

# THE Beacon-News

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## 'We're already on the move'

It's full steam ahead for Aurora programs focusing on aging

By Steve Lord  
Beacon-News

Aurora is adopting elements of an Aging in a Changing Region protocol suggested by the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus.

Aldermen on the City Council heard details of the protocol during the Committee of the Whole meeting on Tuesday. Katrina Boatright, the city's manager of Senior and Disability Services, said Aurora has a good start on programs for its seniors.

"We've already put a lot of things in action," she said. "We have a lot to do, but we're already on the move."

Brad Winick, a consultant working with the caucus to help municipalities with the protocol, called a cohort, agreed.

"I have not worked with many municipalities that have done as much as Aurora," he said.

The Metropolitan Mayors Caucus works with the 275 municipalities in the Chicago region, and Winick said he has done consulting for programs in about 20 cities in Lake, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Will and Cook counties.

He said Aging in a Changing Region is designed to look "at a big

**"I have not worked with many municipalities that have done as much as Aurora."**

— Consultant Brad Winick

picture" on how to program for a growing, aging community.

Winick's work in Aurora began with two workshops, one for residents and another for stakeholders throughout town that provide services for seniors.

As part of the cohort, Aurora will continue with quarterly stakeholder meetings. The city also recently established an Aging-in-Community Advisory

Committee — which officials are in the midst of filling — which was another recommendation.

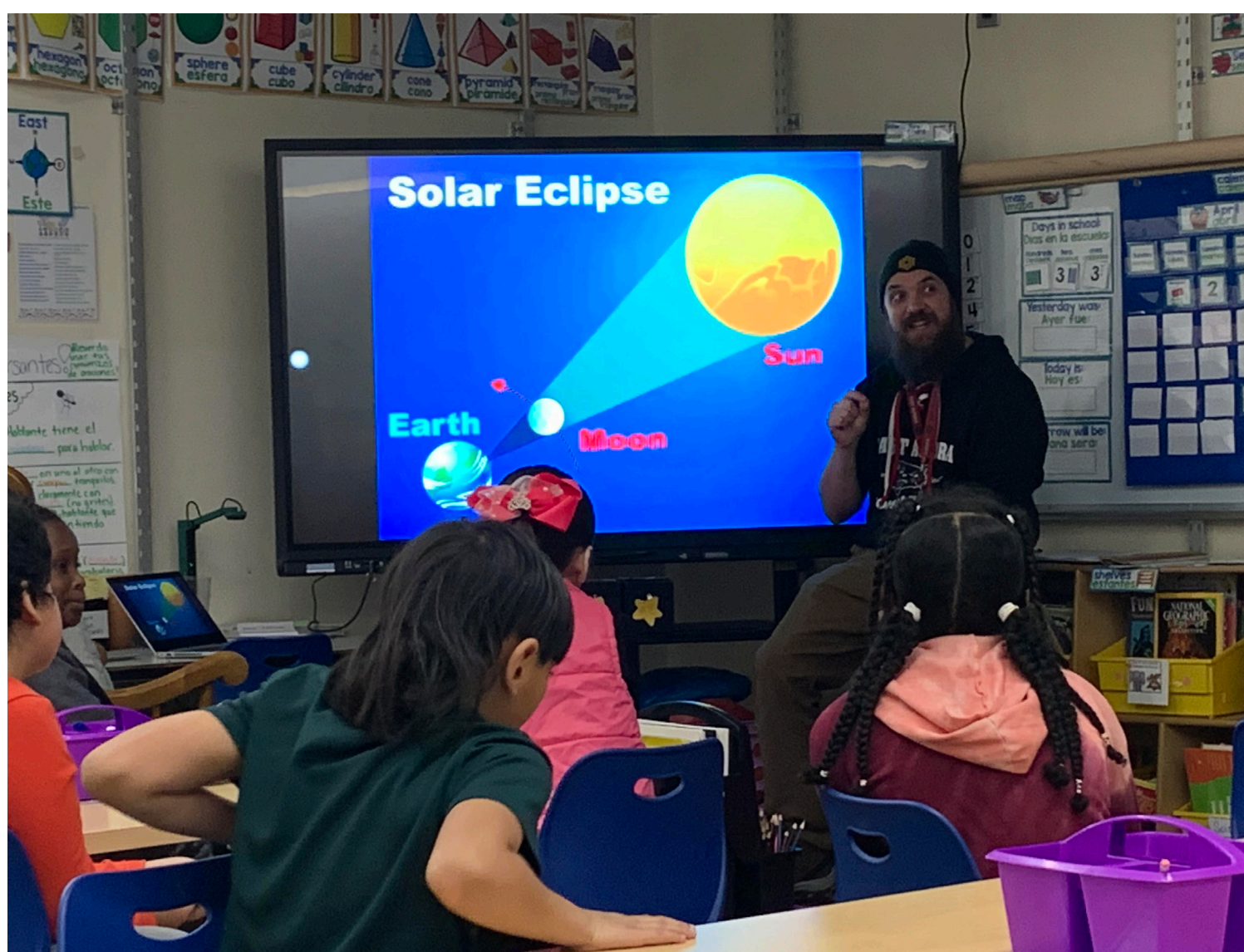
City officials also are establishing an Aging in Place Safety Program, and are discussing a Volunteer Center for seniors.

