

First Mini-Food Pantries Installed Through Coming Together Program

The first mini-food pantries from the Niles Township-wide Coming Together program are now in the ground and running with more to come.

Mini-pantries were installed at **Central United Methodist Church** in Skokie, the **Lincolnwood Public Library** and **St. Peter's Church of Christ** in Skokie. Other pantries are on their way at Skokie and Morton Grove schools as well as the Niles-Maine District Public Library.

Niles Township has played a leading role in the Coming Together project to address the rise in food insecurity in our community. The mini-pantries not only provide a new source for those in quick need of food, but

also valuable information about receiving more assistance.

Donors are encouraged to leave non-disposable food and those in need to take food with them. The pantries are similar to the ubiquitous "free little libraries" seen on many properties now.

But equally important is information on the side of each mini-pantry where those in need can learn about the Niles Township Food Pantry. Although our Food Pantry continues to help record numbers of people each week, there remains community members in need who still don't know where to turn.

Any business, institution or individual can join our project by purchasing and installing a mini-pantry. Niles Township will provide a weather-protected flyer about the project and our Food Pantry for attaching to the side and a sticker for the window.

For information, email misaacs@nilestownship.gov. We have been working with a vendor and can offer contact and ordering information. More information about the Coming Together program can be found at comingtogether.in.



Central United Methodist Church



St. Peter's Church of Christ



Lincolnwood Public Library



Thank You For Helping Us Help Our Neighbors In Need

There is no more inspiring story about finding light when facing darkness than the life journey of former Chicago Police Tactical Officer **Jim Mullen**. Severely injured on the job 25 years ago, Jim was determined to find and spread joy despite his circumstances.

He founded Mullen Foods in 2007 featuring Mullen's Applesauce, the same natural apple sauce his mother made when he was a child. A portion of the proceeds is donated to first responders and veteran charities but also to a variety of positive local initiatives.

We're so grateful the Niles Township Food Pantry became one of those initiatives. Jim sent the Township two pallets of Mullen's Applesauce for distribution to students from Niles Township Food Pantry families in need.

Jim Mullen reflects the spirit of giving back to the community and helping people in need. Niles Township could not pursue its mission every day without the generosity, kindness and selflessness of our neighbors:

Skokie School District 68 filled a large 72-seat bus over two days with badly needed toiletries and household goods for the Niles Township Food Pantry. These items are the most needed



Jim Mullen



for donation right now at the pantry. Thank you to all donors. And a special thank you to the entire organizing and production team at District 68 including Coordinator of Family Services and Engagement **Diana Juarez**, Transportation Secretary/Dispatcher **Cozeake Nelson** and Director of Building and Grounds **Ernest Nelson**.

Thank you to donors and volunteers who helped the Township pack and distribute more school supplies to students in need in 2021-22 than ever before. Thank you to the **Village of Morton Grove** for lending us the property. And a special thanks to the **Education Foundation** and **McGrath Evanston Subaru** for a separate school supplies distribution event at Skokie School District 68 schools.



The Harbour, which offers immediate, stable and safe housing to homeless young people and young mothers with children, has been visiting the Niles Township Food Pantry to provide free personal protective equipment, hygiene products and other resources to people in need.

Our local legislators including State Reps. **Denyse Stoneback** and **Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz** and State Sens. **Ram Villivalam** and **Laura Fine** continue to be great friends and partners to the Township, helping us help people in need in so many important ways.





From the Clerk's Office

Census Bureau

Niles Township was active over the last year in encouraging residents to fill out their 2020 census forms. An accurate count is of critical importance to the well-being and future of Niles Township and Cook County. The U.S. Census Bureau later recognized the Township for its contributions. Area census takers went through

training sessions at the Township, which also hosted representatives who met and spoke to visitors about completing the form. We are pleased to report the effort has paid off. Results from the 2020 census show that numbers have increased for each major municipality that feeds into Niles Township:

Village	2010	2020	Change
Skokie	64,784	67,824	3,040
Morton Grove	23,270	25,297	2,027
Niles	29,803	30,912	1,109
Lincolnwood	12,590	13,463	873

Thank you to all for filling out your census forms as required by law. You have helped both yourself and your community.

Passports

Passport services remain available at our office. We prefer appointments, but should you drop in without having one, we will be glad to assist you if there is no one with a booked



appointment within 20 minutes. You can either book your own appointment by going to our website at www.nilestownshipgov.com, click on Departments, go to Clerk's Office, and scroll down to where you see PASSPORTS, or call us at (847) 673-9300 and we can book the appointment for you. Passport services are available Monday through Friday, between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Handicapped Placards

We are able to issue a temporary handicap placard to you for up to a six-month period. Your physician will need to fill out the form. Forms are available through your physician's office, or at the Niles Township Government Building at 5255 Lincoln Ave. Skokie, 60077. If you need a permanent placard, we can show you what you will need and where to send your application.

