detroit Boat Club Crew and Friends of Detroit Rowing. Detroit Boat Club Crew's John Welchli, silver medalist in rowing at the Melbourne, Australia, 1956 Olympics, was there to welcome in the New Year. Proceeds help to support the crew and their work. The event is open to the public and is a great way to kick off the New Year. Add this to your agenda for January 1, 2016, and join us when the doors to the Boat Club open at 2:00 pm.

Boat Club New Years Day Toast, John Welchli, 1956 Melbourne, Australia silver medalist in rowing.



## SHIVER ON THE RIVER

Friends of the Detroit River partnered with the Belle Isle Conservancy to hold their 16th annual ecological family fair **Saturday, February 7** all around Belle Isle. Approximately 2,000 visited the island's various venues. The Casino building hosted environmental displays, exhibits from various island facilities, kids arts and crafts, BobKat Caricatures, Magic John's Magic Show and the DNR Belle Isle Park Supervisor State of the Island Address by Joe Hall. Mary Anderson, a former president of the Friends of Belle Isle, and one of the 'Shiver' founders from 2000, was presented an award from FDR for her efforts in making this an annual affair. Other special activities included: an U.S. Coast Guard ice rescue demonstration, a Sierra Club snowshoe hike, Detroit Yacht Club tours, rowing demos at the Boat Club, marshmallow toasting at the Aquarium and 'Flying Pancakes at the Flynn Pavilion'. The all-you-can-eat pancakes flying off the grill breakfast adventure was presented by Pure Detroit and The Crofoot as a fun fundraiser for the Belle Isle Conservancy. 'Shiver On The River' is held the first Saturday of February each year on Belle Isle. Mark your calendar for Saturday, February 6, 2016 and join in on the fun.



Shiver On The River Aquarium Arts & Craft Table in the Casino - Photo by Lori Feret



Shiver On The River Pancake Breakfast at the Flynn



Shiver On The River Mary Timmons Anderson Award Ceremony - Photo by Lori Feret

## DAFFODIL LUNCHEON

Daffodil Day at Belle Isle, *A Detroit Daffodil Social*, is sponsored by the Michigan Division, Woman's National Farm & Garden Association. The Belle Isle Conservancy with students from University of Detroit High School, members of the DSO, Challenge Detroit, DTE Care Corps, regional Garden Clubs and DNR Conservatory staff, assisted the Belle Isle Park staff with planting bulbs in the fall. More than 120,000 daffodil bulbs have been planted since the first Daffodil Day.

This year's sixth annual luncheon was held **Wednesday, April 15** at the Detroit Yacht Club with over 325 guests in attendance. Special guests were Ron Olson, Chief of the Parks and Recreation Division of the Michigan DNR and Isaiah McKinnon, Deputy Mayor of the City of Detroit. John Cullen, owner of Celtic Gardens and President of World Cup of Gardening, was the guest speaker whose talk covered *The Story Behind the Garden*.

Volunteers will be planting at least 25,000 more bulbs this year but hopes to add to that count before September. The plantings will take place the last week of September and first week of October this fall. Firm dates and times will be available this fall on the BIC website: [belleisleconservancy.org](http://belleisleconservancy.org) or the BIC Facebook page.



Daffodils on Belle Isle - Knoll East of the DYC - Photo by John Vavrek

## WE'VE MOVED

The Belle Isle Conservancy office has recently moved to a new location. You can now find us at **300 River Place Drive, Suite 2800**, in the former Stroh Brewery Company headquarters on Joseph Campau south of East Jefferson Avenue. This was also the former home of the Detroit-based Parke-Davis Pharmaceutical firm. The buildings date back to the late 19th and early 20th century. Although our address has changed, our phone number is the same 313-331-7760.

300 River Place Location of the BIC Office - Photo by Lori Feret



# Ongoing Events



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

## SCIENCE SATURDAYS LECTURE SERIES

This series has moved to the second Saturday of each month where the Belle Isle Aquarium hosts Science Saturdays Lecture Series. Lectures take place in the Aquarium classroom at 11 am, 12 pm and 1 pm. Admission is free. Upcoming dates will be: **April 11, May 9, June 13, July 11 and August 8.**

## YOUTH EDUCATION

A new Saturday series at the Belle Isle Aquarium is Youth Education on the 3rd Saturday of each month. Admission is free. Upcoming dates will be: **April 18, May 16, June 20, July 18 and August 15** starting at 12 noon.

## KIDS ARTS & CRAFTS/STORYTELLING

The 4th Saturday of each month the Belle Isle Aquarium hosts a kids' series of Arts & Crafts/Storytelling. Admission is free. Upcoming dates will be: **April 25, May 23, June 27, July 25 and August 22.**

## STEWARDSHIP SATURDAYS

Help eradicate Belle Isle's invasive plants on the 3rd Saturday of each month – **April 18, May 16, June 20, July 18 and August 15.** Check the BIC's webpage for detailed activity information and to sign up for specific projects at the spring and early summer. We meet directly at the worksites and volunteers sign their waivers ahead of time to streamline the sign-in process. If interested in this effort, please contact Erica Hill at [hille@belleisleconservancy.org](mailto:hille@belleisleconservancy.org).

