



THE ITHACA YOUTH BUREAU

HAPPENINGS NEWSLETTER

Winter 2024

Snow Much Fun at the IYB!

- [Reserve](#) a public skate session at Cass Park Rink.
- [Registration](#) for Rec Winter Programs is open!
- [Pavilion Rental reservations](#) begin on Weds, Jan 15 at 9am.
- [Boat Rack reservations](#) begin on Weds, Feb 12 at 9am.

Skate into the Holidays at Cass!

Gather your friends and family, lace up your skates, and meet us on the ice during the holiday break! Check out our special holiday public skate session hours below, then head to [Community Pass](#) to reserve your spot(s)! Don't forget that the rink also offers skate rentals for adults, youth, and toddlers!

From the Director's Desk

As I approach my one-year anniversary here at the Youth Bureau, I find myself reflecting on the incredible work the team has accomplished as we've navigated this period of transition together. Change is never easy. We all develop routines, ways of doing things, and preferred methods of interaction. We grow accustomed to certain leadership styles and cultural norms. Yet, over the past year, the team has demonstrated extraordinary grace, patience, support, trust, and a willingness to embrace new approaches. I am truly excited to continue working together to strengthen, grow, and evolve the Youth Bureau in the year ahead.

We will have several opportunities for new people to join our staff in the weeks ahead. Be sure to keep an eye on our social media pages and the City's HR website for updates on upcoming openings.

While I tend to dread the cold and gray of winter, what I love most is the life and energy it brings to our Youth Bureau building. The echoing voices of happy, active participants drifting






CASS PARK ICE RINK HOLIDAY HOURS

Mon, Dec 23: 10am-12pm, 12:30-2:30pm, 3-5pm
 Tues, Dec 24: 10am-12pm, 12:30-2:30pm, 3-5pm
 Weds, Dec 25: CLOSED
 Thurs, Dec 26: 10am-12pm, 12:30-2:30pm, 3-5pm
 Fri, Dec 27: 10am-12pm, 12:30-2:30pm, 3-5pm, 7-9pm
 Sat, Dec 28: 10am-12pm, 12:30-2:30pm, 3-5pm
 Sun, Dec 29: 10am-12pm, 12:30-2:30pm, 3-5pm
 Mon, Dec 30: 10am-12pm, 12:30-2:30pm, 3-5pm
 Tues, Dec 31: 10am-12pm, 12:30-2:30pm, 3-5pm, 7-9pm
 Weds, Jan 1: 12:30-2:30pm, 3-5pm



We will be closed to the public starting at noon on Tuesday, December 24th until 9:00am on Thursday, January 2nd. We wish everyone a safe and wonderful holiday break!

November & December Anniversaries

- | | |
|---|--|
|  Donna Hansen
Front Office |  Anthony Maggio
Recreation Department |
|  Gordon Begent
Recreation Department |  Blake Cute
Cass Park |
|  James D'Alterio
Deputy Director |  Matthew Cwynar
Cass Park |



into my office throughout the day are a constant reminder of the importance of safe, welcoming places where people can play, learn, and grow. From our youngest participants in Tot Spot, exploring and socializing with other families, to our teen Youth Council Ambassadors, learning about the inner workings of government and finding ways to be engaged citizens, to our adults with disabilities, who come here for connection and skill-building—the Youth Bureau is a place where people of all ages and backgrounds come together. It is truly something special. If you've experienced this sense of community firsthand, I hope you'll share it with others and encourage them to join us. We are a community that is constantly evolving, but one thing remains consistent: the positive impact the Youth Bureau has on everyone who becomes part of it.

As we head into the new year, we're excited about the many projects moving forward at various stages of development and construction. The addition to the large pavilion at Stewart Park is nearly complete, and this spring, we'll be able to move day camp supplies and equipment into the space ahead of summer camp.

At the Youth Bureau, design work is nearly finished on a new main parking lot and entrance upgrades to better accommodate the many visitors we welcome daily. Construction on these upgrades is expected to begin this spring.

Design work is also progressing on two projects at Cass Park: the complete replacement of the large pavilion and neighboring restrooms, and the replacement of the restrooms and cold storage building at Union Fields. While construction on these projects will likely not begin until late 2025 or early 2026, they mark important steps forward. Additionally, the City's 2025 capital project budget includes funds to begin exploring



RSS Chorus Boards the Polar Express

Members of our Recreation Support Services Chorus recently put on their annual holiday concert for their families and members of the community. This year they took the audience with them on a magical journey aboard the Polar Express, traveling around the world with songs from different holiday traditions. As always, the chorus did a fantastic job and we can't wait to join them at their spring concert!



Tis The Season To Become A Mentor

This holiday season one of the best gifts you could give is your time. Research consistently shows that having just one caring adult in a

options for renovating the Youth Bureau building to better suit the needs of our current programs and support the growth of new ones.

We'll have much more to share about this project, including opportunities for community input, in the months ahead. Repairs and upgrades to the Cayuga Waterfront Trail and the Cass Park tennis courts are also anticipated in 2025.

We know there are many other facility needs that require attention. We're working closely with local, state, and federal partners to secure the funding needed to address years of deferred maintenance. I am deeply grateful to our facilities team for their tireless efforts to extend the life of our buildings and recreational amenities—a challenging but vital task.