Boatright said exactly what the Volunteer Center would be is getting "fleshed out," but both she and Winick said that fighting the social isolation of aging is a key.

Aurora is currently working on designating department staff as aging-in-community point persons, and practicing anti-ageism in municipal communications and behavior, officials said.

Other recommendations in the cohort include establishing working groups for aging-in-community at a neighborhood level; adding informal gathering places for older residents throughout the city; viewing housing issues in part through an aging-in-community lens; and updating the comprehensive plan to include an aging-in-community focus.

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Robby Savoie, STEAM facilitator for East Aurora School District, was a guest speaker in classrooms in the district this past week, prepping students for Monday's solar eclipse. EAST AURORA SCHOOL DISTRICT 131 PHOTOS

## Schools want solar eclipse to be more than a viewing experience



Denise Crosby

Meteorologists are calling Monday's solar eclipse "the greatest solar eclipse across the U.S. in our lifetime." And although the Chicago area does not reside in the path of totality — head to southern Illinois if you want complete darkness — residents in the Fox Valley can expect up to 94% coverage of the sun.

Which makes this solar event a big deal indeed, and that's why local schools have had their eyes on the sky for quite some time now.

For example, a month ago the

Yorkville Educational Foundation, a nonprofit fundraising arm for School District 115, purchased 8,000 safety-certified eclipse glasses for all K-12 students and staff to use on Monday so everyone will be able to take part in this unique moment.

"We wanted to make sure no one was left out," says Yorkville Educational Foundation President Leslie Smogor.

"We want all students to be able to look back and remember this opportunity ... We are so excited about it."

As are officials with Indian Prairie School District 204, where all 22 elementary and seven middle schools will be participating in a district "watch party," as will science classes at

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Students in Catherine Witzke's fourth grade class at Beaupre Elementary School in Aurora use cardboard tubes to make pinhole projectors for eclipse viewing.

### GAZA CONFLICT

## Cease-fire resolution would be council's decision

By Steve Lord  
Beacon-News

Aurora Mayor Richard Irvin said that any decision on a resolution promoting a cease-fire in Gaza would have to come from the City Council.

He recently said city officials "hear the concerns of our local Aurora community members," but pointed out that "any action taken at a municipal level is purely symbolic and will not influence global political decisions."

"The core of politics is local, and that is why we focus on the actions that can be taken in Aurora to build authentic bridges of unity," he said.



Many local residents have spoken during the last two City Council meetings asking the council to pass a resolution supporting a cease-fire in Gaza for humanitarian reasons, and to allow more aid to get into the region.

They pointed out that other municipalities in Illinois — including locally Bolingbrook and Villa Park — have passed such resolutions. At the same time, other sizable municipalities, such as Naperville and Evanston, have declined to pass resolutions supporting a cease-fire.

While they might be symbolic, some speakers have said that local and state governments in the past have supported resolutions challenging federal government policies.

Some also have said that it would be important to fight the increase in hate crimes that have happened throughout the country, including locally, since the events in Gaza.

Irvin pointed out that last fall, in response to the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israel and the Israeli declaration of war in Gaza, the city brought together local Jewish and Muslim leaders for a public declaration of unity.

"We will continue to work to strengthen the connections through critical conversations and community collaborations, and we should all continue to pray for peace and unity throughout the entire world," Irvin said.