Other Information:

Several staff members are designated Freedom of Information Act officers for Niles Township Government. Many of our documents are now available on our website. You may find what you are looking for there, but please don't hesitate to ask us if you need further assistance. Your request should be sent by email to: clerklevy@nilestownshipgov.com. We also have several staff members who are notary publics. There is no charge for this service.

Finally, we encourage everyone not yet vaccinated to get their vaccine against COVID-19. Vaccines are readily available and can be administered by your physician. Our entire staff here at Niles Township is happy to report that we have all been vaccinated.

Charles Levy

Niles Township Clerk

Get To Know Your Niles Township Board

Niles Township Board members were elected to new four-year terms April 6, 2021. The Board includes the Supervisor, four Trustees, the Clerk and the Assessor. They each have unique roles in serving our community.

Supervisor Bonnie Kahn Ognisanti: The Supervisor is equivalent to the chief executive officer of the Township. She supervises General Assistance, a fund available to Township residents in need and required by law. She takes on multiple financial reporting responsibilities including being treasurer of all Township funds, runs Township operations and oversees employees.

Trustees Mark Collins, Don Gelfund, Kitty Kendrick and Peggy

Tolleson: Township Trustees are voting members of the Board and primarily auditors. They approve the budget and oversee monthly spending. Trustees are

also encouraged to develop Township programs to serve residents. Proposed programs come before the full Board for a vote when there is a cost.

Clerk Charles Levy: The Clerk is the official custodian of all records, books and papers at Niles Township. He files certificates, oaths and other papers as required by law. The Clerk makes sure an official record of Township meetings and actions is recorded.

Assessor Scott Bagnall: The Township Assessor is the taxpayers' advocate. He studies the complexities of the property tax system and uses that information to counsel, assist, and guide taxpayers. The Assessor Office works with taxpayers every day. The Assessor Office also presents appeal preparation and other seminars and workshops of interest to taxpayers.



All seven members of the Niles Township Board were re-elected in April to new four-year terms.

What We've Been Up To At Busy Niles Township

Record Number of Backpacks Handed Out To Students

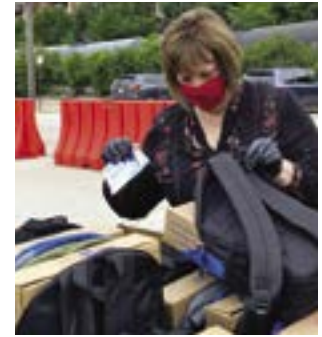
Niles Township distributed 1,500 backpacks loaded with essential school supplies to students in need before the 2021-22 school year. This compares to 900 backpacks last year, which was already a Township record. Most of the backpacks were distributed in a safe drive-up event. Backpacks for Skokie Morton Grove School District 69 students were handed out on a separate day at the district's schools.



Kids receive new backpacks and school supplies



Volunteers Samina Hussain and Morton Grove Mayor Dan DiMaria



Trustee Tolleson loads backpacks with school supplies during School Supplies Distribution Day

- Recognizing that families do not always feel they have access to those in elected positions, Niles Township Supervisor **Bonnie Kahn Ognisanti** established a program where locally-elected leaders spend time at the Niles Township Food Pantry. State Reps. **Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz** and **Denyse Stoneback** became the first elected leaders at the Pantry visiting with clients. Skokie Village Board Trustees **James Johnson** and **Ralph Klein** did the same a few weeks later. Supervisor Ognisanti and Niles Township Social Worker **Ruth Orme-Johnson** recently took a turn at the Pantry Township Table as well.



- The emergence of a successful vaccine has allowed for the return (or soon to return) of some in-person programs at the Township including: **Maribeth Stein**, outreach coordinator and constituent advocate from Congresswoman **Jan Schakowsky's** office and liaison to the Township; CJE SeniorLife's My Go-To Place, a weekly program for older adults, although virtual access is still available; The CJE Legal Help Desk with **Tamara Kushnir Groman** of CJE SeniorLife, serving eligible clients ages 60 and older; Niles Township Food Pantry volunteers, providing help in preparing to serve the community; and the Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County (CEDA), a private, nonprofit Community Action Agency.

- The Township's 2022 blood drives are scheduled for **Wednesday, Jan. 12, Wednesday, April 6, Wednesday, July 6 and Wednesday, Sept. 28**. Please save those dates on your calendar. Enough time exists between blood drives where it will be safe to give blood at each one. The Township works with Vitalant, which used to be LifeSource, to run the blood drives. We'll have more information on our website and social media pages about signing up for the blood drives as we get closer to the dates.



