



# NEWSLETTER

*Nature. People. Places.*



Michele Hodges

## THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

We have such good news to report! For starters, the Conservancy team has grown by two, which strongly positions it to expeditiously advance toward the fruition of its mission.

Katy Wyerman, a young professional with an exceptional track record, assumed the director of resource development role in December, and Erica Hill, an accomplished young woman having worked for three Mayoral Administrations, joins as volunteer coordinator, a position shared with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

The relationship with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) continues to mature, and its commitment to quality, and well intentioned desire to ensure Belle Isle Park is a thriving public space, are readily evident. Park improvements are already numerous, and many more await.

Responsible for advising the DNR on master planning, park improvements, and public safety, the seven member Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee (BIPAC) is comprised of appointees selected by the Governor, former Mayor, and Detroit City Council. As a representative of the Conservancy, I have the duty of chairing this organization, which provides an important opportunity to provide guidance and leadership.

The DNR, Conservancy and BIPAC are intertwined in the effort to punctuate this historic time for Detroit's Belle Isle Park with notable achievements. While doing so, we strive for collaboration, and are buoyed by an inventive spirit. Driving it all is a pledge to serve Belle Isle Park users in a manner that respects Detroit's park and embraces its new caretaker.

The momentum is strong, and the future bright as we look ahead with anticipation and delight. Your support is needed now more than ever for, together, it is certain Frederick Law Olmsted's masterpiece will shine.



# DNR POSTINGS

Submitted by Jolene Priest



Repairing Picnic Shelter Roof



Repairing Exterior Lights at Casino

## Revitalization Efforts

Department of Natural Resources staff and partners worked both indoors and out through the winter and spring to revitalize Belle Isle and its facilities, including its many public restrooms. The goal to open many of these restrooms by late spring was met, and work to open the remaining is ongoing and a top priority. Major restroom restorations include repairing leaking pipes, fixing broken water lines, replacing broken fixtures, adding heating units and painting walls. The Casino building, public safety building (former White House), Conservatory and the Welcome Center (former police station) have also been recipients of revitalization efforts, with staff working from the ground up to clean out debris, drywall and paint walls while keeping the historic integrity of the facilities. Through a partnership with Penske Corporation/ Chevrolet Detroit Belle Isle Grand Prix, the Casino's fire alarm and sprinkler systems have been repaired, its restrooms renovated and energy-efficient LED lighting installed. Partnership efforts by Michigan Cares for Tourism produced over 2,100 hours of volunteer efforts that resulted in a shelter scrapped and painted, light demolition completed inside the Welcome Center, debris cleared from the service area for the Belle Isle Aquarium and Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory, revitalization of the Kids' Kingdom Playscape, repair of picnic tables, wrapping of 230 refuse barrels with "Keep Belle Isle Beautiful," covers, and installation of 130 barrel posts with wrapped barrels. Learn more by viewing a short video found at [www.BelleIslePark.org](http://www.BelleIslePark.org) (to watch, just click on "video").

## Recreation Passport

In February, the gradual phase-in of the \$11 Recreation Passport requirement for Belle Isle Park access began. The Recreation Passport is directly tied to Michigan vehicle license plate registration renewals. Throughout Belle Isle's first year of the Recreation Passport requirement, a vehicle can access the island without a Recreation Passport until the owner's next registration renewal date. For example, if a vehicle license plate's registration renewal date is August 2014, then the Passport is not needed on that vehicle until August. For more information on the Recreation Passports on Belle Isle, including where to purchase them, its many benefits and frequently asked questions, visit [www.BelleIslePark.org](http://www.BelleIslePark.org) and click on "Recreation Passport." Pedestrians and bicyclers are admitted free.



# DEVELOPMENT NEWS

Submitted by Katy Wyerman

The new structure of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) managing Belle Isle Park brings significant resources to the island, and the Belle Isle Conservancy remains committed to raising more funds to

complement the DNR's investments. Many positive changes are occurring on the island, but there is still more to do, and it will take all hands on deck to preserve, protect, and enhance the park to ensure future generations can enjoy Belle Isle Park.

The Belle Isle Conservancy is fortunate to have a broad base of members, a legion of volunteers, and generous support from the corporate community. Over 530 people attended the Grand Prixmiere fundraiser on Friday, May 30th, including Governor Rick Snyder and Mayor Mike Duggan. We were blown away by the generosity of

event attendees that helped us raise over \$650,000! Thank you to the Grand Prixmiere's sponsors: Penske Corporation, PwC, Chevrolet, FirstMerit Bank, Strategic Staffing Solutions, Detroit Jazz Festival, DTE Energy, UAW-GM Center for Human Resources, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, Crain Communications, Firestone, Lear Corporation and Franco Public Relations Group.