## BELLE ISLE PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee consists of three representatives appointed by the governor, one representative appointed by the Detroit City Council, two representatives appointed by the mayor of the city, and one representative to serve as chair jointly appointed by the governor and the mayor. The Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee Meetings 9:00 – 11:30 am, are free and open to the public. Dates of upcoming 2015 meetings are, unless otherwise noted on the website: **April 16, May 21, June 18, July 16 and August 20.** Check the DNR – Belle Isle Park website – Advisory Committee - 2015 Meeting Schedule for location, agenda and additional information – [www.michigan.gov/dnr](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr).

## CONSERVATORY TOURS

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



DON'T MISS THESE

# Upcoming Events



## 4TH DETROIT RIVER WATER FESTIVAL

**Thursday, April 30** – Friends of the Detroit River will be hosting the Detroit River Water Festival on Belle Isle again this year. It is a day-long educational event designed to help sixth-grade students learn about the importance and beauty of the water around us and how it impacts our daily lives with hands-on activities. Students from 30 Detroit area schools will come together this year to learn about the Detroit River. In 2014, nearly 800 Detroit Public School students from 17 schools participated in the program on Belle Isle.

## CINCO DE MAYO CELEBRATION AT THE CONSERVATORY

**Sunday, May 3 – Conservatory 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm** – Come celebrate Cinco de Mayo with us at the Conservatory in the Show House. There will be music, dancers and tasty samples of cooking from Mexico. Check the BIC website and facebook page for further details as the day draws near.

## GRAND PRIXMIERE

**Friday, May 29** – The Grand Prixmiere, the Conservancy's major fundraising event, will be held by the Scott Fountain on the Belle Isle race track. Chaired this year by Paula and Steve Kiefer, VP of Global Purchasing and Supply Chain for GM, our goal is to surpass last year's revenue of \$650,000. The evening is already sold out.

## SCOTT FOUNTAIN PEWABIC TILE FUNDRAISER

**Friday, June 5 – at Pewabic Pottery 10125 East Jefferson Ave. 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm** – Join us at Historic Pewabic Pottery to help restore Scott Fountain's Pewabic tiles that were damaged during the repair of the fountain's basin. Pewabic purchases made during this event will benefit the Scott Fountain Pewabic Tile Fund. Hors d'oeuvres & wine will be available. Free Secured Parking.

## 5TH ANNUAL RENAISSANCE EQUESTRIAN'S DREAM CHARITY TRAIL RIDE

**Saturday, June 27 – Ride starts at Woodside Drive and The Strand at 12:00 pm** – A fun, family-oriented fundraising event based around horseback riding. Proceeds will be donated to the "comfort cart," a program initiated to acknowledge patients and family members waiting in the Infusion Center of the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute. Horse owners from around the Midwest are invited to this 5.5 mile trail ride around Belle Isle. Horses start to arrive on the island around 9:00 am. For further information on the event or the organization go to the Renaissance Equestrian Society facebook page.

## BAREFOOT WINE ADOPT-A-BEACH™ BELLE ISLE SHORE CLEAN UP

**Saturday, August 8** – The event is part of a partnership between Barefoot Wine & Bubbly, Belle Isle Conservancy and the Alliance's Adopt-a-Beach™ Program to help clean up Great Lakes beaches and shorelines and make them barefoot friendly. The cleanup is open to the public and is a memorial to Mary Waterstone who worked to preserve her beloved Belle Isle. For additional information and to register for the cleanup go to the website [www.GreatLakesAdopt.org](http://www.GreatLakesAdopt.org) and search for Belle Isle Beach. Times and location for the event will be posted on the Belle Isle Conservancy website and facebook page. After the clean-up volunteers 21 and older will be invited to an after celebration at a local venue.



Detroit River Water Festival on Belle Isle  
May 8, 2014 - photo by Lori Feret

Scott Fountain Pewabic Tile Fundraiser at  
Pewabic Pottery June 7, 2014 - Photo by Lori Feret



Equestrian Trail Ride on Belle Isle  
June 22, 2014 – photo by Jason Paluchniak

Barefoot Wine Belle Isle Beach Clean Up  
August 16, 2014 - Photo by John Vavrek



# WHAT IS HAPPENING *Around*

## 100<sup>TH</sup> BRIDGE FIRE ANNIVERSARY – APRIL 27, 1915

Lori Feret

Belle Isle opened as a City of Detroit park 135 years ago on May 10, 1880. Access was by boat or ferry, and plans commenced to build a bridge from Detroit's mainland. The wood and steel swing bridge paved with a wood plank floor soaked in creosote opened June 25, 1889. Later, five wooden sections nearest the island were replaced with steel 88' Pony truss sections.

