



# DETROIT RIVERFRONT CONSERVANCY

Issue 11 • Quarter 3 • 2020



## A MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

**T**hroughout a very challenging 2020, the Detroit Riverfront has served as a place of peace and encouragement for our community.

In a time when silver linings are in short supply, it has been incredible to watch our public spaces play an important role in the lives of so many people. Some have started a new tradition of morning walks along the Riverwalk. Others have reacquainted themselves with the simple joys of reading a good book on a secluded bench. The beauty of our riverfront is that our community embraces it in many different ways.

We are proud that the Riverwalk and the Dequindre Cut have remained open and have welcomed more guests than ever before this year. We are also proud that the riverfront has been the site of several peaceful protests where people have gathered to have their voices be heard.

Our team has implemented safety measures to help prevent the spread of COVID, and the community has embraced the return of many popular annual programs along the riverfront this summer, including Yoga, Tai, Chi, Reading & Rhythm on the Riverfront and Moonlight Yoga. New programs like Kids Yoga and Senior Hustle Fitness have been well received. And through a partnership with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, we hosted three inspiring musical performances along the riverfront in August. We are grateful to all our program partners for joining us in providing a vibrant and diverse summer season for thousands of Detroiters. This summer has also seen the opening of Smokey G's Barbecue and Geisha Girls Sushi at Robert C. Valade Park.

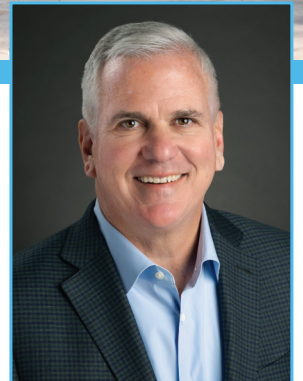
We're excited about our upcoming #BeingApartTogether fundraiser that will feature a unique box of local and Detroit-themed items sent to the

homes of supporters, and some fantastic online musical performances. You can read more about this important fundraiser in this newsletter. Please join in the fun and support our efforts!

The health and safety of all riverfront visitors remains the highest priority for the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy. Please know that we will maintain our social distancing protocols, and our cleaning team will continue to keep all surfaces as clean as possible.

Thank you all for your continued support. I hope to see you along the Detroit Riverfront soon.

Matthew P. Cullen  
Chairman





# Events and Programming **ON THE RIVERFRONT**



The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy team has embraced the challenges of 2020 and have welcomed thousands of visitors with a wide variety of programming.

**C**ommunity favorites such as weekly Yoga and Tai Chi classes, Reading & Rhythm on the Riverfront, Herbal Walk and Talks, Moonlight Yoga and the Campbell Terrace Music Series were back. Exciting new programs like Kids Yoga and Story Time, Senior Hustle Fitness and Community Barre classes made their debut this summer as well.

There's still plenty of warm and sunny weather left to soak in, so the Programming team at the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy is extending some of its most popular programs for the whole family to enjoy this month.

Check out these free offerings and come on down to the riverfront. Pre-registration is required. Please visit [detroitriverfront.org/things-to-do](https://detroitriverfront.org/things-to-do) to register.

## **Senior Hustle Fitness**

**When:** Every Tuesday through September 29 from 10 to 11 a.m.

**Where:** Robert C. Valade Park

Get that blood pumping and heart rate up during a rousing session of exercises designed for seniors.

## **Community Zumba**

**When:** Saturday, September 26 from 11 a.m. to Noon

**Where:** Gabriel Richard Park

Bring your best moves and prepare to work up a sweat while listening to some energetic music with the scenic MacArthur Bridge to Belle Isle as the back drop.

## **Kids Yoga and Story Time**

**When:** Saturday, September 19 & 26 from 10 to 11 a.m.

**Where:** Robert C. Valade Park

Let your little ones relax and unwind at beautiful Robert C. Valade Park with engaging stretches and stories for children.

## **Herbal Walk & Talk**

**When:** Monday, September 28 from 6 to 9 p.m.

**Where:** Cullen Plaza





Learn about native herbs and plant life during a leisurely stroll through Milliken State Park with Detroit Riverfront Conservancy volunteer Regina Lawson.

### **Detroit Month of Design**

**When:** Every day the month of September from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.

**Where:** Dequindre Cut Greenway and Detroit Riverfront, various locations

Celebrate design in Detroit while checking out some creative and colorful designs and installations by local and visiting artists along the beautiful Detroit Riverwalk and Dequindre Cut Greenway.