- The new Niles Township **Skills Development Grant** helps unemployed or underemployed clients return to work as well as assisting our COVID-19 impacted businesses. Under the Skills Development Grant program, vetted businesses receive a grant of up to \$5,000 after providing a Niles Township client six months of training in an industry skill. The grant is intended for on-the-job training or to subsidize a course trainees can take to sharpen their skills.

- The Niles Township Assessor's Office has been busy helping residents with questions about property tax bills and appeals. Niles Township Assessor **Scott Bagnall** and Deputy Assessor **Julianna Oh** recently presented a free Webinar on how and why to appeal your property's assessed value. The event was also sponsored by the Niles-Maine District Public Library. Assessor Bagnall also provided information in Lincolnwood, Skokie and elsewhere.



- Trustee **Peggy Tolleson** represented the Township at Morton Grove's popular two-day "Labor Days" festival in Harrer Park, which the Township supported.

- Township leaders attended the **Rotary Club Of Skokie Valley's** Pancake Breakfast before hosting a table at Skokie's downtown Backlot Bash.



Supervisor Bonnie Kahn Ognisanti & Clerk Charles Levy

- Niles Township Supervisor **Bonnie Kahn Ognisanti** was one of the featured speakers at the Lincolnwood Multi-Cultural Task Force's "Celebrating Our Asian Neighbors" in Proesel Park in Lincolnwood.

- Niles Township Trustee **Don Gelfund** represented the Township at Lincolnwood's National Night Out and emceed the annual Lincolnwood Fest – both events held in Proesel Park.



Trustee Don Gelfund & Lincolnwood Police Chief Jay Parrott



Trustee Mark Collins

- The opening ceremony for Skokie's first Juneteenth Celebration was filled with impassioned, inspiring and powerful speakers including one given by Niles Township Trustee **Mark Collins**.



Message From Assessor Scott Bagnall

Hello Niles Township:

I am told you should receive this newsletter prior to tax year 2021 appeal deadlines. But I am not going to address appeals right now. We are in the third year of the 2019 Triennial Reassessment. Many taxpayers previously filed two appeals for the 2019 tax year and

two appeals for the 2020 tax year. We will send a notice to the email list, along with the appeal procedure we will use, just as soon as we have an appeal filing opening date from the County. Until then, taxpayers are invited to visit NilesTownshipAssessor.com.

The County will reassess Niles Township in 2022. I suspect a year from now we might be quite concerned with the 2022 "Tri." Until then though, there is a new, brand new actually, law that I want to bring to your attention. There are lots of new laws but we are going to focus on this one. This one just might leave a number of people saying, "What . . .?"

There are two issues. Similar in a way. And different in a way. Both of these issues are subject to control to some extent anyway by us as taxpayers.

One. This applies to all tax parcels but I am going to address this as a large commercial property issue. It goes like this: The County assesses a commercial property, let's call it "Huge Mall A," at let's say \$150,000,000. Huge Mall A objects to the valuation and appeals. Agencies to which Huge Mall A pays property taxes intervene in the appeal and oppose Huge Mall A's market value reduction request. (I find it odd that many people involved in the appeal intervention process cannot explain a purpose of opposing market value reduction requests.)

What I have said from even before we saw the 2019 Niles Township commercial property increases is the taxing agencies should intervene in these appeals and support reduction requests.

Here's why. If Huge Mall A appeals to the Property Tax Appeal Board [PTAB] and four years later PTAB reduces the Huge Mall A market value to let's say \$100,000,000, then taxes originally collected on that \$50,000,000 reduced amount will be refunded to Huge Mall A. The County will deduct the refund amount from then current year tax revenues otherwise due to the agencies.

With this procedure the agencies are just flat out going to miss the taxes originally attributable to that \$50,000,000. It does not matter if the agencies spent the tax revenues when collected four years ago, they are going to make a refund from current property tax revenues anyway.

My way, the Huge Mall A value would have been reduced four years earlier and figured into the tax bills back then. That way the risk of a huge value reduction with a corresponding huge refund from current revenues four years after the original tax year is reduced if not eliminated.

Issue #2. Similar. Residential taxpayers are entitled to a variety of exemptions. Because there is much work to the system and process of preparing property tax bills, the exemptions need to be filed and processed by a specific date. The tax year is always one year behind the calendar year. So tax year 2020 exemptions were to be filed in March, 2021 for incorporation into the 2020 tax bills. When an exemption does not appear on the tax bill we can file a certificate of error through our office and get a refund for the taxpayer. This causes a problem. Just like PTAB refunds, exemption certificate of error refunds are deducted from then current tax proceeds but these refund amounts were not calculated into the original year in question tax bills.