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**"The core of politics is local, and that is why we focus on the actions that can be taken in Aurora to build authentic bridges of unity."**

— Aurora Mayor Richard Irvin

### AURORA UNIVERSITY

## Athletes work to clean up area near campus

By David Sharos  
Chicago Tribune

Aurora University lacrosse player Ian Funk was busy Friday morning with his teammates and other athletes from the school who were willingly engaged in a community service project.

"I've done community service before but nothing along these

lines. I'm happy to be out here," Funk, 19, of Rochester, Minnesota, said as he and others worked to pick up debris along a road and by homes near the campus in Aurora.

Athletes representing many of the 24 Aurora University athletic teams came together Friday to participate in a cleanup effort near Spartan Athletic Park as part of

the annual celebration of NCAA Division Three Week, an observance that has been around for at least 15 years.

Trash left from the winter along Edgelawn Drive between Prairie Street and Jericho Road was collected beginning at 9 a.m. Friday, with work scheduled to last anywhere from an hour to 90 minutes.

Aurora University Athletic Director Jim Hamad said the collection was originally scheduled for Monday, but had to be pushed back due to rainy conditions over the Easter weekend that would have made gathering paper and other materials more challenging.

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TODAY'S WEATHER



High 51 Low 46

Complete Chicagoland forecast on back page

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**BRIEFS**

# Volunteers needed to plant trees in celebration of Earth Day

Staff report

The Kane County Forest Preserve District is looking for volunteers to help plant trees at Elburn Forest Preserve in Elburn in celebration of Earth Day on Saturday, April 20.

The event, to begin at 9 a.m. at Elburn Forest Preserve at 1N750 Reed St. in Elburn, will include the planting of hundreds of bur oak trees, district officials said in a press release.

All trees will be planted in a couple of hours, and district officials said they can use as many helpers as possible. The planting process is simple — volunteers will plant trees in holes that have already been dug, tamp down dirt and then add water and mulch, according to the release.

Throughout the morning, a pop-up naturalist exhibit will be on site and the Kane Forest Preserve Foundation will have a table featuring information and giveaways.

“Our Earth Day celebration is a great way to give back to your local preserve and the environment,” Forest Preserve Natural Resources Manager Jason Johnson said in the release. “Your contribution will help convert a seven-acre hay field, previously used for agriculture, back into a thriving woodland.”

For groups of 10 volunteers or more, contact the district’s volunteer coordinator at 630-762-2741 or email [CleaveRobb@kaneforest.com](mailto:CleaveRobb@kaneforest.com) to register. Groups of less than 10 people are welcome to join in to help during the event without registering in advance.

Parking will be available at the main lot at 1N750 Reed St., as well as at Elburn American Legion Post 630 and in the back lot at Obscurity Brewing. There will be tractor-pulled wagon rides at Shelter A at the preserve to take volunteers to the planting site.

For more information about the Earth Day tree-planting event at Elburn Forest Preserve, go to [www.kaneforest.com](http://www.kaneforest.com), call 630-232-5980 or find the Kane County Forest Preserve District on social media @forestpreserve.

## Used book sale set in St. Charles

The Friends of St. Charles Public Library will hold its annual Spring Used Book Sale from April 19 to 21 at the library, 1 S. Sixth Ave. in St. Charles.



Patrick Chess of the Forest Preserve District of Kane County shows volunteers how to plant a tree on Earth Day 2017 at Kenyon Farm Forest Preserve in South Elgin. The district is looking for volunteers to plant trees for this year’s Earth Day, April 20, at Elburn Forest Preserve in Elburn. **GLORIA CASAS/FOR COURIER-NEWS**

The sale will run from 2:30 to 7:30 p.m. Friday, April 19; from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, April 20; and from noon to 3 p.m. Sunday, April 21, in the Huntley Community Room at the library.

The book sale will include paperbacks, hardcovers, CDs, DVDs, computer and board games and more, organizers said.

Established in 1979, the Friends of St. Charles Library is committed to raising funds to support the library for the benefit and enhancement of its services, programs, facilities, staff and the community, group officials said.

For more information on the sale, call 630-584-0076, ext. 231, or go to [scpld.org/used-book-sale](http://scpld.org/used-book-sale).

## Dragonflies in the spotlight

Dragonflies will be highlighted during a Kane County Forest Preserve District program from 1 to 2 p.m. Friday, May 17, at Pingree Grove Forest Preserve in Pingree Grove.