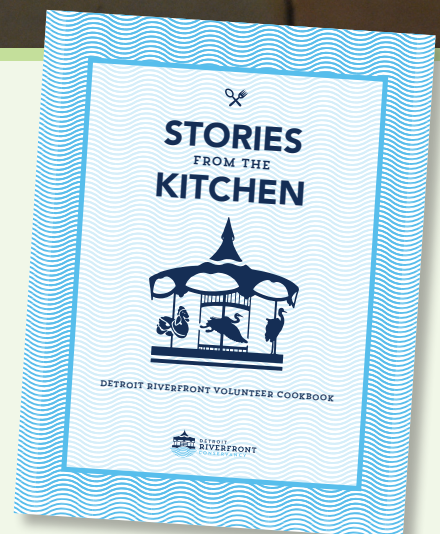
### **Volunteer Cookbook**

Interested in surprising someone special with a new dish or dessert you made with your own two hands? Check out “Stories from the Kitchen,” the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy’s new cookbook. It’s more than just a cookbook, it is evidence of how Conservancy volunteers and staff used food to reflect, relax and create community during the pandemic.

The cookbook features delicious recipes for breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks and desserts. And, each recipe includes a brief narrative from the person submitting it as to why the dish is special to them.

Some of the recipes in the cookbook are new and some have been passed down through generations of family members. The one thing they all have in common is that they are all delicious.

Check it out and please consider making a donation to support the Conservancy’s riverfront revitalization efforts at [detroitriverfront.org/cookbook](https://detroitriverfront.org/cookbook).







# COMPLETING THE

Throughout 2020, the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy has continued to make progress with construction.

**R**iverfront Towers  
At the end of June, crews returned to complete the boardwalk in front of the Riverfront Towers property. With the return of construction, the finishing touches of security cameras, call boxes and the security gateway are now in place. However, while this boardwalk may be complete, it won't be open for foot traffic until it can be connected to the rest of the Riverwalk via both the Platform and DDA Parcels.

## **The Platform Parcel**

Work is complete on the Platform Parcel, the section of Riverwalk that runs between the former site of Joe Louis Arena and Riverfront Towers. By the end of June, crews were able to finish installing the marine railing, light posts, security cameras and benches. Owned by businessman Peter Cummings,

this piece of Riverwalk is significant because it represents the first stretch of the two-mile long West Riverfront Project.

## **DDA Parcel**

To the west of Riverfront Towers lies a parcel of land owned by the Downtown Development Authority (DDA). The Conservancy is working with the DDA to develop a crucial section of Riverwalk across their property which will connect the Riverfront Towers boardwalk with what will become Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park. Trades are working on design and build concepts for seawall repair. Once complete, trades will pull permits and begin work in spring of 2021. The Conservancy is looking forward to breaking ground and developing this new section of Riverwalk. With the help of Smith Group in Ann Arbor, the design for this project is ready to go, with

completion expected in fall of 2021.

## **Uniroyal Promenade**

Construction began in August on the first phase of the Uniroyal Promenade. This project is important because it will connect Gabriel Richard Park with Mt. Elliott Park, officially completing the Conservancy's vision of a connected 3.5 miles of Riverwalk along the East Riverfront. This first phase will focus on the installation of the sediment cap in the water, after which the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) will begin construction on the new section of Riverwalk. When complete in late 2021, this section will serve as another beautiful amenity along the riverfront, featuring creative design elements and landscaping, as well as new benches, lighting,





# VISION

security cameras and designated pathways for bicycles and pedestrians.

## May Creek

The design stage is nearing completion for the May Creek greenway. This project will provide Riverwalk visitors with safe and convenient access to the West Riverfront from Corktown. The Conservancy is working with landowners to secure easements and officially break ground late this year with an expected opening of fall 2021.

## Joseph Campau Greenway

Leading the way with construction efforts on the Joseph Campau Greenway, contractors with the City of Detroit have returned to the site, putting the finishing touches on the section between Jefferson Avenue and Robert Bradby Drive. Now on the second phase of construction, crews are working to bring updates such as benches, lighting, security cameras, outdoor power stations, and a 10-foot wide pedestrian and bicycle path the rest of the way up the 1.2 mile greenway to Vernor Highway.

When complete this fall, the Joseph Campau Greenway will provide Detroit residents on the east side with safer and more convenient access to the beautiful parks and green spaces along the Riverwalk.

## Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Centennial Park

The Conservancy is looking forward to breaking ground on construction for Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park. The first phase of this project will be coordinated with the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to remediate

sediment along the shoreline of the Detroit River. This important work will create a safer environment for visitors, as well as provide renewed habitat for fish and other aquatic life.

When complete in 2023, this 22-acre park will feature a large water feature, a Sport House for athletics, the Delta Dental Children's Play Garden, as well as an expansive lawn for hosting special events. This extensive property is sure to be a focal point of activity and a favorite destination for visitors to the West Riverfront.







A physically-distant,  
socially-connected  
fundraiser to support your  
Detroit Riverfront Conservancy



## FUNDRAISER PROVIDES A NEW WAY FOR PEOPLE TO EXPERIENCE THE RIVERFRONT

**T**he Detroit Riverfront Conservancy is excited about a physically-distant, socially-connected fundraiser this fall that will provide new and unique ways for people to experience the riverfront.

Presented by Citizens, #BeingApartTogether is a celebration of the important role Detroit Riverfront parks play in the community and will feature musical performances and a home-delivered “goodie” package filled with limited-edition riverfront items, locally-sourced gifts and unique activities for outdoor fun.

The whole community can enjoy a broadcast of musical performances by local artists that is made possible by supporters of #BeingApartTogether. Performers include In Transit, Al Bettis, Juuni and New World Soul. The performances

will be broadcast on Friday, October 16 at 6 p.m. on the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy’s Facebook page.

Supporters of #BeingApartTogether will receive a unique package curated in partnership with Detroit’s own City Bird delivered to their homes. There will be something for the whole family inside, including a special riverfront throw blanket, a #BeingApartTogether kite, a limited edition enamel camping mug, a Detroit Riverfront knit cap, a DIY

kaleidoscope kit, a watercolor postcard set, a grab bag of Detroit-themed items and more! Also included is a special activity booklet filled with games and recipes.

This fundraiser will play a critical role in keeping the Riverwalk

and the Dequindre Cut clean, safe and accessible destinations for all. Due to the pandemic, more people are visiting the riverfront public spaces than ever before in their history. The rise in attendance has meant an increase in security,

*“We are proud to support the Conservancy and excited about this unique fundraiser that will celebrate the riverfront and introduce new supporters to the organization making these spaces possible.”*

– Rick Hampson, president of Citizens, Michigan





## THE #BEINGAPARTTOGETHER PACKAGE



Presented by **Citizens**™

cleaning and maintenance costs, making the work of the Conservancy, as well as the need for financial support from the community, more essential than ever.

“We are excited to announce this opportunity to support our work by #BeingApartTogether and hope the community will embrace it in the same way they have embraced our parks over this last year,” said Cassie Brenske, chief development officer for the Conservancy.

As presenting sponsor of the Conservancy’s annual Soirée on the Greenway fall fundraiser since 2018, Citizens views the #BeingApartTogether fundraiser as a great opportunity to continue its support of the ongoing transformation of the Detroit Riverfront.

“We are proud to support the Conservancy and excited about this unique fundraiser that will celebrate the riverfront and introduce new supporters to the organization making these spaces possible,” said Rick Hampson, president of Citizens, Michigan.

Sponsorships are still available and supporters of **#BeingApartTogether**, with a donation of \$250, will receive the special box of items and activities delivered to their door. The collection of items will be available for purchase through the end of the year, making it the perfect holiday gift for loved ones.

**For more information about the event, visit [detroitriverfront.org/BeingApartTogether](http://detroitriverfront.org/BeingApartTogether)**







## Riverwalk Even More Important During Coronavirus Pandemic

By John Hartig

Everyone knows that the Detroit Riverwalk is a beautiful, clean, and safe gathering place for all.

But it is much more than this. It is a place to hear the “conk-la-ree” sound of red-winged blackbirds at the wetlands of Milliken State Park, behold the dancing wings of butterflies at the butterfly gardens of Gabriel Richard Park, ponder the variety of life at the native plant garden along the Dequindre Cut, experience a sense of wonder watching waterfowl on their annual migration, marvel at the sight of approximately 88 million gallons of water passing through the Detroit River each minute, and share the excitement of a young child landing a fish.

Richard Louv has shown in his book titled *Last Child Left in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder* that today children’s physical contact and intimacy with nature is fading. Louv directly links the lack of nature in the lives of today’s children to some of the most disturbing childhood trends, such as the rise in obesity rate, attention disorders, and depression. Luckily for us, the cure

can start with a walk on the Detroit Riverwalk or a stop at one of our riverfront parks.