Our funders make it possible for enhanced activities and features on the island. We are looking forward to bringing back Belle Isle Summer Saturdays (BLISS) this season, thanks to Charter One's commitment to providing operational funding and a number of recreation passports for those in need. By working with the DNR and with support from corporate funders, we were able to ensure that the Scott Fountain will operate daily this summer.

We also want to thank many of our local business supporters for their ongoing support. Miller Canfield alone has provided over 50 hours of pro-bono work for the organization. Thank you!

## BREATHING NEW VIBRANT LIFE *into an aging beauty*

Under the stewardship of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory is undergoing a transformation. Jeremy Kemp, employed by the Belle Isle Conservancy (BIC) and DNR and recently from Chicago's Lincoln Park Conservatory, along with DNR Conservation Corps employees are breathing new life into the various "houses". Plants are being relocated to areas that better suit their growing needs, and various garden clubs are donating new plant material to beautify the facility. Pruning in the Tropical, Palm and Show Houses has let in light and enhanced displays. The greatest transformation is the Fernery. Overgrown but enchanting, Jeremy and crew have peeled back layers of ferns to uncover unique nooks and crannies, filling them with new ferns.

Thanks also to our donors who are helping enhance this historic collection and funding other changes to the Conservatory. The Garden Club of Dearborn's generous donation of \$1,000 is helping purchase new specimens for the Conservatory, along with kind donations from Woman's National Farm and Garden-Rochester and Troy Branches, the Men's and Women's Garden Club of Grosse Pointe, the Grosse Pointe Farm and Garden Club, the Quinlin Club, Luisa Czyrka, John Donnelly and an anonymous \$5,000 donation. The Conservancy funded the transportation of the generous donations of tropical plants from Chicago's Garfield and Lincoln Park Conservancies which can be found throughout the facility.



In early May, the BIC and DNR conducted a volunteer forum for members who expressed an interest in helping at the Conservatory and/or with garden projects. Soon volunteers will once again be assisting with planting and maintaining flower beds at the Conservatory and other locations on the island. Look for an enhanced floral experience thanks to our cadre of dedicated, enthusiastic and loyal volunteers and the efforts of the DNR staff.



Thanks to last fall's Garden Party on Belle Isle sponsored by various Detroit area garden clubs, Venus Bronze Works has restored the Levi Barbour Fountain's Leaping Gazelle in the sunken gardens, the Children's Christian Temperance Fountain (also known as Cold Water Girl) in the Tropical House orchid pool and the bronze Turtle Fountain in the Lily Pond garden. The restorations are now complete and we hope you stop by to admire these beautiful masterpieces.



# Past Events

## DETROIT RIVER WATER FESTIVAL 2014

The 3rd Annual Detroit River Water Festival hosted by the Friends of the Detroit River (FDR) was held on **Thursday, May 8th**. 600 sixth-grade students from Detroit area schools attended this free, day-long educational event designed to teach students about the Great Lakes, rivers, watersheds and aquatic ecosystems. 160 adults and volunteers helped to provide the activities, demonstrations and curricula. This year the event moved to Belle Isle from the Detroit River Walk allowing more space and diversity in presentations. Thank you for the outstanding efforts of all the event partners in continuing to provide this wonderful educational experience to Detroit Public Schools.



## MICHIGAN CARES FOR TOURISM VOLUNTEER DAY

Michigan Cares for Tourism, a non-profit partnership with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), brought over 350 volunteers including Governor and Mrs. Rick Snyder, from around the state to clean up Belle Isle on **Friday, May 9th**. Each volunteer paid \$50 to attend, and the event was limited to 350 participants. Volunteer teams removed debris from the former Police Station, refurbished the shelter near the Dossin Museum and worked on picnic areas, bridges, fencing and playscape area. Paul Stansbie, one of the group's organizers, called Belle Isle the "holy grail of tourism renovation projects." He said, "We want to start to lift it up to the level it needs to be."