And now the law. On Aug. 20, 2021 the Governor signed SB 508 into law with an effective date of right now. With SB 508 the County Clerk will increase the levies of taxing agencies to recapture those PTAB and certificate of error property tax refunds. This is a brand new procedure in Illinois. The amount of the recapture might not appear clearly obvious to us. In essence the effect is the tax bill will be recalculated and adjusted (higher) a year or more after the original tax bill was issued and paid so as to recapture the tax refunds.

The sky is not falling but anyone buying or selling, or financing, or issuing title insurance, in Niles Township (actually anywhere in Illinois) may wish to at least consider whether this re-tax to recapture law will have an impact.

Go to NilesTownshipAssessor.com to register to receive email notifications. Please support Niles Township businesses. If not us — then who?

Scott Bagnall Niles Township Assessor

Julie Oh Deputy Assessor

NilesTownshipAssessor.com

Assessor@NilesTownshipGov.com

Township Tips For Gardeners

*Niles Township has expanded and upgraded its on-site gardens in recent years in support of sustainability and the environment. Our gardens also supply the Niles Township Food Pantry with food. We salute and support all of our at-home gardeners, which is why Supervisor and garden enthusiast **Bonnie Kahn Ognisanti** offers a valuable gardening tip each newsletter.*

There is good news for weary gardeners — and we gardeners are all a little weary once fall rolls around.

Horticulturists now believe that it is better to save fall clean-up for the spring. Although there are many reasons to delay tidying the garden, three spoke to the "lazy naturalist" in me.

- Beneficial insects rely on hollow plant stems and leaf litter to overwinter or to lay eggs that hatch in the spring. Many of these insects do garden work themselves, such as

eating nasty, harmful bugs like aphids or pollinating squash flowers for a larger harvest. More help for an overwhelmed gardener!

- Seed heads like those left from echinacea flowers, goldenrod or rose hips provide a winter source of food for birds, which are delightful to see in the lifeless throes of a winter landscape.

- Leaf litter from healthy plants decompose, adding depleted nutrients back into the soil and improving water retention. (Go ahead and cut back and dispose of any diseased foliage though.)

Do your back a favor and let your garden rest for the winter. The reward will be a healthier garden full of happy bees, butterflies, birds and thriving plants.



Township Available Services

Some Niles Township programs have returned or are soon to return to in-person operations. Please check with the Township (by phone, online or through social media) for location details.

Blood Drive

Wednesday, Jan. 12, 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 pm.

Sign-up: Vitalant.org. Click on "Donate Now." Go to the bottom of the page to "Search by Group Code." Enter Group Code: 888A (unique code for Niles Township Government). Select your group and an appointment time.

CEDA related services:

Phone: (847) 328-5166 Ext. 5419

Cell: (312) 448-1861

CJE SeniorLife's My Go-To Place (for Seniors)

Thursdays, 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

www.cje.net/life-enrichment/community-engagement/my-go-place.

CJE SeniorLife Legal Help Desk

Wednesdays, 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. (appointments recommended)

Phone: Tamara at (773) 508-1086 Email: tamara.kushnirgroman@cje.net

Niles Township Administrator/Clerk Services

Online Appointment: www.nilestownshipgov.com

Phone: (847) 673-9300

Property Tax Issues:

Online Appointment: www.nilestownshipgov.com

Information: <https://nilestownshipassessor.com>

Niles Township Food Pantry

Monday - Friday, 9:30 - 11:30 a.m., 1:00 - 3:30 p.m.

Extended hours on **Tuesday, 4:00 - 6:30 p.m.**

Phone: (847) 983-0073

Information: nilestownshipgov.com/food-pantry-news/

Niles Township Social Services

(General and Emergency Assistance, COVID-19 Response Fund)

Online Appointment: www.nilestownshipgov.com

Forms & Info: nilestownshipgov.com/social-services-2020/

Phone: (847) 673-9300

Email: socialworker@nilestownshipgov.com

North Suburban Legal Aid Clinic

(Immigration Issues) Phone: Lia: (847)-737-4042.

Email: LKimYi@nslegalaid.org

Social Security or Medicare Issues:

The **third Monday of each month, 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

Phone: Maribeth Stein of Rep. Jan Schakowsky's office (773) 506-7100.

Email: Maribeth.stein@mail.house.gov

Tune in to the Township You can now receive real time updates between newsletters by signing up for our Township emails. Simply visit www.nilestownshipgov.com and type your name and email address in the box found on our home page.

We are also sharing news, updates, community event listings and fun stories about great things happening in Niles Township via our social media channels. Follow us on Twitter [@NilesTownship](https://twitter.com/NilesTownship); Like us on Facebook [@nilestownshipgovernment](https://www.facebook.com/nilestownshipgovernment); Subscribe to our YouTube channel (Niles Township).

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