Indeed, adults and children both need contact with nature. Research has shown that access to nature in urban areas leads to better psychological well-being and social functioning, including improved human health. In fact, a recent study showed that just two hours a week or 20 minutes a day in nature had a positive effect on people’s moods and self-reported health. With all the issues and restrictions on our lives caused by the coronavirus pandemic, we need something that reduces our stress, lowers our blood pressure, stimulates our immune system, and improves our

mood more than ever before. And the Detroit Riverwalk is open for enjoyment to reconnect a little with nature.

But please remember when you visit to

follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s recommended guidelines on protecting yourself and loved ones, such as keeping at least a six-foot distance from other people, avoiding high-touch areas, not touching your face, and washing your hands for at least 20 seconds as soon as you get back home. Come down and get your “Vitamin N” for a nature-rich and healthy life.

*“Luckily for us, the cure can start with a walk on the Detroit Riverwalk or a stop at one of our riverfront parks.”*

– John H. Hartig, PhD, Board Member, Detroit Riverfront Conservancy





## BOARD MEMBER TRIBUTE: REMEMBERING EVELYN JOHNSTON

**The entire Detroit Riverfront Conservancy family mourns the passing of Evelyn Johnston, a founding member of our Board of Directors and a tremendous supporter of the riverfront revitalization efforts.**

Evelyn Johnston was born in Miami, Florida in 1932 and moved to the Detroit area as a young girl. A graduate of Western High School in Detroit, Evelyn received her undergraduate degree from Wayne State University College of Education and obtained a Master's Degree in Education from the University of Michigan.

Always a spirited and hard worker, Evelyn pursued a diverse and meaningful career, first as a nurse at the Detroit Receiving Hospital, then later as an educator, certified financial planner and finally an adjunct professor at Wayne County Community College. Evelyn loved to learn and travel, but at the heart of everything she did was always the intention to make the world a better and more inclusive place – starting with her home city, Detroit.

Evelyn raised her two daughters in the city and became very invested in her community. She was a staunch attendant of City Council meetings and the president of the River East Alliance. As a founding member of the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy Board of Directors, Evelyn wanted to make sure that her Detroit neighbors had an opportunity to participate in the transformation of the riverfront, sometimes even going door to door to tell people about public meetings.

“She very much wanted to make sure that the riverfront was inclusive of the community and respectful of the footprint of the city,” said Sharon Banks, Evelyn’s eldest daughter. “She always encouraged community input so that the people who

lived, worked and played in Detroit could have a say in how the riverfront was used.” Sharon was also a Conservancy Board member and currently works as a consultant with the organization’s communications team.

Evelyn retired from the Board of Directors after 11 years of service but remained a passionate supporter of the Conservancy’s mission as an Emeritus member, and always enjoyed visits to the riverfront with her family. She especially loved events like the Kids Fishing Fest where she could spend time with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren on the water’s edge and see other families and people of all ages enjoying the riverfront.

“Evelyn was a loyal friend and a trusted advisor to the Conservancy,” said Matt Cullen, chairman of the Conservancy Board of Directors. “Even after retiring from our Board, she remained an ardent supporter and will be remembered as one of the most passionate cheerleaders our organization will ever know.”

For those who knew Evelyn personally, she is remembered for her tenacious spirit, leadership and fearlessness to speak her mind. There is no doubt that her dedication to Detroit and fostering community engagement has made a lasting impact on the riverfront and its visitors. “It’s a life well lived and she made many contributions,” said Sharon. “It makes our family proud and humbled by how many people she touched and how she is remembered.”

*“She very much wanted to make sure that the riverfront was inclusive of the community and respectful of the footprint of the city.”*

– Sharon Banks, Evelyn’s eldest daughter





## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: FRANK FORD

Originally from Springfield, Missouri, Frank Ford is a private practice lawyer specializing in anything related to traffic law, wills, probates and even a bit of real estate. Outside of his work, Frank has a lot of hobbies and enjoys reading, gardening, tennis and of course, volunteering with the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy.

Frank first got involved volunteering on the riverfront in 2016 at his wife Linda's suggestion. Since then he's mostly worked as a greeter, welcoming people as they enter events, sharing information about the event, and generally helping to create a friendly atmosphere. As a greeter, Frank loves seeing the excitement as the guests enter, and his favorite part is thanking them as they leave and witnessing how they have enjoyed their time on the riverfront. "Seeing the joy and satisfaction that people have had at the events is really nice," said Frank. "It's always a nice, positive thing to experience."