Cigars and cigarettes discarded on the flammable creosote block paving caused about six fires each day. Two watchmen were stationed on the bridge with buckets of water to douse the small blazes.

In the afternoon of April 27, 1915, a steel cart, filled with hot coals for heating tar, swayed spilling coals. As the cart returned to the mainland, Watchman Kearney and his partner spotted a fire on the draw of the bridge. Grabbing their buckets they ran, but the trail of fire led all the way back to the island. The creosote soaked blocks fueled the blaze sending huge, clouds of black smoke into the air with flames wrapped around the steel structure twisting it into grotesque shapes.

Two fireboats and thirteen fire companies responded pouring tons of water on the structure as firemen hacked away at the center span. Intense heat split some supporting stone piers sending them hissing into the river. The entire center span of the bridge collapsed while

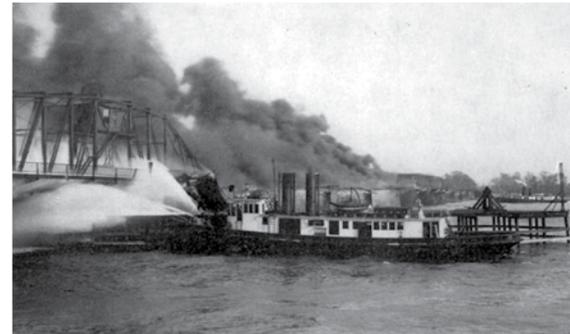
thousands watched. The estimated total damage was \$250,000 with no loss of life.

In August 1916, a temporary bridge was completed about 175 feet down-stream parallel to the old bridge. After the new Belle Isle Bridge opened November 1, 1923, the Swan family of Grosse Ile bought one of the 88' Pony truss sections, had it floated down the Detroit River on a barge, relocating it to connect Swan Island to Grosse Ile, where it stands today.

The Belle Isle Bridge was renamed the MacArthur Bridge in 1942 for WWII General Douglas MacArthur.



Old Belle Isle Bridge 1910 Postcard



Old Belle Isle Bridge Fire 1915 Postcard with Detroit fireboat James Battle Fighting the Blaze

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE NOTES

Roberta Henrion

The Belle Isle Historic Preservation Committee is hard at work preparing a Request for Proposal for a Rehabilitation Master Plan of the James Scott Memorial Water Fountain and site. The RFP is 90% complete and should be done by the end of the month. The RFP will be funded with dedicated funds from BIC's merger with Friends of Belle Isle.

Mr. Robert Christensen, National Register of Historic Places Coordinator for the Michigan State Historic Office, is working on the updated nomination by putting the finishing touches to seek the National level of significance. The goal is to elevate the significance to the Federal level making the park eligible for more grants. Rita Walsh of Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. authored the nomination, and Mr. Christensen edits and controls the flow of projects presented to the States Review Board. The next step is review and approval by the Michigan State Historic Preservation Review Board before

its presentation to the Keeper of the National Register. Let's keep our fingers crossed that the presentation is made and approved at the May 15, 2015 meeting, putting the nomination another step closer on its journey to approval. As the nomination moves through the process, City of Detroit's Historic Designation Advisory Board is working in tandem to make Belle Isle Park a local historic district.

The BIC Historic Preservation Committee is working with the DNR to choose a site for the rediscovered Belle Isle Park Michigan Historical Marker, which will be installed in the spring.

Scott Fountain  
Summer, 2014



# Belle Isle



Ronald Brown Academy (RBA) students looking at an invasive species tank - photo by Amy Emmert

## Spring Has Sprung!

Amy Emmert, School Programs Director Belle Isle Aquarium and Conservatory

Learning is still in bloom at the Belle Isle Aquarium and Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory. We continue to serve 20-30 Detroit Public School 4th graders every Monday and Tuesday morning. We have also added to the flower bunch, and are proud to announce that in addition to Detroit, we will also host every 4th grader in Hamtramck Public Schools on our field trip adventures. All of this is made possible by the generous support of the GM foundation.

New to our field trip experience are Venus flytraps and Pitcher plants incased in the lobby area and are an incredibly unique example of plant adaptations. Carnivorous plants are a huge hit with all the kids. Jeremy Kemp continues to expand the amazingly diverse collection, which supports our educational objective of students exploring the wondrous adaptations of the plant and animal world. I am so grateful to all our extraordinary volunteers for all they do; this program would not be the success it is without them. But there is always room for more! If you are interested in volunteering with our field trip programs please contact Amy Emmert at amyemmertbelleisle@gmail.com



RBA students tasting tropical juices in the Conservatory, Docents-Barb Osher, Donna McCosh and Ken Muha - photo by Amy Emmert



RBA students looking at Zebra & Quagga mussels with Docent, Jill Duncan - photo by Amy Emmert

## Save the Date



Metro Detroit Youth Day 2014 – Michigan Opera Youth Chorus Performs – Photo by Jared Purcell, Mlive.com

**METRO DETROIT YOUTH DAY – Wednesday, July 15 at the Athletic Field from 8:30 am – 2:30 pm** – A metro Detroit tradition for the past 33 years “Inspiring our Youth To Do The Most Good.” There is fun, food, games, prizes, celebrity guests,

entertainment and more. Pre-registration is required for this free event for ages 8 – 15. For additional information go to the MDYD website at <http://www.youth-day.com>.

