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Welcome to the Team

Alonzo Thomas	PW	Water Plant Operator
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Welcoming Back Familiar Faces

CJ Hughes	PW	Seasonal PW Worker
Alfonso Lopez	PW	Seasonal PW Worker

Thank You & Best Wishes

Randy Curtis	PW	Water Plant Operator
Rachel Polak	CD	Planning Intern

Around Town Highlights

Cinco de Mayo @ Tamales

Through May 5
493 Central Avenue | 847-433-4070

Write-In on the Lake with the Poet Laureate

Rosewood Beach
May 8 | 1—3:30 pm
883 Sheridan Road

Compost & Shredding Event

Hidden Creek AquaPark
May 9 | 9—10:00 am
1220 Fredrickson Place

Explore more Highland Park events [here!](#)

Employee Anniversaries

Last Name	First Name	Dept.	Title	Years
Hunter	Jeffrey	PW	Maintenance Aide	37
Overholser	Lee	PW	Transit Coordinator	30
Hughes	Ryan	Fire	Battalion Chief	27
Curran	Sean	Police	Police Commander	26
Spanos	Thomas	Police	Police Officer	26
Morris	Jay	Police	Evidence Custodian	24
Mocogni	Erik	Fire	Battalion Chief	23
Gottschalk	Christopher	Fire	Firefighter	15
Grasso	Matthew	Fire	Firefighter	15
McDonald	Brian	Fire	Firefighter	15
Urban	Steven	Fire	Firefighter	15
Daniels	Patricia	PW	Bus Driver Pt	14
Dean	Douglas	PW	Maintenance Worker	14
Graff	Darren	Police	Police Officer	14
Best	Kevin	Fire	Firefighter	12
Tameling	Peter	Fire	Firefighter	12
Powell	Delroy	PW	Bus Driver Pt	10
McCaulou	Kristi	Finance	Finance Director	9
Bekov	David	Police	Police Officer	5
Chavez	Anthony	Police	Police Officer	3
De Leon	Chris	Finance	IT Support Technician	3
Gomez-Machuca	Maria	Finance	Utility Billing Splclst	3
Hoffmann	Patrick	CD	Planner	3
Lattner	Daniel	Fire	Firefighter	3
Lee	Hyengi	Police	Police Officer	3
Nowotarski	Thomas	Police	Police Officer	3
Trujillo	Emilio	PW	Maintenance Worker	3
Turkowski	Alec	PW	Civil Engineer	2
Markle	Madeleine	CD	Planner	1
Poster	Andre	Police	Community Service Officer	1

Highland Park Celebrates Arbor Day



Highland Park's Arbor Day at Ravinia brought the community together to celebrate nature and sustainability!

Read more [here.](#)



North Shore Classic: The City will sponsor registration fees for the 2026 North Shore Classic for all employees who participate in the WIN program. This includes WIN Program spouses as well! Whether you're a seasoned runner or just looking to enjoy a fun, community-oriented event, the North Shore Classic offers great options: Half Marathon and 5K, all taking place right here in Highland Park.

Race Details:

- Date: **Sunday, May 31, 2026**
- 5K Start: 7:00 AM | Half Marathon Start: 7:30 AM
- Start/Finish Line: St. Johns & Central Ave → St. Johns & Elm Place
- Course: USATF-certified, scenic, and designed for all experience levels

How to Register:

- Visit <https://northshoreclassic.com/> and follow the steps to register for the race.
- At checkout, click "Use Coupon" and enter **HIGHLANDPARK2026**, then click "Apply Coupon."
- The coupon will apply 100% of the race fee for eligible participants. This code must be entered at the time of registration.
- After using the code, your registration will be pending until approved by HR.
- You will receive confirmation once approved and will be all set to race!
- The registration deadline is **May 15, 2026**.

June Walking Challenge: Planning for the June Walking/Step Challenge is underway. Now is a great time to start organizing your team (limit 4 people) and be on the lookout for an official announcement in the next few weeks. Participants will receive 25 WIN points. This is a prize-based challenge! The first- and second-place teams will receive Highland Park gift cards, and all other teams that cross the finish line will be entered into a raffle for an additional prize....so choose your team wisely!

New Participants – Join the WIN Program!

If you're not currently enrolled in the WIN program but want to participate, visit [CHC Wellness](#) and use Program Code **7092Cit189** to register your account. Once registered, schedule your health screening to complete enrollment. Discounts for new participants will take effect once biometric results are confirmed.