## ANNUAL AGRISCIENCE PLANT SALE

The Annual Agriscience Advisory Board Plant Sale took place **Saturday, May 17 from 9 am – 3 pm at the Greenhouses**. Heirloom tomatoes were featured while perennials, annual market baskets, vegetables, and herbs were also available. Proceeds from the sale benefited the Detroit Public School's Randolph CTC Agriscience Program. Students and volunteers grew all of the plants. The Randolph CTC Agriscience Program utilizes current technologies, partnerships and urban agriculture education to develop youth who are prepared for employment, secondary education and leadership roles in the agriculture industries.



## SPRING CLEANING OF BELLE ISLE & KOI WRANGLING

The morning of **Saturday, April 26** brought over 200 volunteers (including individuals, families and school groups) to Belle Isle for the Belle Isle Conservancy's Annual Spring Clean Up. Another 250 volunteers, families and scout groups worked at the Belle Isle Aquarium to transfer the koi from the basement of the Aquarium to the lily pond.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) supplied rakes, shovels, garbage bags and other implements while the volunteers supplied the man-power. A hot dog lunch was provided for volunteers at both the Casino building veranda and at the lily pond. The Belle Isle Conservancy would like to thank all the volunteers, the DNR and those local businesses who helped to support this event: Absopure Water Co., American Coney Island, Big Boy Restaurant on Jefferson, Better Made Potato Chips, Uncle Ray's Potato Chips, Golden Spice Catering, Detroit Hardware, Busy Bee Hardware, Village Ace Hardware, Brooks Lumber, Kroger (16 Mile & John R) and Target (12 Mile & Dequindre).



▲ Photos by Jeremy Kemp

## PwC GRAND PRIXMIERE, PRESENTED BY CHEVROLET

The 2014 Grand Prixmiere, the official launch party of the Chevrolet Detroit Belle Isle Grand Prix weekend and a fundraiser for the Belle Isle Conservancy, was held **Friday evening, May 30th at Belle Isle Park**. Kim and Mark Reuss co-chaired this year's event. Guests arrived via the Chevrolet Detroit Belle Isle Grand Prix track, mingled with race drivers, savored a delectable meal overlooking the Scott Fountain, joined an exceptional live auction, enjoyed memorable entertainment, and relished the island at sunset. The event was sold out immediately and raised more than \$650,000 for the Belle Isle Conservancy. Thank you to the Grand Prixmiere, its sponsors and to those who attended for raising these additional funds.



Grand Prixmiere Evening at Scott Fountain

## SCOTT FOUNTAIN PEWABIC TILE FUNDRAISER

The Belle Isle Conservancy (BIC) hosted their 4th annual fundraiser to support efforts to restore Pewabic tiles to Belle Isle's Scott Fountain on **Friday, June 6th at Pewabic Pottery in Detroit**. Over 200 guests enjoyed light hors d'oeuvres and wine while strolling and shopping Pewabic's tent and store to the music of Don Pharrh & His Jazz Trio. Donations and ticket sales of over \$10,000 plus a percentage of all purchases made that evening benefited BIC's Scott Fountain Pewabic Tile Fund. During repair of the fountain basin in 2010, the original tiles, designed by Mary Chase Perry Pewabic's founder, were damaged. If you would like to donate to this fund please contact the Conservancy at 313-331-7760.



# Ongoing Events

## SCIENCE SATURDAYS LECTURE SERIES

The first Saturday of each month 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. Dates will be **July 5, August 2 and September 5**.

## STEWARDSHIP SATURDAYS

Help eradicate the invasive plants on the third Saturday of each month—**June 21, July 19 and August 16**. Meet at the Belle Isle Nature Zoo at 9:00 am and work until 12 noon. Refreshments will be served. So far in 2014, we have had 497 volunteers and 2,070 hours. Thank you to all the volunteers.



## BELLE ISLE PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Belle Isle 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 occur each month, are free and are open to the public. More information is available at [www.belleislepark.org](http://www.belleislepark.org). Dates of upcoming meetings are: **Thursday, June 26, Thursday, July 24 and Thursday, August 2 at the Flynn Pavilion from 9 to 11 am**.

# Save the Date

**The Garden Party on Belle Isle, Tuesday, September 9, 5:30 to 8:00 pm.**, an evening at the Conservatory and Gardens with cocktails, hors d'oeuvres and entertainment.