**THE GARDEN PARTY ON BELLE ISLE – Tuesday, September 15 at the Conservatory from 5:00 – 7:00 pm** – The Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory will host their 9th annual cocktail party fundraiser. It is not to be missed!

**POLISH THE JEWEL LUNCHEON – Thursday, October 8 at the historic Belle Isle Casino** – The Belle Isle Conservancy will host the 11th annual Polish the Jewel Luncheon in the Belle Isle Casino, chaired by Dr. Shauna Ryder Diggs. At this event, we will be honoring Ruth Glancy, one of the most tireless volunteers Detroit has ever seen as well as DTE Energy for their unflinching support of Belle Isle.

**DAFFODIL PLANTING** – Planting will take place the last week in September and the first week in October. Firm dates will be available in the fall.

**LIGHT UP THE AQUARIUM (LUTA) – Friday, December 4 at the Aquarium** – This will be the third year for our spectacular fundraiser at the Belle Isle Aquarium. Plans are in the works. Watch for another great silent auction.

**HOLIDAY STROLL – Friday, December 11 at the Conservatory, Aquarium and Dossin Great Lakes Museum from 5:00 – 8:00 pm.** – Another fun holiday season event family event is being planned. Lights, decorations, donuts, hot cider, the Deep River Choir, be sure to attend.



## VOLUNTEER EXCITEMENT AROUND BELLE ISLE

Erica Hill, Volunteer Coordinator



This year promises to be an exciting time for volunteers on Belle Isle. Our volunteers contributed more than 10,000 hours last year. From shelter painting, to the Belle Isle Open House to daffodil installations and Stewardship Saturday's, the island was buzzing with volunteer activities. This year we will far surpass last year's achievement.

Groups have already started to clean the island for the season. Students from Divine Child High School and volunteers from Quicken Loans came to the island to bear the cold, during the winter months, for workdays on the island. They have jump-started our season by removing leaves and debris around the old zoo, the conservatory garden and along Insulrue.

We are looking forward to what this season has in store for us. We have implemented new volunteer management software that will enhance the volunteer experience with volunteers checking in with new technology on iPads. In addition there are a host of volunteer projects and partnerships that we will engage in this season.

*“Our volunteers contributed more than 10,000 hours last year.”*

With the coordination of the DNR's Laurel Malvitz-Draper, our Stewardship Saturdays will be reorganized to match the needs of the island with our volunteer base. In doing this, our Natural Resource Stewardship will continue to thrive. To help facilitate this, we are seeking volunteers with specialized skills in the area of ecology and natural resources to be a part of these activities.

We welcome Andy McDowell, our new chairman of the Island Stewardship and Conservation Committee. Andy has hit the ground running, and we look forward to his leadership and his continued work on the island.

Finally, please join us for the Annual Belle Isle Clean up on April 25 at the Flynn Pavilion. We will begin registration at 8:30 am, cleanup begins at 9:00 am, we will work until 12:00 pm and hot dogs will be served after that! Sign-Up on the BIC website. We need your help!

See you on the island!

**Divine Child High School student volunteers performed general clean up around the Casino, Scott Fountain and Flynn Pavilion – March 10, 2015 - photo by Erica Hill**



# IT JUST KEEPS GETTING BETTER

Lori Feret and Jennifer Boardman

The 110-year-old Belle Isle Aquarium keeps getting better through the support of volunteers, donations and grants! Look for building improvements, more exhibits, and opportunities to engage visitors. We have hosted children's birthday parties, formal dinners, and other special events including, "Barkfest" – a private dog party which received the 'WOOF Seal of Approval' from all who attended. To discuss scheduling a private event at the Aquarium, visit [belleisleconservancy.org](http://belleisleconservancy.org) and choose "contact."

**WHAT'S NEW** - We now have a permanent exhibit for our electric eels and a large stingray exhibit. Pewabic Pottery has created the first ever, Belle Isle Aquarium tile, which will be available in May and be the third Belle Isle related Pewabic tile. The new weather-vane is nearing completion, and a chameleon exhibit is in the works. 'Kids Arts & Crafts' series on the last Saturday of each month will help kids learn about the underwater world.

Scaffolding was erected under the center dome where restoration of the huge skylight is nearly complete, and by summer three of the four skylights will be fully restored and functioning! Closed for sixty years because of leaks and deterioration, natural light will once again shine inside.