Planning for Retirement: IMRF Tools & Resources

Saving for Retirement

A recent study found the median retirement savings is less than \$1,000.

Learn more about how IMRF helps member save with every paycheck and how to save even more with the Voluntary Additional Contributions (VAC) Program.



Applying for Retirement

April through June is one of the busiest times for retirements at IMRF.

Get answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about the retirement process.



Mental Health Awareness Month: Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Support is Here for You

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, a reminder that support is always within reach. The City offers confidential resources to help you and your family navigate life's challenges, whether personal, professional, or anything in between. Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to you and your household members 24 hours a day, seven days a week to assist with virtually any issue. Whether you're facing a difficult moment or simply need someone to talk to, these services are here for you, confidentially. Taking care of your mental health is just as important as your physical health, and if you or a loved one could benefit from support, we encourage you to explore the resources available.



- Confidential counseling, expert guidance, and resources for life's challenges
- Available to employees and household members
- First 8 sessions: City covers 100% of the counseling fee
- Session 9 and beyond: Employee responsible (self-pay or insurance)
- 833-806-8722 (TRS: Dial 711)
- [guidanceresources.com](https://www.guidanceresources.com) (WebID: COHEAP)
- Click [here](#) for your personalized care journey
- Located in Highland Park; available to employees and family members
- In-person and virtual (Zoom) sessions available
- First 15 sessions: City covers 100% of the counseling fee
- Session 16 and beyond: Employee responsible (self-pay or insurance)
- (847) 441-5600
- <https://www.josselyn.org/about-us/highland-park>

Messenger Bulletin Board

Employee Achievement Spotlight

We're excited to share some outstanding accomplishments from across the City! Please join us in congratulating the following employees on their recent certifications:

- Justin Eiskamp (Payroll Specialist, Finance) – Fundamental Payroll Certification (FPC)
- Lara Lukasik (Deputy Finance Director, Finance) – Fundamental Payroll Certification (FPC)
- Sherry Yu (Zoning & Permit Tech, CD) – Permit Technician Certification
- Steven Smith (Plumbing Inspector, CD) – Plumbing Inspector Certification
- Eric Parfenoff (Building/Housing Inspector, CD) – Master Code Professional (MCP) Certification (One of only 52 in Illinois and 500 nationwide!)
- Jim Ferber (Senior Inspector, CD) – Certified Building Official (CBO) Certification

These accomplishments reflect a strong commitment to professional growth and excellence in serving our community. We're proud to recognize their hard work and dedication! Keep up the great work!

Have you recently earned a certification or reached a professional milestone? We'd love to celebrate you, too! Please share your accomplishments with us at hr@cityhpil.com so we can highlight your success in an upcoming Messenger.

Young Professionals Volunteer Opportunity!

Looking to give back and connect with others in the community? Join the **Highland Park Chamber of Commerce Young Professionals Group** for a meaningful afternoon volunteering at the **Moraine Township Food Pantry**.



This is a great opportunity to make a direct impact while networking with fellow young professionals. After the volunteer session, keep the conversation going at an optional happy hour (Dutch treat) at DeNucci's.

- **Date:** May 29 @ 2:00—4:00 pm
- **Location:** Moraine Township Food Pantry (800 Central Ave.)
- **Cost:** Free to volunteer
- **Spots:** Limited to 15 participants (waitlist available)

The Young Professionals Group is designed for professionals aged 40 and under, and you don't need to live or work in Highland Park to attend—all are welcome to join and get involved.

Register at:

<https://business.chamberhp.com/events/details/young-professionals-group-volunteer-day-10767>

Looking to Update Your Direct Deposit?

Keeping your direct deposit information up to date helps ensure your pay is processed **accurately and securely**.



How to Submit a Change

You can update your direct deposit using one of the following methods:

- **Employee Self-Service (ESS):** Upload your completed form directly
- **Inter-Office Mail:** Send your completed form through internal mail
- **In Person:** Drop off your completed form to HR or Payroll

For Your Security, to protect your information, direct deposit changes **cannot** be accepted via:

- Email
- Phone calls
- Verbal requests

What You'll Need

Please be sure to include:

- Completed and signed Direct Deposit Authorization Form
- Your Employee Number
- Bank Routing Number
- Bank Account Number
- Account Type (Checking or Savings)

You may also be asked to provide a voided check or bank letter for verification.

Why This Matters

These steps help:

- Protect your wages
- Prevent fraud
- Ensure accurate and timely payroll processing

Messenger Bulletin Board

Mother's Day is Sunday, May 10!