The session will discuss how and why various types of dragonflies travel different distances as the seasons change. There will also be a walk through a dragonfly habitat to search for early dragonfly arrivals in the region, event organizers said.

The free program is for all ages. Advance registration is required. To register, go to [www.kaneforest.com/register](http://www.kaneforest.com/register), call 630-444-3190 or email [programs@kaneforest.com](mailto:programs@kaneforest.com).

Pingree Grove Forest Preserve is at 14N187 Route 20 in Pingree Grove.

To view a full roster of Forest Preserve District of Kane County programs, go to [www.kaneforest.com](http://www.kaneforest.com) or find the district on social media by searching @forestpreserve.

## Geneva police to take part in Drug Take-Back Day

The Geneva Police Department will work with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration to collect expired or unwanted prescription medications from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, April 27, as part of National Drug Take-Back Day.

People can turn in their medications to the records specialist at the front desk of the Geneva Police Department, 20 Police Plaza in Geneva, police officials said.

Items that will be accepted include prescription medications, medication samples, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, pet medications and non-controlled DEA drugs.

Pills should be removed from their origi-

nal container by pouring them directly into a plastic bag, officials said. Pills in blister packs can remain in the plastic but should be taken out of their boxes. Liquids will only be collected if properly sealed in their original container, according to officials.

People should take any empty prescription bottles and boxes that may contain any personal information back home, police said.

The Geneva Police Department will not accept any ointments, illegal substances or narcotics, thermometers, IV bags, sharps or needles, bloody or infectious waste or empty containers during the event.

After the event is over, the Geneva Police Department will revert to its current practice of accepting unused medication from Geneva residents only.

For more information about the disposal of prescription drugs, go to the DEA’s website at [www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov](http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov).

## DuPage County offers texting option for 211

DuPage County residents can text their ZIP code to 898211 and be connected with the county’s free 211 health and human services information and referral system.

The new texting option is available between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. weekdays. Residents can still dial 211 or go to [www.211dupage.gov](http://www.211dupage.gov) to find services near them 24 hours a day, seven days a week, county officials said in a news release.

Texting improves the county’s ability to connect residents with resources and support, Human Services Chairman Greg Schwarze said in a statement. Texting will start a conversation with a live, trained operator who can connect residents with the right information.

DuPage County has compiled a database of more than 600 service providers connecting residents to social service resources, including clothing or personal items, disaster help, food, health and wellness, income support, legal aid, transportation and more.

The 211 helpline, which launched in November 2022, is confidential. It has connected more than 8,000 people to social services, county officials said.

It is different from 988, the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, which provides free and confidential support for people in a mental health, suicidal or emotional crisis.

## Crosby

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the three high schools.

In western Kane County, Kaneland parents were notified that teachers and principals will use their professional judgment in determining the level of participation, but that only those with signed permission slips will be able to view the eclipse with the safety glasses provided by the district.

Likewise, West Aurora School District 129 is asking for permission from parents, but hopes to turn this rare astronomical phenomenon into a unique opportunity to learn about astronomy, space and the science behind eclipses, says district spokesperson Anna Gonzalez.

All sixth graders, who are studying a relevant unit, will be given eyewear to view the eclipse, she said, as will those at the high school who are in science classes held during the eclipse peak, which is 2:07 p.m. Plus, viewing glasses will be available at dismissal time on a first-come, first-served basis.

West Aurora also sent

a memo to parents about how they can make this event a family affair, such as decorating eclipse glasses and reaching out to STEM teachers with any questions.

All districts are stressing safety first. Oswego School District 308 is livestreaming the event for younger grades but excused absences will be given if parents want their children to view the event live with them, said Director of Communications Theresa Komitas, also noting high school dismissal is at 2:20 p.m. as the eclipse impact begins to recede.

As educators, district officials understand this once-in-a-lifetime experience must involve far more than a few moments staring into the heavens. That’s why the eclipse, which begins at 12:50 p.m. and ends at 3:21 p.m., is being treated as a “perfect afternoon of science,” said East Aurora Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Lisa Dallacqua.