For the third year, The Michigan Glass Project adopted the Aquarium as their charity. Aquarium Co-Chairs, Jennifer Boardman and Vance Patrick accepted a \$12,000 check from Drew Kups and Allison Key of MGP in a ceremony in February. MGP, one of our biggest financial supporters has donated a total of \$36,000 to the Aquarium. Detroit Synergy, another big supporter, has the starting line of their annual *Belle Isle Spring Into Nature 5K Run/Walk*, on Saturday April 25, at the Aquarium.

The William Davidson Foundation awarded BIC a grant providing funding for restoration of the Aquarium façade and sidewalks, interior ceiling tile, bathroom renovations, heat and power system upgrades, and expanded programs for reaching new friends and supporters.

The annual spring Koi Transfer is Saturday, May 2nd. Bring a new, clean bucket and help us move the koi from their winter home in the Aquarium basement to their summer digs in the lily pond. This year we have partnered with New York Life, who will have a tent where they will make free child photo I.D. cards for parents.

Lots more to see and do, so come down and visit the Belle Isle Aquarium.



**Barkfest Visitor Checks Out Otis the Puffer Fish Exhibit – February, 2015**

**BarkfestGroup at the Conservatory – February, 2015**



**Michigan Glass Project Check Donation Award – February 7, 2015**



**Dome Skylight with Scaffolding – March, 2015 - photo by Lori Feret**



**Seahorse Exhibit - photo by Lori Feret**



**Stringray Exhibit - photo by Lori Feret**

**Weather-vane – two halves after cleanup and some minor repairs. Pretty much all cleaned up at this point, just some minor details to attend to. You can see the fins in the background. January, 2015**



Nashua Creek Bridge in the Fall – Photo by John Vavrek



Winter Stewardship Saturday, photo by Lori Feret

## NATURAL RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP ON THE ISLAND

Laurel Malvitz-Draper

As an introduction, I am Laurel Malvitz-Draper. I have a BS in Natural Resource Ecology and Management from the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources, and thirteen years of experience working in the field of ecological restoration while coordinating volunteers. Working for the DNR, Parks and Recreation Division, Stewardship Unit, I have coordinated the Volunteer Stewardship program in southeast Michigan since 2005. The program covers nine parks now including Belle Isle Park and focuses on restoring high-quality natural areas within our state parks. I grew up in the Ferndale area and remember enjoying my time on Belle Isle as a kid; I'm excited to be working there!

I worked with Mebby Pearson last year and led my first "solo" workday in November 2014. Luckily I had the help of some knowledgeable volunteers - Ted Hejka and Pat Hammer - to help me coordinate the large group of volunteers. The flags that Mebby had hung on invasive shrubs remained to keep folks busy as they learned how to identify glossy and common/European buckthorn, honeysuckle, etc. Throughout the winter we've been working to restore the wet mesic flat-woods on the island, especially some of the highest quality areas in and around the paved biking/hiking trail near Nashua Canal. In November through March, 118 volunteers donated 424 volunteer hours covering approximately 20 acres. There are benefits to working in the woods in the cold winter- no bugs and it's easier to see through leafless shrub thickets in order to find the invasives among them. It takes a keen eye to identify plants with only winter characteristics (bark, twigs, buds) but we've made excellent progress with the support of so many enthusiastic volunteers.

Stewardship Saturdays will continue the third Saturday of each month (except December). Activities this spring may tend toward gardening (in the Rotary native garden and at the conservatory) and debris clean-up because we can't treat invasive shrubs when "the sap is rising". Keep an eye out on BIC's webpage for detailed activity information and to sign up for specific projects at the spring and early summer

Stewardship Saturdays - April 18, May 16, and June 20. We have been meeting directly at the worksites and having volunteers sign their waivers ahead of time to streamline the sign-in process. We'll evaluate how that's working and change things if needed.

We are looking for specialized volunteers to fill a few special, key roles. If you are interested in any of the following, please contact Erica Hill or myself:

- **Invasive shrub ID expert** - help flag invasive shrubs in spring and flag/treat in fall at special small group outings. This will prepare us for future large group workdays that tend to have many novice volunteers without plant ID skills
- **Early Detection, Rapid Response Team** - learn how to identify some early-invading non-native, invasive plants at a field-based training session and then help survey the woods for more of those plants that same season and in future years. A multi-year commitment is important, since after we treat the first few known points of that invader, we won't have real life examples to show people. Seeing plants in person is worth more than a thousand words.
- **Workday co-leaders** - lead and work alongside a group of 10 or so volunteers, help answer questions about plant ID, treatment technique, restoration goals, etc. Shrub and tree ID skills (both native and non-native) are useful as well as a desire to work with people.
- **Bird Surveys** – We encourage birders to report checklists and counts to eBird using the Belle Isle hotspot. DNR would like to know of any rare species found and their locations.
- **Plant Surveys** - We are looking for botanists interested in searching for rare plants on the island.
- **Frog and Toad Surveys** – We are looking for folks who know frog and toad calls to continue the surveys that have taken place in past years.