As we close out 2024, I want to send my warmest wishes for a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Joyous Kwanzaa, or whatever traditions you and your family celebrate this time of year. I look forward to seeing you in the new year!

Sincerely,

Gregg Houck, Youth Bureau Director

child's life can significantly improve their mental health, social development, academic performance, and overall well-being, even in the face of challenging circumstances, with positive impacts lasting into adulthood; essentially, a single supportive adult can act as a protective factor against negative experiences and foster resilience in a child. Learn more at bbbsithaca.org!



College & Career Discovery Program needs male mentors for their 8th graders. Mentors must be 18+ and able to dedicate 2 hrs/week to spending quality time with their mentee. Orientation and support are provided. Mentoring is a rewarding experience that inspires growth, fosters confidence, and ignites potential in area youth!

Questions? Check out [Mentoring FAQs](#) or contact Daquan Rockett: (607) 273-8364 x2138 or drockett@cityofithaca.org

Bring Your Little Ones to Tot Spot!

Have you heard of Tot Spot, the YB's stay-and-play place for 1-5 year-olds and their grown-ups during the cold months in Ithaca? Tot Spot meets in the gym for free play with

the occasional event or special activity. It's a great way for little ones to get the wiggles out and for parents and caregivers to connect. Visit the [Tot Spot website](#) for additional information, costs, and guidelines.



Recreation Programs Make Great Gifts

Give the gift of an experience this holiday season by registering your child for a YB Rec sports or expressive arts program or ice skating lessons. They'll learn or further develop skills that will last them a lifetime. Select programs even offer Adult/Child classes so you can make memories together! Visit [Community Pass](#) to see what programs are available for your child to enjoy.

[Gift a Rec Program](#)

2024 Elks Hoop Shoot was a Slam Dunk!

This past weekend, area youth competed in the Ithaca Elks Lodge #636 annual Hoop Shoot contest. Participants shot free throws and our contest winners will continue to the regional Elks Hoop Shoot contest, with the chance to compete at the state and national levels if they continue to win. Congrats to all of our participants and thank you to the Ithaca Elks Lodge #636 for putting on another great event!



Warm Up with Board Games and Cocoa!

Ithaca Youth Bureau is having three family



board games and hot cocoa evenings throughout the winter! Mark your calendars for Friday, February 21st, March 21st, and April 17th.

Come with family or friends; we have games for all ages, from Memory to Ticket to Ride. We will even have toys to help keep infants occupied!

Register on [Community Pass!](#)

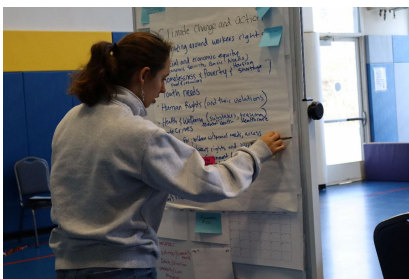


Youth Council Ambassadors is Underway

The 2024-2025 Youth Council Ambassadors (YCA) cohort launched their year with a full-day retreat in October. Thirteen Ambassadors came together to take part in team-building exercises, leadership development, and planning activities for the year ahead.



The group then visited City Hall, where they met with City Manager Deb Mohlenhoff to discuss the importance of local government and its impact. The day also included an in-depth discussion on current events at both national and local levels, setting the stage for their exploration of civic engagement and media literacy.



YCA is a group of local youth with a mission to listen and speak for the youth of Tompkins County.

A Message from Friends of the Ithaca Youth Bureau



Friends of the Ithaca Youth Bureau (FIYB) is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting the Ithaca Youth Bureau (IYB) in fulfilling its mission of offering Ithaca area participants from all backgrounds, walks of life, identities, abilities, and lived experiences a broad range of recreation and youth development services, supports, and opportunities to enable them to thrive.

IYB Director Gregg Houck expressed: "Now more than ever, it's vital to support our young people and their families. The Ithaca Youth Bureau's programs, whether in sports, arts, or job training, offer opportunities that help youth build confidence, resilience, and a sense of belonging."

Friends of the IYB (FIYB) supports IYB programs, facilities, and people!
[Friendsiyb.org/donate](https://www.friendsiyb.org/donate)

Can we count on you to unite with the IYB and FIYB to be best able to ensure that our community's children and youth have access to safe and healthy recreational and youth development opportunities?

Through the generosity of community members, Friends of the Ithaca Youth Bureau provided funding for the following IYB spring and summer program needs:

- Replaced three Cass Park soccer goals
- Provided new tents for the Outings Program's camping trips
- Increased resources for scholarships to families for their children to attend Cass and Stewart Park Day Camps
- Secured an additional Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) for the Recreation Division for use at Stewart Park Day Camp and to have on hand at youth sports programs
- Supported the Paul Schreurs Memorial Program's cultural enrichment trip to New York City

There are numerous ways you can unite with FIYB to show your support for the IYB! Gifts can be made online at <https://www.friendsiyb.org/donate> or by check mailed to: Friends of the Ithaca Youth Bureau PO Box 4198 Ithaca, NY 14852 In addition, FIYB can accept gifts of stocks and securities. Contact friendsiyb@gmail.com for further details. THANK YOU!

Gratefully, FIYB Board (Jeff Love, Mary Grainger, Allen Green, Eric Nichols)

[Donate to FIYB](https://www.friendsiyb.org/donate)



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