“We did not want our kids to just put glasses on and go outside, then come back in and go about our normal day,” she added. “We’ve been doing a lot of advance research to turn this unique and unusual event into a



Students in East Aurora School District 131 have been learning about the upcoming solar eclipse through a variety of hands-on activities in the week leading up to Monday’s event. **EAST AURORA SCHOOL DISTRICT 131**

live science opportunity” that will help students learn skills like collecting data and making observations.

Prep work not only included ordering viewing glasses for the majority of buildings but tapping into community resources, as well as the National Science Teachers Association, National Environmental Education Foundation and

NASA to help come up with age-appropriate lessons.

Research shows what a role science plays in activating the imaginations of young children, and that, in turn, “will increase their learning,” said Dallacqua, who reported students “having a blast” as they learned more about the eclipse through text-based lessons, interactive activities

**“We did not want our kids to just put glasses on and go outside, then come back in and go about our normal day. We’ve been doing a lot of advance research to turn this unique and unusual event into a live science opportunity.”**

— East Aurora Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum **Lisa Dallacqua**

and hands-on projects, such as pinhole projectors made from cardboard tubes.

Organizations other than school districts, by the way, are also offering educational experiences. For example, Batavia Public Library will hold a viewing party in its Reading Garden from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. Monday, with materials available so families can learn about this solar event and watch it in their homes or at the library. And the Wilds at Red Oak Nature Center in North Aurora is hosting a viewing party — featuring eclipse-themed activities, treat bags and viewing glasses for those who register — from noon to 3 p.m. Monday.

“You will have to rewire your brain and tell it that

this stint of shade and darkness is taking longer than a cloud,” suggested Facility Manager Renee Oakley on the Fox Valley Park District website. “It’s a bit unsettling because you’re aware that the world is different.”

Which makes this rare event a once-in-a-lifetime teaching opportunity.

“There is nothing like walking into a school and 500 little kids want to show you their solar projects,” East Aurora’s Dallacqua told me on Friday.

“The buzz in our building is palpable,” she continued. “The students are thrilled this is happening. And that starts with adults making a big deal out of it.”

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# THE Beacon-News

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## Athletes

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“As far as cleaning up the area of Edgelawn ... we typically try to clean up that area after the snow melts. It’s typically a heavy traffic area on the West Side of Aurora,” Hamad said. “Students and staff drive by there and by the end of winter it’s kind of become an eyesore. This is a gateway into the stadium, and we’ve always made a conscientious effort to clean it up.”

Hamad said the cleanup effort has been a regular event for about five years and that each of the 24 university teams usually sends athletes to help out.

“There are always a lot of football team members and those from outdoor sports,” he said. “We get around 40 to 50 athletes each year. Our custodial staff provides collection materials and picks things up when we’re done. It’s kind of a cool thing because our campus safety folks, they’ll have a few cars there to direct traffic and communication people are out as well to make it kind of an event. The theme is to clean up the west side of



Aurora University football players Zachary Chavanne, 19, of Houston, left, and Anthony Czerwicz, 19, from Tinley Park, worked to pick up trash near the campus Friday morning as a part of a cleanup project. **DAVID SHAROS/PHOTOS FOR THE BEACON-NEWS**



Members of various Aurora University athletic teams clean up along Edgelawn Drive.

AU and keep it from being a trash bin.”

Ty Pruett, 20, from Austin, Texas, was one of a number of Aurora University football players on hand, and said while the job wasn’t glamorous, those volunteering were “out here with our buddies and

having fun with each other.”

“They messaged us about a week ago and said ‘Hey, we got a little community service going on’ and so we came,” he said.

Anthony Czerwicz, 19, from Tinley Park, said he was a freshman at Aurora University and that this

was his first year helping out with the cleanup effort.

“This is our community. Our school is right here and why shouldn’t we try and keep it nice and clean?” he said. “We’re living and going to school here and people should try and keep it a nice place. It wasn’t hard for the football team to get people here. We sent out a text message to like the whole team and we had a bunch of people sign up right away.”

Zachary Chavanne, 19, of Houston, also pitched in Friday and said he had done some community service picking up trash in the fall.

“I also did some work like this at home as well,” Chavanne said.

While the main benefit of the event is about beautifying the area, Hamad said it’s also “about the community who are such great supporters of our athletic department.”

“The stands are always filled with people who have no real connection to AU other than they live in the area,” he said. “I think there’s a half-mile of attention we give to this area and it’s the least we can do.”

*David Sharos is a freelance reporter for The Beacon-News.*