**Polish the Jewel, Tenth Annual Belle Isle Legacy Luncheon, Wednesday, September 17, 11 am to 1:30 pm at the Belle Isle Casino.**

# Upcoming Events

DON'T MISS THESE



## 4TH ANNUAL DREAM CHARITY TRAIL RIDE

**Saturday, June 21 – Belle Isle starting at 12:00 pm**

The Renaissance Equestrian Society's 4th Annual Charity Trail Ride is coming to Belle Isle **Saturday, June 21st** benefiting the Karmanos Cancer Institute. Horses will ride at 12 noon starting at Woodside Drive and The Strand. Look for them as they travel around the island. It is a "dream come true" for riders of all disciplines and abilities. The Renaissance Equestrian Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with a goal of introducing an awareness of horses to the area while creating educational programs for youth, families and businesses. More information, updates and pictures are found on Facebook at Renaissance Equestrian Society.



2013 Dream Trail Ride on Belle Isle  
Photo by Peggy Kramer

## BLISS IS BACK!

**Saturday, June 23, July 19, August 16 & September 20 – Belle Isle**

In 2013, the Belle Isle Conservancy, in partnership with the Detroit Recreation Department, launched a new program entitled Belle Isle Summer Saturdays (BLISS) to bring new energy to Belle Isle. Programming (which last year included yoga classes, island tours, kayak and bike rentals, food trucks, and more) was undertaken in partnership with Detroit area non-profits, small businesses, corporations, community groups and individuals. Planning is underway for the 2014 BLISS season. Look for BLISS events on the third Saturday of each month from June through September and visit our website – [www.belleisleconservancy.org/annual-events/bliss/](http://www.belleisleconservancy.org/annual-events/bliss/) - for more information.



## BAREFOOT WINE BELLE ISLE BEACH CLEAN UP

**Wednesday, August 6 – Belle Isle Beach – 5:30 – 7:00 pm**

Barefoot Wine has again teamed up with the Alliance for the Great Lakes and the Belle Isle Conservancy to host an Adopt-a-Beach cleanup at Belle Isle Beach. The cleanup is open to the public and will take place at the **Belle Isle Beach Wednesday, August 6th from 5:30 until 7:00 pm** participants should meet at the Bathhouse. Afterward participants 21 years of age or older can join a celebration at the Detroit Yacht Club from 7:00 – 8:30 pm. This beach cleanup will be held as a memorial to Mary Waterstone who lead this event for the past several years. For additional information contact [www.GreatLakesAdopt.org](http://www.GreatLakesAdopt.org) to register.

# WHAT IS HAPPENING *Around*

## GOLDEN SYMBOLS OF HOPE AND REBIRTH ABOUND

William Wordsworth's words apply to the over 80,000 daffodils donated by the Michigan Branch of the Woman's National Farm and Garden Association since 2009. Cecily O'Conner, then chair of the Bloomfield Hills Branch, met with Conservancy Chair, Sarah Earley, Detroit Recreation Director, Alicia Minter, and Keith Flournoy, former Park Supervisor to discuss her idea to plant daffodils as a symbol of hope and rebirth. Since then, an annual Daffodil Day luncheon, launched by Claudia Scioly of the Ann Arbor branch, is a funding mechanism for these daffodils. More importantly, this is a way for Michigan members to enjoy Belle Isle's beauty in the springtime for years to come.



*I wander'd lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.*

April's luncheon, attended by over 350 WNF&GA members, raised funds for 24,000 more daffodils to be matched by a like amount from the DNR. We will be garnering the support of many volunteers this fall to plant these bulbs around the island.

In October of 2013, students from the University of Detroit Jesuit High School spent their day of service on Belle Isle planting these cheerful flowers. They were assisted by the City of Detroit Floriculture Staff, DPS's Randolph CTC Agriscience Program students and Conservancy volunteers. Due to our harsh winter, the daffodils were late this year but could be seen well into May in various locations.



# Belle Isle



## AN OLD POLICE STATION BECOMES A NEW VISITOR'S CENTER

The Belle Isle Police Station has needed renovating for some time. Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) activities to turn this former Police Station into a Visitor's Services Center began in early May. The Belle Isle Welcome Center will function as a public access point for visitors with questions about Belle Isle, other state parks or the DNR. Recreation Passports for access to all Michigan State Parks will be available for purchase there.

