



D124 Continues to Explore Solutions to Facility Challenges



Evergreen Park Elementary School District 124 has a long history of bringing high quality learning to the PreK-8 students in Evergreen Park and the fact that school facilities are between 59 and 98 years old is part of that history. After a process to explore options including gathering community input and opinions, district leaders are continuing to identify priority needs and potential solutions.

After a multi-year process that included facility studies, focus groups, and community surveys, a proposal was shared with the community in the fall of 2025 through community events, a comprehensive webpage, and video tours to consider a potential March 2026 election. The proposal was developed in the spring of 2025 by a Citizen Task Force composed of business, civic, and educational leaders; parents and non-parents; seniors; and other community stakeholders who met with the District to review background information, ask questions, make recommendations, and vet the funding proposal.

The proposal would have addressed highest-priority capital facility needs districtwide by replacing Central Middle School and making critical improvements at the four elementary schools, including renovations, small additions, and eliminating the use of 24-year-old mobile classrooms.

“When we launched the proposal out into the community to get input, we told our community members that these are their schools and that they will always have the final say in what happens with them,” said D124 Board President Michael Aumiller. “As a board, we do not want to make decisions that don’t include the voice of the community because it is simply not the best path forward.”

The last step in determining the path forward was to hear from the residents and taxpayers of Evergreen Park on whether or not the proposal that was recommended by the community task force was something they would consider supporting. The conversations held at public events with district leadership and through a variety of channels, along with the data presented to the district through a public opinion survey was all taken into consideration.

“The data demonstrated that the taxpayers of Evergreen Park have concerns about the costs associated with a project of this scope and more specifically the timing,” said Dr. Woodland and Mr. Aumiller in a letter to the community. “As leaders, we have learned that if you are going to ask for feedback, you must listen to it, so that is what we will do. While this can feel like a setback in some ways, this process also allowed us to connect with more residents than ever before, to bring those who haven’t set foot in our buildings in decades into our schools, and to create lasting connections that will benefit our students for years to come.”



[continue on page 2]

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Evergreen Park Elementary School District 124 publishes *Perspective* for parents and residents.

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While there was not a recommendation to the board to pursue an election around this proposal, the work has not stopped to address priority facility needs. DLA Architects continues to work with the district to identify more urgent needs and outline options to modernize and improve district facilities.



At Central Middle School, those needs include:

-  Overcrowded classrooms and hallways with poor circulation and accessibility concerns
-  17 separate entry points and other security concerns
-  Outdated, inefficient HVAC and mechanical systems
-  Basement classrooms and cafeteria with no natural light
-  Undersized library/media center, science labs, and common areas
-  No auditorium or collaborative learning spaces
-  Traffic congestion and parking issues that affect student and community safety

While elementary schools also face challenges including:

- Reliance on 24-year-old modular classrooms that also pose student safety concerns
- Undersized classrooms and common areas
- Art, music, and technology taught from carts due to lack of space

“A lot of good came out of all of the conversations that we had around this proposal in the fall,” said Superintendent Dr. Jenna Woodland. “Our staff is a powerful force and we work together and bring our best no matter what. We do amazing things with what we have, and while there are challenges in our buildings, especially at Central Middle School, we know that with a culture of collaboration and support, the students served by D124 will continue to be uplifted and supported in our schools.”

The district will continue to share updates on the findings of DLA Architects and the possible solutions which could include a modified proposal for the community to consider. A special thank you to all of the community members who attended a Q&A session, reached out to get questions answered, and to all who participated in the survey.

“We could not do this without our community, and we made a lot of great connections throughout this process that really reinforced my belief that this is a community who really cares about its young people,” said Dr. Woodland. “There is always more work to be done and to do nothing is simply not an option if our students are being impacted. I am excited to build on the connections we have made and continue these conversations!”