# CHANGE IS THE WORD!

Janice Ellison

Change is the operative word at the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory. Recently two palms were removed in the Palm House and the others pruned. A Sausage Tree replaces the overgrown Date Palm near Cactus House entrance while other plantings have been installed to further reflect the nature of this special room. A Tree Aloe was removed in the Cactus House and many new varieties were added to lend a more coherent look. The Tropical House continues to change with additional new specimens including a Jade Vine. In the Show House crowded evergreens were removed and more appropriate plants added as background for the ever-changing displays. The Easter lily display was particularly beautiful this year with the addition of a Bougainvillea tree, hydrangeas and other spring-like flowers.

The BIC Conservatory committee has established three main goals for 2015. We are working on *developing an educational plan* which will include adding additional signage, docent education and the continuation of our programs with Detroit and Hamtramck public schools.

We are *developing partnerships* with other conservatories and gardens along with area garden clubs and other organizations. We are planning a trip for the staff and committee members to Matthaei Botanical Gardens to meet and exchange ideas. We hope to partner with *The Garden Party on Belle Isle* to renovate the Lily Pond Garden. Several boulders have fallen into the pond, the pond leaks and the 1930's landscaping must be replaced.

The DNR and BIC with Albert Kahn and Associates are coming up with a *strategic plan* for the Conservatory and Aquarium which will include not only infrastructure upgrades but enhancements to the gardens, greenhouses and possible additions of amenities to the Conservatory. Our committee is actively participating in this process.



2015 Easter Show –  
photo by Lori Feret

We are presenting *Indigenous Plants of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo's Mexico* to run concurrently with the DIA exhibit. Throughout the Conservatory, plants of Mexico will be highlighted with colorful signage. We are also planning a Cinco de Mayo festival on Sunday, May 3 with dancers, music and snacks. We plan to bring you other interesting programs that tie the Conservatory into local events while highlighting our unique collection.

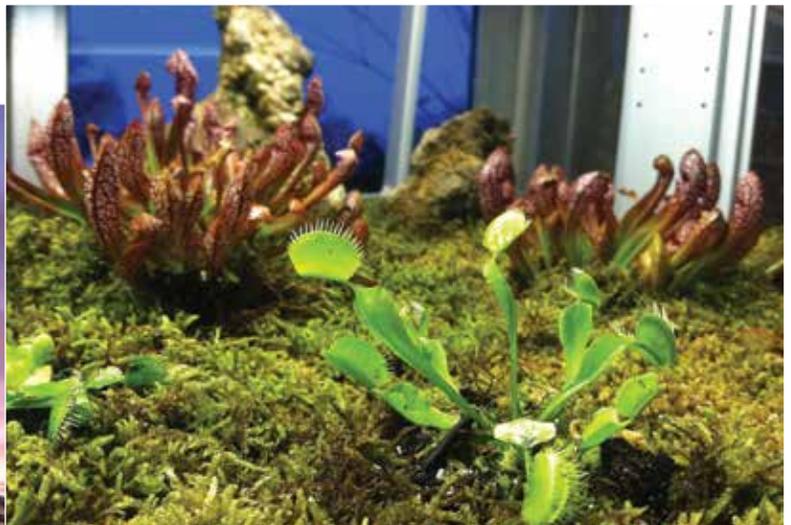


Palm House – Sausage Tree - Photo by  
Janice Ellison

Conservatory Fall, 2014 - Photo by Jeremy Kemp



New Carnivorous Plants Display -  
January, 2015 - Photo by Jeremy Kemp



## MORE ACCOMPLISHMENTS COMPLETED –

### *More Revitalization Efforts Underway*

Submitted by Jolene Priest, Urban Communications Specialist Public Information Office/ Executive Division Department of Natural Resources

Just over a year into operation as Michigan's 102nd state park, Belle Isle is showing real improvements – from refurbished park shelters and renovated restrooms to universally accessible parking spaces and removal of hazardous trees.

Between November 2013 (when the 30-year lease agreement with the City of Detroit was signed, signaling the start of the 90-day transition to state management) through the end of the state's fiscal year Sept. 30, 2014, nearly \$12 million was invested in Belle Isle, including \$1.56 million in grant funding. Individuals and groups – including a metro-area Boy Scout troop and 350 Michigan Cares for Tourism supporters – gave more than 10,000 valuable volunteer hours, committing their time and resources to the island's revitalization.

Highlights from Belle Isle's first year as a state park include:

**Strong support.** In addition to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the commitment from the Belle Isle Conservancy, Michigan State Police, the City of Detroit, the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee, the Greening of Detroit, the National Park Service, the Friends of the Detroit River – among many others – showed that partnerships are a key to the long-term success of the island.