We celebrate all the incredible mothers and mother figures in every form, those who nurture, guide, support, and care in ways big and small. Your love, strength, and impact are felt every day, and we are grateful for all that you do. You make the world brighter simply by being in it. Wishing you a day filled with joy, love, and well-deserved appreciation!

Here are some Mother's Day events around HP:

May 10 | [Indus Progressive Indian](#)—Mother's Day Brunch (10:30am - 2:30pm)

May 10 | [PIXCA](#)—Mother's Day Dining

Through May 10 | [Therapeutic Kneads](#) —Free \$15 gift with \$150+ gift card

Through May 31 | [Sugaring NYC](#) —New clients: 20% off + gift cards & scrubs available

Highland Park Hits the Ice: EEWC Wolves Family Outing!



Thanks to everyone who joined us for a windy Sunday at the Chicago Wolves game—great company, an exciting matchup, and a Wolves win!

Two Ways to Lify Your Day: JR the Chicken (5/4) & Therapy Dogs (5/18)

Monday, May 4

In celebration of Star Wars Day, take a quick break and stop by to visit JR, the emotional support chicken—a fun way to recharge during your workday!

- City Hall (Lower-Level Conference Room): 12:00 – 1:15 PM
- Public Services (PW Large Conference Room): 2:15 – 3:30 PM
- Senior Center (East Lobby): 4:00 – 5:00 PM

Bonus: Wear your favorite Star Wars gear!

Monday, May 18

Get ready for some tail wags and smiles! Take a break and unwind with the therapy dogs from [Rainbow Animal Assisted Therapy](#).

- PW Large and Small Conference Rooms
- Noon—2:00pm (15-minute time slots)
- 2 participants per dog, per time slot
- Spots are limited

Sign-up: [Q:\Events\May 18 - Pet Therapy Sign-Up.xlsx](#)

Employee Spotlight

Each month, this piece highlights an employee from a different department. This month's employee interview is with **Rachel Polak, (Planning Intern—CD)**.

Messenger Editor: Where did you grow up, and what's one fun/quirky fact about your hometown that people might not expect?

Rachel Polak: I grew up in Indianapolis, Indiana. One fun fact about Indianapolis is that when the city was originally surveyed, they used magnetic north instead of true north. So the grid is off kilter by about 1.5 degrees, though they were able to adjust as the city expanded outward.

ME: As a kid, what did you imagine you'd be doing as an adult—and does any part of that dream still live on today?

RP: When I was a kid, I wanted to be a farmer or a race car driver. These days I have lots of plants and sometimes drive fast, so I guess I am fulfilling my childhood dreams!

ME: If your personality were a season, which one would it be and why?

RP: I think the season that most resembles my personality is spring. Everything is bright and colorful, the weather is crazy and unpredictable, and there is a lot to look forward to.

ME: What show, podcast, or book are you completely hooked on right now?

RP: Recently I've been watching *The Pitt*! A few coworkers recommended it to me and I have really enjoyed the show so far.

ME: If you could wake up tomorrow having instantly mastered one skill, what would it be—and how would it change your daily life?

RP: I really want to be able to do a handstand. It wouldn't really change my daily life, but I think it would be cool.

ME: What's your go-to workday snack or drink that keeps you going? **RP:** Coffee or tea!

ME: It's karaoke night! What's your go-to song to bring the crowd to life?

RP: I've actually never done karaoke, so I don't really have a go-to song. I think it would depend on how I'm feeling and who I'm with.

ME: You get three seats at your dream dinner table—anyone from any time. Who's on the guest list? **RP:** Carrie Fisher, Amelia Earhart, and Anthony Bourdain.

ME: Hollywood is making a movie about your life – who's playing you, and what's the title?

RP: Rachel McAdams (not just because her name is Rachel), and the title would be *Here and There and Everywhere*.



Join us in congratulating Rachel on graduating and starting her full-time role!
We'll miss her at Highland Park and wish her all the best!

Strong Teams Support Mental Health

WHY MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS AT WORK



Mental health is just as important as physical safety. Stress, anxiety, fatigue, and burnout can impact focus, decision-making, and overall job performance—potentially increasing the risk of workplace injuries. Creating a culture that supports mental well-being helps keep everyone safer, healthier, and more productive.

"We all have mental health, and we all have to work to maintain it."

Recognizing the Warning Signs

Be aware of changes in yourself and your coworkers.

Common signs may include:

- Increased irritability or mood changes
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Fatigue or low energy
- Withdrawal from coworkers or normal activities
- Changes in sleep or appetite
- Early recognition can make a significant difference.