The proposed project included a \$109.8 million bond issue. Of that amount, \$74.9 million would have been used to replace Central Middle School, while \$34.9 million would have funded critical facility improvements at the four elementary schools. If the District waited five years to try the same proposal and annual construction inflation was a modest 4%, the cost would increase by more than \$25 million.

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DAY OF SERVICE AT CMS

Gives Students a Chance to Give Back

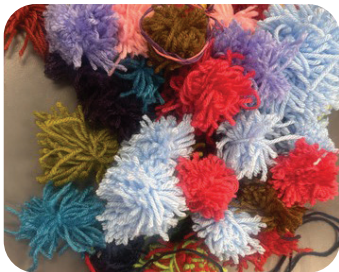
Inspired by the day of service student leadership organizes each year led by Ms. Julie Kelly and Ms. Alana Lieske, the culture and climate school improvement team worked to create a schoolwide day of service for the 2025-26 school year where all CMS students participated in giving back to the community.

The idea was to create an option for all students to get involved in both community service and leadership while giving them choice and voice in what they could do.

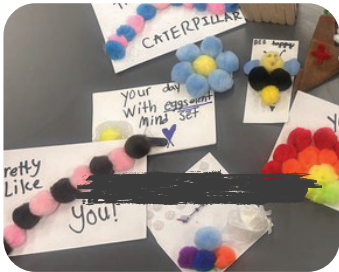
Students voted on the service activities they wanted to engage in as a grade-level and took on a number of activities including:



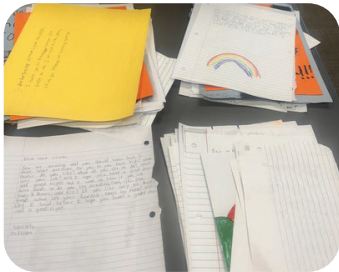
Make fidgets and friendship bracelets for senior citizens



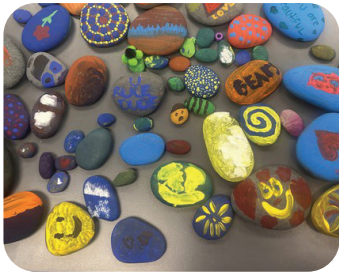
Make dog or cat toys using old T-shirts



Create pen pal letters for elementary schools and bookmarks for senior citizens



Write cards or letters for nursing home residents, veterans, or hospitalized children



Kindness Rocks for community spaces

We are so proud of our students, and we are grateful for their impact!

"The day went very well and students were engaged and focused as they took pride in their work," said CMS Dean Danielle Weston. "Many enjoyed the hands-on nature of the projects and liked knowing that what they created would positively impact others. The overall feeling throughout the building was calm, positive, and purposeful!"

Teachers shared that students were proud of their contributions, and there was a strong sense of community and collaboration across grade levels as everyone was able to pull on the same rope and work towards a common goal.

"Each new project brought excitement from my 6th grade students and enthusiasm to collaborate with their peers," said CMS Art Teacher Sarah Heflin. "Students paired up to write fun pen pal letters for elementary students and make fidgets and friendship bracelets for senior citizens in Evergreen Park, and cat toys for an animal shelter."

The idea for a schoolwide Day of Service grew out of our ongoing culture and climate work at CMS where staff and students are

focusing on strengthening the sense of student belonging, connection, and overall school climate. The Day of Service was designed to give students a way to give back while seeing themselves as active contributors to their school and broader community. Planning was led by the Culture and Climate team, with support from administration and teachers across grade levels.

"Acts of service take a middle schooler out of the typical self-focused middle school frame of mind and help them focus on others," said Music and Choir Director Lisa Baños-Cru. "My hope is that all of our middle schoolers took the time to really think about the perspective of those receiving the acts of service. Trying to see the world from someone else's shoes is a skill that even adults need to do regularly in order to stay grounded in the realities of our world as well as to be thankful for all that we have but forget to acknowledge in our lives."