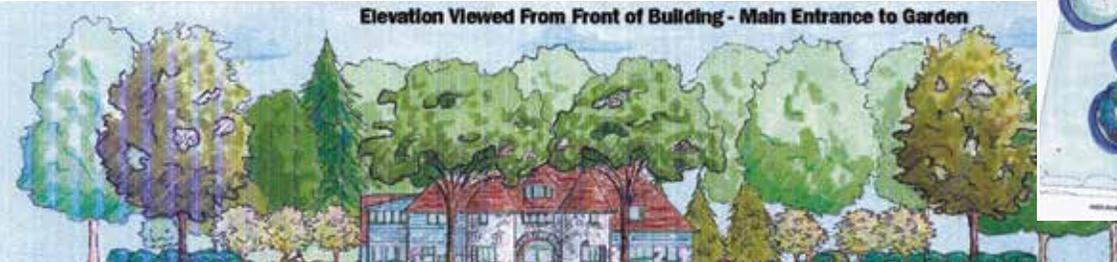
Partnering with the Belle Isle Conservancy and the DNR, the Rotary Club of Detroit collaborated in developing a native demonstration garden around the Welcome Center intended for the enjoyment of visitors as well as being educational. This is a two-year project to be installed in stages. Landscape architect Andy McDowell of Cardno JFNew was commissioned by the Detroit Rotary to develop the native garden design. DTE Energy and MGM Grand support his effort. The DNR, as a valued partner on this project and involved in the design process, is assisting with plants and materials. In the next year, the Detroit Rotary will continue to raise corporate and foundation funding. For more information on how you might support this effort, please contact Mebby Pearson at [Melvadean.Pearson@gmail.com](mailto:Melvadean.Pearson@gmail.com).



Over 2000 community volunteer hours were involved on the site over a four-year period. In September of 2013, the Detroit Rotarians participated in the Belle Isle Conservancy's Stewardship Saturday program removing invasive plants, clearing vegetation around the structure and preparing the site for its future along with a host of other volunteers.



Elevation Viewed From Front of Building - Main Entrance to Garden



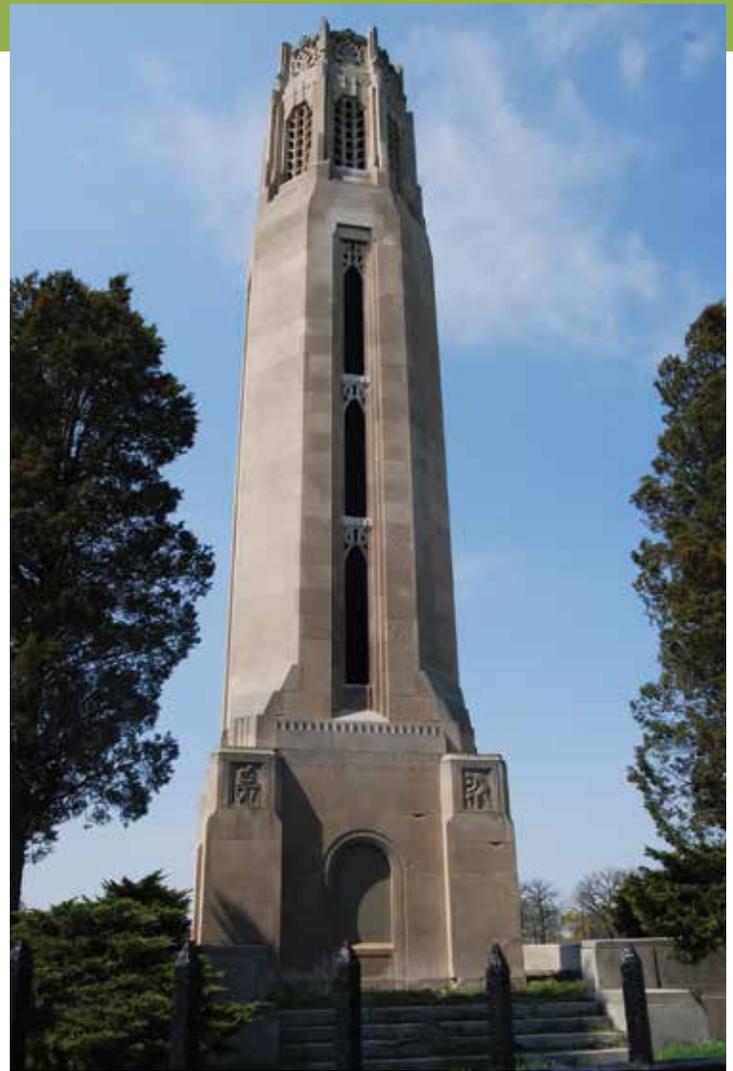
# HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE NOTES

Submitted by Roberta Henrion

Much has been accomplished in the Historic Preservation arena, much is in progress and lots more is being planned. Many partners, such as the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Belle Isle Conservancy (BIC), the City of Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board (HDAB) and their components to name a few, are sharing their ideas, talents, accomplishments and history.