Last year Frank took on a new role as a riverfront tour guide. He likes to start each tour with a short

quiz about the Conservancy to quickly engage his audience. "I enjoy seeing that 'wow' factor when you tell somebody something that they didn't know and they are glad to get that information," said Frank. "Some people are surprised just how much of the riverfront there is to explore."

One of Frank's favorite places on the riverfront is the Gateway to Freedom sculpture at Phillip A. Hart Plaza that looks out over the water to Windsor, Ontario. That memorial, sculpted by Edward Dwight, commemorates Detroit's role in the Underground Railroad and features six fugitive slaves ready to board a boat to Canada. On the Windsor side of the river is a sister statue showing their safe arrival. For its history and significance to the city, Frank is excited to share the story behind that pair of sculptures on every tour he leads.

"Knowledgeable volunteers like Frank are invaluable to the Conservancy," said Renee Rodriguez, volunteer manager at the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy. "Not only do they assist with events and answering the questions of Riverwalk visitors, oftentimes they share important information about Detroit and may even help to provide insight into the city's history. We are very thankful for their dedication to making the riverfront the best it can be."

## WAYS TO VOLUNTEER

- Greet and provide directional support at programs and events
- Lead arts and crafts activities for kids
- Staff the information booth
- Become a Riverfront Ambassador
- Set up at events

To learn more and apply, visit  
**[www.detroitriverfront.org/volunteers](http://www.detroitriverfront.org/volunteers)**  
or call **(313) 566-8207**.





# GRATEFUL FOR COMMUNITY SUPPORT

This year has been a challenging year in many ways for our community. One bright spot is that during these difficult times, the Riverwalk and the Dequindre Cut have remained open for people to enjoy. During the summer months, more people than ever before spent time in these remarkable public spaces. There are still many weeks left of beautiful weather to enjoy.

The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy is extremely proud that the Riverwalk and the Dequindre Cut have remained open during these uncertain times. It has been inspiring to see how the public has embraced these destinations and we hope that our community will also embrace our need for support.

The rise in attendance and use of our amenities has meant an increase in security, cleaning and maintenance costs, which makes the need for financial support more essential than ever.

The Conservancy is fortunate to be funded by generous individuals, organizations, companies and foundations making both large and small gifts to support our efforts. We can't do it without you! This fall season, please consider supporting the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy with a gift today.

## WAYS TO GIVE

Considering a gift to the riverfront?  
Here are some ways you can help out:

- Make a one-time donation or become a Monthly Sustainer
- Learn about your employer's matching gift program
- Become a member and receive exclusive benefits
- Purchase an engraved brick or paver, underwrite a commemorative bench or make an honorary gift for a loved one
- Support the Conservancy at its fundraising events

Visit [detroitriverfront.org/waystohelp](http://detroitriverfront.org/waystohelp)

**We know these are difficult times, and we appreciate your consideration of support for the work we do. If you planned to make a gift this year, please consider giving at [www.detroitriverfront.org/give/NL2](http://www.detroitriverfront.org/give/NL2)**

## About the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy

The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy is a non-profit organization founded in 2003 with the mission to develop public access to Detroit's riverfront and to serve as an anchor for economic development. As the permanent stewards of the Riverwalk and the Dequindre Cut, the Conservancy is responsible for raising the funds needed for construction, operation, maintenance, security and programming of the public spaces located along the riverfront. The Conservancy's ultimate vision is to develop five-and-a-half miles of riverfront from the Ambassador Bridge on the west to Gabriel Richard Park, just east of the MacArthur Bridge to Belle Isle. Visit [www.detroitriverfront.org](http://www.detroitriverfront.org) for more information.







DETROIT  
**RIVERFRONT**  
CONSERVANCY

600 Renaissance Center  
Suite 1720  
Detroit, MI 48243-1805  
(313) 566-8200  
detroitriverfront.org

Non Profit  
Organization  
US Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 730  
Southfield, MI

**IN THIS ISSUE...**

STORY	PAGE
A Message from Leadership .....	1
Events and Programming .....	2
Completing the Vision .....	4
#BeingApartTogether Fundraiser.....	6
Riverwalk Even More Important During Coronavirus Pandemic .....	8
Remembering Evelyn Johnston .....	9
Volunteer Spotlight: Frank Ford .....	10
Grateful for Community Support .....	11