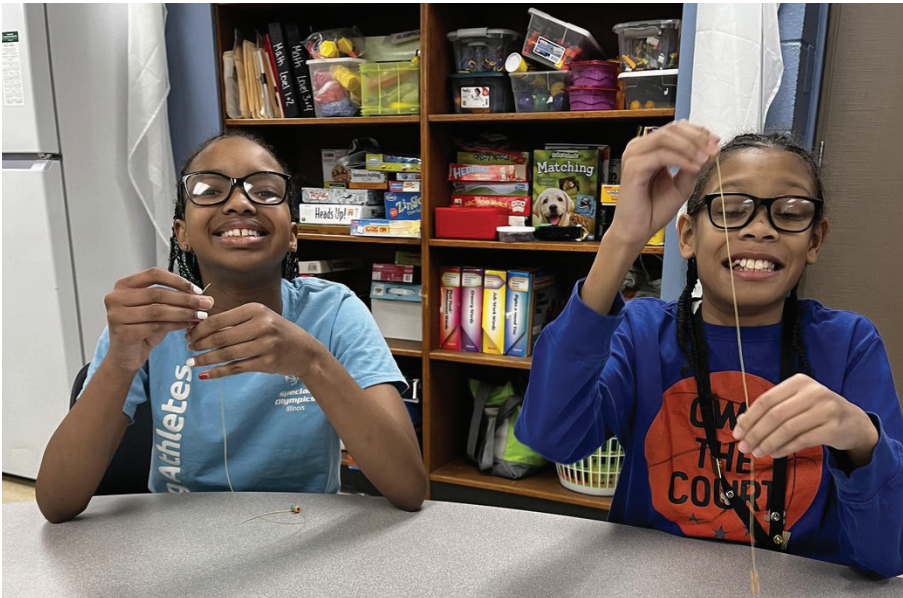
Students shared that it felt good to do hands-on activities that they knew would make someone's day brighter. Whether it was writing cards and letters for senior citizens, veterans, and hospitalized children or making bookmarks and pen pal letters for younger students, or even creating dog and cat toys for an animal shelter, their work made a difference!

"I hope that my act of service made someone's day and put a smile on their face," said 8th grader Londyn Orange. "I completed the fidget service and it made me feel amazing to know that a fidget I made was going to a veteran," added 8th grader Taliah Knight. "While making this fidget I got to help others make theirs and it was a fun experience and an amazing way to connect with my classmates and I was happy to see so many people make them which means more veterans get to receive fidgets which makes me happy!"

These experiences help students feel connected to their school and community, reinforcing a sense of belonging that is essential at this stage of development.

"Middle school is a critical time for students' social and emotional development and acts of service like these provide meaningful opportunities for students to build empathy, practice responsibility, and develop an awareness of how their actions impact others," said Weston. "Through service learning, students strengthen key skills such as cooperation, self-awareness, and compassion while working toward a shared purpose."

A special thank you to the culture and climate school improvement team, which is led by Mr. Jensen and Ms. Weston along with teachers Ms. Appleberry, Ms. Banos-Cruz, Mr. Piermattei, and Ms. Heflin.



Evergreen Reads

Community Read Going Strong

Each year Evergreen Reads chooses a book to have as a “community read” where students, staff, families, and community members are all able to read a great book, have something to discuss, and build a strong sense of community.

The program began in 2017 as an initiative started by a former superintendent and has featured a number of fantastic books over the years. In 2025, the book was *The Wild Robot* by Peter Brown, a middle-grade novel about Roz, a robot shipwrecked on a remote and wild island. It all began with the book *A Long Way From Chicago* by Richard Peck in 2017 and the excitement of having a community read together, setting an example for students and creating opportunities for connection.

As an article in the Patch shared at the time, “Evergreen Park Reads tries to find common ground among bakers, construction workers, third graders, high school athletes, young parents with preschoolers, doctors and lawyers and retired empty nesters, as well as civic leaders and elected officials by reading the same book.”