Watch for an announcement of the public meeting regarding the recently adopted "The Belle Isle Park Local Historic District Preliminary Report" and the final vote by the City Council to approve the creation of the district. The new nomination to the National Register of Historic Places is in its final stages. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), a division of DNR, hopes to present it to the State Historic Preservation Review Board meeting in mid-May at the earliest.

The Aquarium and the Nancy Brown Peace Carillon were the recipients of SHPO's 2013 Certified Local Government Grants. BIC is providing the matching dollars to rehabilitate the Aquarium's masonry and windows. Quinn Evans is preparing a "Conditions Assessment Report Master Plan" for the Carillon. Hopefully, continued financial support will allow the historic preservation work to continue in 2014.



# VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Submitted by Erica Hill



Just like many of you, I have fond memories and stories of visiting Belle Isle, while I was growing up in the city of Detroit. My family had-and still has- family reunions on the island. My sister and I would play on the Playscape and slide on the Giant Slide. My adult years have given way to bike riding and experiencing the island's tranquility, as I work or take conference calls. It is quite serendipitous to now coordinate volunteers in the park where I grew up, worked and played.

I am a lifelong Detroit. I have worked in three Mayoral Administrations, coordinated large events, coordinated and fostered corporate and community relationships and am quite familiar with the Detroit landscape. I love people and the spirit of volunteerism.

Our expanding volunteer program will build from our existing structure and experience, while embracing technology, new energy, expanded programming, creative partnerships and recognizing the hard work of all of our dedicated volunteers.

I am excited to be a part of the Belle Isle family. I look forward to speaking and meeting you very soon.  
Erica



# MORE HOURS MORE FEELS

Since reopening September 2012, the Belle Isle Aquarium open hours have been limited to Saturdays. That is about to change. Beginning June 7, the Aquarium will be open Saturdays and Sundays from 10:00 am until 4:00 pm. Under the state park lease agreement, the Belle Isle Conservancy (BIC) operates the Aquarium while the adjacent Conservatory is staffed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources with BIC support.

According to the Aquarium's Volunteer Development Coordinator Tom Drummy, "We believe we are the only volunteer-run public aquarium in the world. There is a clear desire for us to be open on more days, and we have been ramping up to accommodate."

Belle Isle Conservancy aquarium volunteers are making arrangements to accommodate school field trips. Interested

educators should contact Carol White at BelleIsleAquarium@belleisleconservancy.org for more information.

*"We believe we are the only volunteer-run public aquarium in the world. There is a clear desire for us to be open on more days, and we have been ramping up to accommodate."*

Work is nearing completion on the aquarium's new electric eel exhibit. Problems were encountered in repairing the permanent concrete tank. "Some of the methods used for repairs over the years were not the best," remarked aquarium

volunteer John MacKenzie. "Many of these tanks have problems, but this is the worst we have tackled."

Once water tight, the electric eel exhibit will be "tankscaped" to simulate their natural habitat in Peru. This will include some material volunteers salvaged in January from the recently closed National Aquarium in Washington, DC. The two eels currently reside in a temporary display with an apparatus indicating the electrical charge they generate. This is the work of Dr. Jeff Ram and students from Wayne State University.

# BOARD MEMBERS:

## Board of Directors

The Belle Isle Conservancy is governed by a 18-member board of directors, including two appointees from the City of Detroit and one from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

- Sarah Earley, Chair**  
Community Volunteer
- Ethan Vinson, Esq., Vice Chair**  
Cummings, McClorey, Davis & Acho
- Paul Huxley, Treasurer**  
Strategic Staffing Solutions
- Joyce Hayes Giles, Secretary**  
Community Volunteer
- Kate Beebe**  
Katherine Beebe & Associates
- Ed Deeb**  
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Appreciation Foundation
- Janice Ellison**  
Community Volunteer
- Cynthia Ford**  
Community Volunteer
- Ray Johnson**  
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- Judy Jonna**  
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- Alicia B. Masse**  
Alderney Advisors, LLC
- Vance Patrick**  
R. V. Patrick Construction
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- Marilyn Tuchow**  
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RESOURCES REPRESENTATIVE**
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- CITY OF DETROIT REPRESENTATIVES**
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President
- Katy Wyerman**  
Director of Resource Development
- Erica Hill**  
Volunteer Coordinator
- Velma Hall**  
Administrative Support
- Bernadette Wilson**  
Administrative Support

# 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

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

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