- Kate Middleton

Supporting Each Other

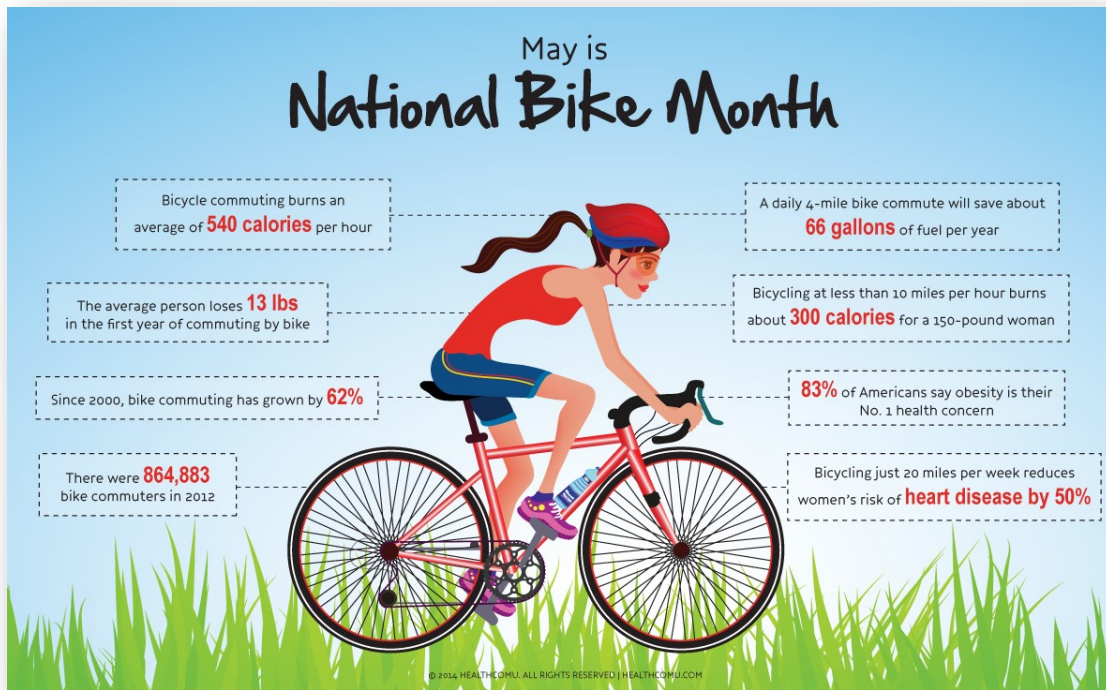
A strong team looks out for one another:

- Check in with coworkers who may be struggling
- Listen without judgment
- Encourage seeking professional help when needed
- Promote a respectful and supportive work environment

Practical Ways to Support Mental Health

- Take breaks: Step away to reset, even for a few minutes
- Stay connected: Talk with coworkers, friends, or family
- Manage workload: Prioritize tasks and ask for help when needed
- Practice self-care: Exercise, eat well, and get enough sleep
- Speak up: If you're feeling overwhelmed, let a supervisor or trusted person know

Taking care of your mental health helps protect not only yourself but also your team. Let's continue to build a workplace where safety includes both mind and body.



May is the perfect time to focus on both mental well-being and bike safety and here in Highland Park, we have plenty of ways to do both.

Whether you're riding along the lakefront, through Ravinia, or exploring neighborhood streets and trails, biking is a simple way to support your well-being. It can help:

- Reduce stress and boost mood
- Improve focus and energy levels
- Support overall physical and mental health
- Burn up to 500+ calories per hour
- Reduce your environmental impact (a short daily ride can save gallons of fuel each year)

More people than ever are turning to biking for health, cost savings, and sustainability, making it a great habit to build into your routine.

Be a "Roll Model" on the Road

As more riders take to Highland Park's streets and paths, safety is key:

- Stay alert – expect the unexpected
- Wear a helmet
- Follow the rules of the road – cyclists have the same rights and responsibilities as drivers
- Share the road – look out for drivers, pedestrians, and fellow cyclists



A Healthier You, A Safer Highland Park

Taking time for yourself, even a short ride, can make a big difference for your mental health. By riding safely and staying aware, we can help keep our community active, healthy, and safe.

Sources: <https://anchorageparkfoundation.org/2021/05/may-is-national-bike-month>,
<https://michiganbicyclelaw.com/may-national-bike-month/>