This year staff and students chose the book *Pax* by Sara Pennypacker which is about the bond between a boy, Peter, and his pet fox, Pax. This bond is shattered when Peter’s father forces him to abandon Pax as war approaches. The story alternates between Peter’s journey to find his fox and Pax’s struggle for survival in the wild.

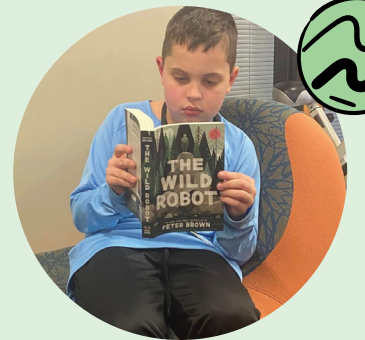
“The Evergreen Reads program is important because it builds a shared reading experience that fosters a culture of literacy across the entire school and community,” said District Librarian Angela Iverson. “When students, staff, and families engage with the same text, it encourages meaningful conversations, increases motivation to read, and helps students see reading as a social and enjoyable experience rather than an isolated task.”

In order to get strong participation, 25 copies of the book are made available in each of the district’s schools and are available to our families on a first come, first serve basis. The team also makes sure several copies are available in local Little Free Libraries. As the reading gets underway, videos are shared of different chapters being read by district teachers as well as students at Central Middle School.

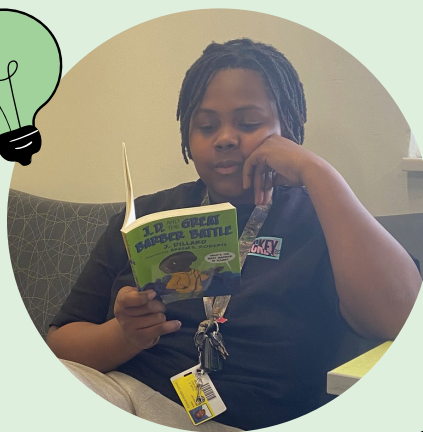
“Teachers are able to guide the reading as it fits into their school day over a few weeks and students really get excited about it,” said Iverson. “This initiative also promotes inclusion by giving all students access to the same story, supports cross-grade connections, and reinforces the idea that reading is valued and celebrated throughout the school community!”



2026



2025



2024



2022



2020



2023



2021



2019



2018



2017

D124 School Spotlights

Northeast Elementary

Northeast Went for the Gold at the Chicago Wolves Game!

In October, Northeast took an all-school field trip to a Chicago Wolves game. The day was a huge success with students representing our school with pride, following expectations, and enjoying a fun, memorable experience together.

The trip provided a great opportunity to build community, practice positive behavior in a real-world setting, and celebrate being part of our school family. We take pride and work hard in making experiences like this possible. 20 of our students also won a PBIS raffle which allowed them to cheer the team on, giving high fives in the tunnel as they entered the ice after intermission. It was a day full of smiles, teamwork, and school spirit!



Northwest Elementary

Supporting Students In Every Way

Education is not just about grades and test scores. At Northwest, we are committed to nurturing the whole child – mind, body and heart -- so students not only succeed in school, but grow into well-rounded citizens.

Academics are important to our student's growth. This year, we have focused on WIN time (What I Need) in which teachers look at student data to figure out where gaps are in student performance. Teachers then develop activities around what students need at that moment. Our students have seen great growth with this model. We also continue to provide interventions during the school day and homework help after school to further help students get what they need.

We also help develop student's physical well-being and discipline. In addition to gym class, our students also have other activities to develop fitness including field day, classroom brain breaks, and this year we had a special visit from the Chicago Bears to do a special camp for our students about healthy habits. For personal discipline, we provide opportunities through our PBIS program to help encourage positive behavior and growth. For instance, after winter break, we developed a Scooby Doo themed review for our students to review and practice school expectations.