**Increased attendance.** Attendance statistics for 2014 at major island attractions showed stronger attendance than in prior years. The largest gain was at the Belle Isle Aquarium (up 125 percent over 2013), the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory was up 91 percent; the Dossin Great Lakes Museum increased 91; and the Belle Isle Nature Zoo saw a 12-percent increase. Since June 1, 2014, when MDOT began counting vehicles via a traffic monitor on MacArthur Bridge, the island park has welcomed more than 2 million visitors.

**Employment opportunities.** By last summer, 12 of the island's 17 public restrooms were renovated and reopened, thanks in part to efforts by The Youth Connection, Inc. and Healthy Kidz. Youth from the MDOT Youth Corp and Jewish Vocational Services also participated

in revitalization efforts during the past year, and a veterans group – through a Michigan State University return-to-work program – made significant repairs to the Kids' Row play-scape. Such initiatives were instrumental in the revitalization efforts on the island.

**Equipment/facility improvements.** Visitors saw plenty of upgrades, including eight park shelter renovations; a new kids' swim area with a buoy system and water-safety signage at the swim beach; 50 refurbished picnic tables; the addition of 200 refuse barrels (with "Keep Belle Isle Beautiful" wraps) set on anchors around the island; and an overall effort to keep the park clean.

**Beautification and safety efforts.** To make the park safe, more than 350 hazardous trees were removed from maintained areas of the park. A volunteer effort through the Greening of Detroit saw to the November replanting of 120 flowering cherry trees, lost to disease and age, near the Scott Memorial Fountain basin. In addition, the fountain operated daily from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Memorial Day through Labor Day.

**Creative programming.** Looking for new ways to draw visitors to Belle Isle, the park offered a variety of new recreation and learning opportunities, including the opening of a disc golf course; free swimming lessons for all ages (as part of the DNR's Recreation 101 "how to" classes); winter and spring wildlife programming; and the Belle Isle Harvest Festival.

Looking ahead in 2015, efforts – in addition to continuation of current revitalization efforts such as restroom restoration – will focus on replacing critical heating and ventilation systems in major park facilities, enhancing recreation facilities and structures, strategic replanting of trees, improving key trails and renovating the athletic complex. All of these efforts align with the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee's strategic plan, which includes the following goals: a safe and clean park; customer-oriented thinking; stewardship and community spaces; partnership and alliances; and continuous improvement.

**DNR Summer Youth Employment Program – Universally accessible sidewalks and parking spaces added by the Youth Connection**



**Belle Isle Harvest Festival October 18, 2014 – Children with Smokey the Bear**



**MSU Return-to-Work Veterans' Group Made Repairs to the Kids' Row Playscape**



# MICHIGAN STATE PARK RECREATION PASSPORT

Submitted by Jolene Priest, Urban Communications Specialist Public Information Office/ Executive Division Department of Natural Resources

As Belle Isle enters its second year as a state park, the Recreation Passport is now required on all passenger vehicles entering Belle Isle Park. This is consistent with all other Michigan state parks. Recreation Passports can be purchased at a temporary visitor contact station on the island, located to the left just after crossing the MacArthur Bridge. From mid-March through late spring, the contact station is staffed with a park ranger from 8 am to 4 pm Wednesday through Sunday. A permanent visitor contact station will be installed in late spring. It will be located shortly after crossing MacArthur Bridge near the flower clock. The permanent visitor contact station will be open for Recreation Passport purchases from 6 am to 9 pm every day from May through September.

Recreation Passports can also be purchased at the following locations in downtown Detroit:

- **Belle Isle administrative office**, located in the White House on Inselruhe Avenue across from the Belle Isle Aquarium. The office is open from 8 am to 4 pm Monday-Friday.
- **Outdoor Adventure Center** ([www.michigan.gov/outdooradventure](http://www.michigan.gov/outdooradventure)), located at 1801 Atwater Street at the corner of Atwater and Orleans Streets (in the former Globe Building). Until late June, when the facility will be open to the public and front entrance can be accessed, enter through the side door on the corner of Atwater Street and Orleans Street next to the parking lot. The Outdoor Adventure Center is open 8 am to 5 pm Monday-Friday.
- (Beginning in mid-April) **Milliken State Park and Harbor**, located at 1900 Atwater Street. The administrative office is open 8 am to 4 am Monday-Friday.