Lastly, we teach our students that it is important to be kind. Our student council leads efforts to help our community including collecting toys for Almost Home (a local agency helping homeless and food-insecure families), hosting a food drive for the Evergreen Park Food Pantry, and raising money for research for children's cancer through our St. Baldrick's fundraiser. We hope by nurturing the whole child, students will take these skills beyond the classroom to the rest of their lives.



Southwest Elementary

Southwest Students Roll into the New Year

Welcome back! The halls of Southwest are buzzing with New Year energy, but if you listen closely to the gym, you'll hear a distinct rhythmic whir. Our 3rd-, 4th-, and 5th-graders haven't just returned to class after break; they're rolling into 2026 with style.

This quarter, Mrs. Roe is swapping traditional basketballs for rollerblades. The gym has been transformed into a temporary skating rink, giving upper elementary students the chance to learn and practice a "lifetime sport" that builds cardiovascular health, coordination, and core strength.

While it looks like pure fun, the curriculum is designed around several key milestones:

- **Safety Mastery:** Every session begins with a "gear check." Students are learning the importance of properly securing helmets, wrist, elbow, and knee pads.
- **The Art of the Stop:** Before they can go fast, they have to learn how to slow down. Students are currently perfecting the "T-stop" and the "heel brake."
- **Resilience:** For many, this is their first time on wheels. Seeing a student pick themselves up after a tumble and try again is the ultimate lesson in perseverance.

It's one of Mrs. Roe's favorite units of the year for a number of reasons. "It gives students an opportunity to learn and try something new. It's a great way to exercise, and you don't need anyone to do it with. It is a lifelong skill that allows them to skate for leisure or transportation. It's so fun to see the improvement they make from day one to the last day."



The atmosphere in the gym is electric. With upbeat music playing and classmates cheering each other on, it's common to see a student pause their lap to help a peer find their balance. We are incredibly proud of the bravery and sportsmanship our students are showing.

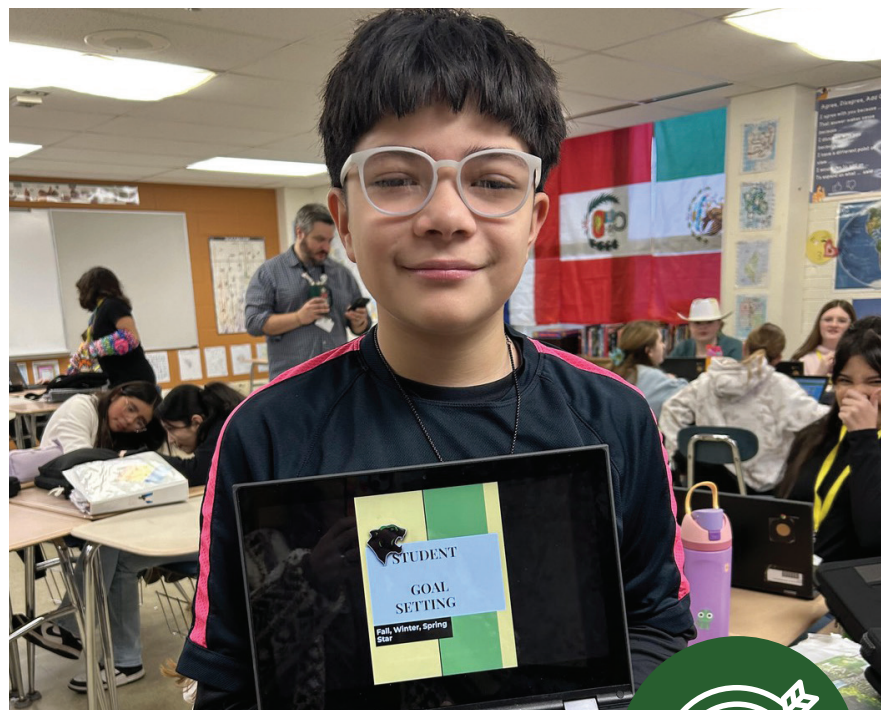
They aren't just learning to skate; they are learning to navigate challenges with a smile. We can't wait to see how they keep this momentum rolling through the rest of the semester!

Central Middle School



Power of Language

We recently conducted a Power of Language lesson during the advisory period at Central Middle School with the goal to ensure students can understand the impact of their words along with discussing stopping and thinking before speaking to prevent saying anything harmful. Students engaged in a reflection activity, and then ended with an activity where they wrote compliments to each other in an effort to showcase the power of positive language!



Star Goal Setting

In an effort to empower students and have them take ownership over their learning, students review their Star data and create personalized goals! We are so proud of our students and teachers for their hard work! Students reviewed data after the winter Star assessment in advisory.



Southeast Elementary

This Spring Southeast is highlighting our 5th-grade basketball team, our student council, 100th day of school and new clubs to Southeast!

5th Grade Basketball

We wanted to take a minute to highlight our 5th-grade basketball team! The 5th-grade basketball team is having a great start to the season. Over winter break, they competed in the highly competitive St. Christopher tournament, bringing home a 2nd place trophy out of 40 teams. In the regular season they are currently 7-0 and ranked in 1st place. The team is hopeful to bring home a conference championship this year.

The team is made up of a combination of Southeast and Northeast students, including: Grant Brookhart (SE), Jude Clossin (SE), Noah Correa (SE), Ryan Deutsch (SE), Alexander Jackson (SE), Christian Lane II (SE), Kameron Robinson (SE), Josiah Royster (NE) and Kenneth Smith (NE). The team is coached by Christian Lane (Sr.).

Student Council

We are excited to highlight our student council, led by Ally Banks and Jeanette Ryan, along with officers Christian Lane (president), Francisco Rivas (vice-president), Jude Clossin (treasurer), and James Dalzell (secretary). Southeast’s student council has been busy making our school and community a better place. They organized a school-wide food drive that provided essential support to local families through the Evergreen Park Food Pantry donating more than 700 canned food items. The Student Council invited the Mayor of E.P., Kelly Burke, for a lunch and learn. Mayor Burke spoke with the students about leadership and is planning on hosting the students at the Village Hall. The Student Council hosts a weekly Spirit Table during lunch to raise money for special events that take place at Southeast. Student Council officers have been meeting monthly with Principal Vermeer to problem-solve and to discuss how to make improvements for our school. We have valued hearing student voices in school-wide decision-making.

100th Day of School

Feb. 6 marked the 100th day of school, and kindergarten students at Southeast celebrated in style! Students and teachers dressed as if they were 100 years old and enjoyed a variety of fun activities, including art projects, writing prompts, counting, and STEAM challenges.



New Clubs introduced at Southeast!

Southeast offers a variety of clubs to our students, including drawing, craft, double-dutch, LEGO, board games, and taekwondo. We are thrilled to offer two new clubs this Spring: Improv Club and Influencers Club.



Improv Club

Through a series of fast-paced improv games, students will build confidence, strengthen communication skills, and develop teamwork. Students learn to think quickly and creatively on their feet as they develop characters and scenes on the spot. Improv encourages students to take risks in a safe, supportive environment — while having a lot of fun along the way!



Influencers Club

In this exciting new club, students will work behind the scenes like real Hollywood creators. Using the theme Hollywood Eagles: Leading the Way, students will produce PBIS reels, shorts, and videos designed to teach and model schoolwide expectations. This club promotes leadership, teamwork, and creativity, while giving students a star-worthy way to showcase their Eagle pride.

EVERGREEN PARK D124 COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAM *Summer 2026 Classes*

Get Creative

Decorative Flower Pot

Friday, March 13, 6:30-8 p.m.

School District 124 Administrative Office
2929 West 87th Street, Door 2

Everyone attending this class will have the opportunity to create a beautiful flower pot with decorative mosaic pieces.