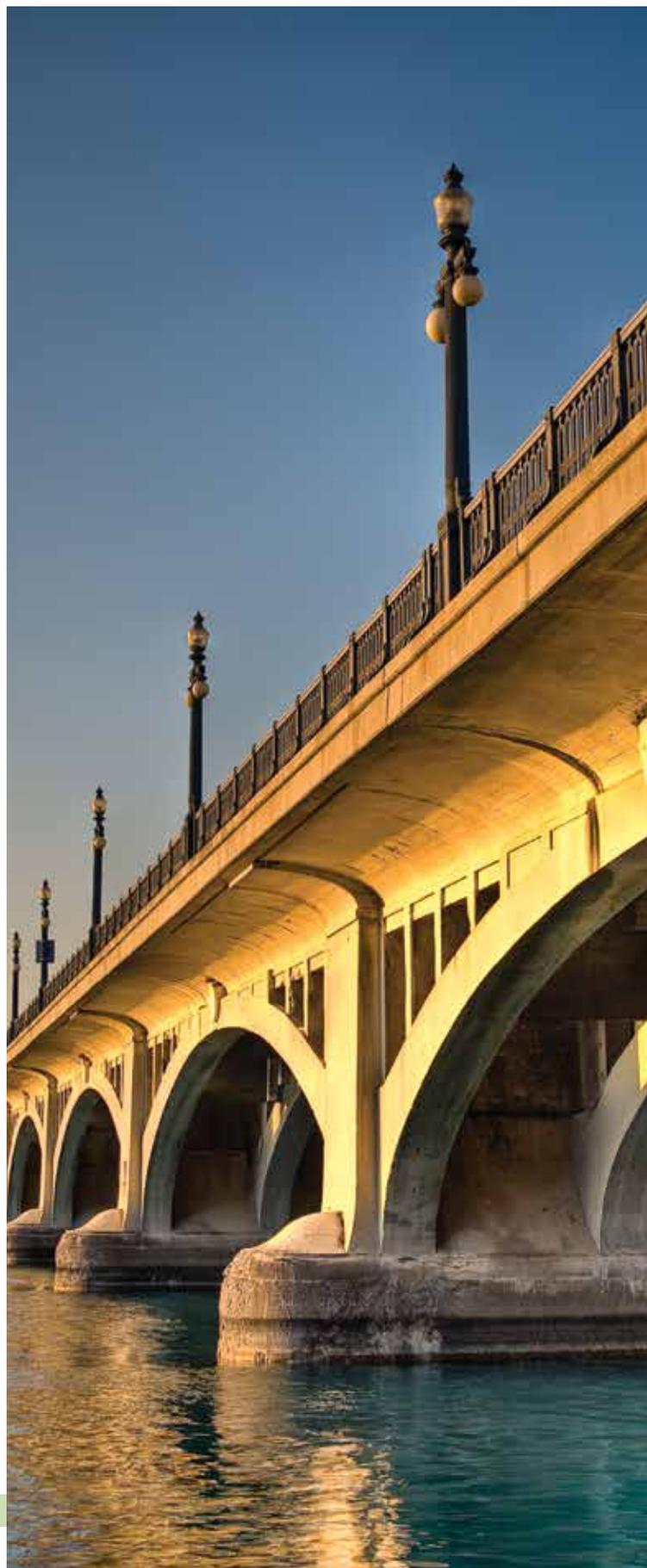
The Recreation Passport is also available for purchase:

- With the Secretary of State during license plate registration renewal (at any branch office, online or kiosk)
- At any Michigan State Park and recreation area
- Online, **for non-Michigan registered vehicle ONLY**, by visiting [www.michigan.gov/estore](http://www.michigan.gov/estore) and by clicking on "State Park Recreation Passport" on the left navigation bar

The Recreation Passport is \$11 for Michigan-registered vehicles and \$5 for motorcycles. A daily motor vehicle permit is available for \$9 for non-Michigan registered vehicles. An annual motor vehicle permit is available for \$31 for non-Michigan registered vehicles. This includes vehicles belonging to persons traveling from out of state to reunions or other shelter events, as well as non-Michigan rental vehicles. Motor vehicle permits for non-Michigan registered vehicles can be purchased at the park or online at [www.michigan.gov/estore](http://www.michigan.gov/estore) by clicking on "State Park Recreation Passport." Pedestrians, bicyclists and those using public transportation can enter the park for free and do not need the passport.

The Recreation Passport helps fund and gains access to all 102 Michigan state parks, recreation areas, state forest campgrounds and non-motorized trail heads and boat launches. It also assists in improving neighborhood parks through the Recreation Passport community grants program.

More information about the Recreation Passport can be found at [www.michigan.gov/recreationpassport](http://www.michigan.gov/recreationpassport)



# 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.

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- Summer Ritner**  
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- Tess Miller**  
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

[www.BelleIsleConservancy.org](http://www.BelleIsleConservancy.org)

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 Like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and visit us at [www.belleisleconservancy.org](http://www.belleisleconservancy.org)  
 for more news, events, updates and more!

**IN THIS ISSUE:**

**PAGE**

The President's Report ..... 2

News from the Chair ..... 2

Development News ..... 3

Historical Articles ..... 8

Education News ..... 9

Volunteer News ..... 10

Aquarium Updates ..... 11

Stewardship News ..... 12

Conservatory Updates ..... 13

DNR News ..... 14 & 15



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