This Art Workshop was made possible to you free of charge through the generous donation from the School District 124 Educational Foundation.

Maximum class size 15 participants. Registrations will be handled on a first-come basis.



Kids Art Class: Chihuly Inspired Lesson

Friday, May 1, 6:30-8 p.m.

School District 124 Administrative Office
2929 West 87th Street, Door 2

Children of all ages will enjoy this unique art project inspired by artist Dale Chihuly. After coloring a plastic plate with markers, the plate is melted. The plastic twists into a shape resembling a flower. Your child's artwork can be placed on an easel for display or attached to a dowel rod and put in your flower garden.

This Art Workshop was made possible to you free of charge through the generous donation from the School District 124 Educational Foundation.

All children attending this class must be with an adult. When registering, please include the number of children that will be attending this class with you. Maximum class size 15 participants. Registrations will be handled on a first-come basis.



Cooking Classes

Children's Class: Triple Layer Parfait

Friday, April 17, 6:30-8 p.m.

School District 124 Administrative Office
2929 West 87th Street, Door 2

A special treat that your child will enjoy making and sharing with their family! All children attending this class must be with an adult. When registering, please include the number of children that will be attending this class with you. Aprons are recommended.

All ingredients are provided through a generous donation from Meijer Foods of Evergreen Park.

Maximum class size 15 participants. Registrations will be handled on a first-come basis.



Adult Cooking Class: Focaccia Bread

Friday, May 15, 6:30-8 p.m.

School District 124 Administrative Office
2929 West 87th Street, Door 2

Learn how to make focaccia, a flat leavened oven-baked Italian bread.

Ingredients are provided through a generous donation from Pete's Fresh Market.

Maximum class size 15 participants. Registrations will be handled on a first-come basis.



Health

CPR Training

Monday, March 30, 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Evergreen Park Fire Department, 9000 South Kedzie, Park in the North or West Parking Lot and enter through the first door on the West side of the building.

CPR, or cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, is an important skill that everyone should learn. You will never know when you may need this skill to save a loved one. Take the time to get certified and enjoy the peace of mind of knowing you can help someone in need.

The Heartsaver CPR class (not CPR for healthcare workers) will be provided to you by an American Heart Association certified instructor from the Evergreen Park Fire Department. Upon completion you will receive a Heartsaver completion card that is valid for 2 years. Individuals registering must be at least 13 years of age or older.

A \$25.00 non-refundable deposit (check made out to Evergreen Park Fire Department) is required when registering (Please note: There is no charge for EP Village Employees, however you must complete the registration process). This deposit is used to pay for the CPR card you will receive verifying that you have taken the class and are certified in CPR. When completing your registration form indicate the class date that you would like to attend March 31 or June 30.

Maximum class size 10 people. Registrations will be handled on a first-come basis.



First Aid

Monday, April 20, 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Evergreen Park Fire Department, 9000 South Kedzie, Park in the North or West Parking Lot and enter through the first door on the West side of the building.

Learning First Aid can provide you and those you care for with peace of mind.

Upon completion of this class you will receive a certification card that is valid for 2 years. The First Aid class will be provided to you by an American Heart Association certified instructor from the Evergreen Park Fire Department. Individuals registering must be 13 years of age or older.

A \$25.00 non-refundable deposit (check made out to Evergreen Park Fire Department) is required when registering (Please note: There is no charge for Village Employees, however you must complete the registration process). This deposit is used to pay for the First Aid card you will receive verifying that you have taken the class and are certified in First Aid.



Registration Information:

All registrations are on a first come basis. Registration forms are available at the Administrative Office, 2929 West 87th Street, on the District 124 website under the 'Community' tab by clicking the 'Community Education Registration Form' or by scanning the QR code below. After completing the registration form, please follow the directions on the form to submit your registration.



Scan Here!

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COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMS