



Issue 23 / Q1 / 2024



## A MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

On a cold mid-January night, as snowflakes fell gently to the ground and the smell of bonfires and roasting marshmallows filled the air, hundreds of people gathered in a small park along the Detroit Riverfront. A seven-foot-tall chimney made of ice stood tall in front of the crowd. Torches were lit, and the ice came to life with fire. As flames and sparks reached high into the night sky, it cast a warm glow over the crowd. There was cheering and applause. Kids stood with their mouths agape at the unforgettable sight before them.

This was the scene at the Fire & Ice Festival, part of the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy's Winter at Valade series. If you were able to join us, you know it was a great party.

We like parties, and we're really good at hosting them. But we don't put this much work into our programming just because it's fun.

Winter can be a tough season. Winter in Detroit can be particularly difficult.

December is exciting because it leads up to the holidays and some vacation for the kids. When January hits, it's back to work, the sky turns gray for weeks at a time, and it can get discouraging. You see less of your friends and family and many people fall into depression or cycles of loneliness.

That's where we show up. Several years ago, community members started encouraging the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy to do programs in the winter. We sent our Senior Director of Programs and Public Spaces, Rachel Frierson, to Montreal to see how Canada celebrates winter. As we learned about how different cities bring people together when the weather turns cold, we knew we needed to provide more opportunities to people here in Detroit.

Winter at Valade looks like a few weekends of great parties (and I can assure you that these *are* great parties). But it's about more than that. It's about giving people something free and fun to do so that they don't spend all weekend on the couch in front of the television.

The Detroit Riverfront is a place where kids and adults can make new friends and get some exercise while doing it. It's about community, and reminding us that we're all in this together, we're all still here, and it won't stay cold and dark forever.

Spring is just around the corner.

The Detroit Riverfront brings us together. When we're together, we can get through anything.

Mark Wallace  
President & CEO



# CONSTRUCTION UPDATES

## RALPH C. WILSON, JR. CENTENNIAL PARK

A relatively mild winter allowed crews to make tremendous progress on the transformation of West Riverfront Park into Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park.

At the **William Davidson Sport House**, structural steel and concrete walls are complete. The metal roof deck is in place and installation of the membrane roofing is underway. In the coming months, crews will begin work on the placement of the concrete floor slab, the skylight covering and numerous interior finishes.

The site grading and topography across the entire **Delta Dental Play Garden** is now complete. Foundations for the play equipment are partially complete and many of the swings and slides are currently stored on site. The Monstrum play structures have shipped from Denmark and will arrive in April.

All major work on the **Huron-Clinton Metroparks Water Garden** is nearing completion. The pump station panel was just completed several weeks ago to allow water from the Detroit River to funnel into the Water Garden. Topsoil is expected to arrive in the middle of April followed by the installation of trees and decorative stone that will be placed around the water's edge.

Crews are currently grading the **DTE Foundation Hill** and raising the elevations to the proper levels.

The East Comfort Station is fully enclosed, and trades will complete interior finishes in the coming weeks. At the West Comfort Station, concrete walls and concrete floor slab is complete and trades are working on roofing with interior finishes to follow.

The sitework contractor is finalizing grading across the site, and placement of light pole bases is continuing. Additionally, the first shipment of trees have arrived and preparation to begin hardscape areas for walkways will begin over the next couple of weeks.

The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy is targeting a summer 2025 grand opening for Ralph Wilson Park.

## DDA PARCEL

Construction of the Riverwalk extension across the DDA parcel, which is located between Riverfront Towers and Ralph Wilson Park, is well underway. Now that all underground utilities are in place, light pole bases are set and limestone seating is strategically placed, crews will begin pouring the concrete walkway this spring. Light poles, security cameras, furnishings and landscaping will follow along with a temporary path that will be installed from the river's edge to Jefferson Avenue.

The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy is looking forward to celebrating the opening of this new stretch of Riverwalk, as well as the opening of the boardwalk in front of Riverfront Towers, in June.







Ralph Wilson Park Looking East to DDA Parcel



William Davidson Sport House



DDA Parcel



Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park From Above



# SPRING PROGRAMMING ALONG THE DETROIT RIVERFRONT

## Eclipse Viewing

**Date:** April 8

**Time:** 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

**Location:** Cullen Plaza

All are invited to come watch an almost total solar eclipse hit the Detroit area. At our special Eclipse Viewing event, participants will receive special solar eclipse viewing glasses and other fun goodies while we experience the first solar eclipse since 2017. Participants will look through a telescope, view an eclipse diagram, and learn more about how and why a solar eclipse happens.

## Sturgeon Day

**Date:** May 4

**Time:** 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

**Location:** Milliken State Park

Sturgeon Day is back this year to celebrate all things sturgeon at Milliken State Park on the Detroit Riverfront. Families can join us for this free event and see the amazing Lake Sturgeon up close and personal. The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge and staff from the Michigan DNR will be on hand to help educate visitors and provide demonstrations, learning activities and more. More fishing fun will be coming to the riverfront with the return of Kids Fishing Fest to Milliken State Park on June 9.

## Southwest Greenway Health Crawl

**Date:** May 11

**Time:** 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

**Location:** on the Southwest Greenway

As part of Mental Health Awareness Month, the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy will host a health and wellness “crawl” along the Southwest Greenway. The nearly one mile stretch will be filled with partner activations, fitness breaks, and resource tables for all ages. Visitors will be able to participate in activities such as healthy cooking demos, guided meditations, and drop in workout classes. The Southwest Greenway is located near the intersection of Bagley and Wabash and connects the Southwest Detroit and Corktown neighborhoods to the Detroit Riverfront.

## Riverfront Run

**Date:** June 8

**Time:** 10K 8:40 a.m. & 5K 9:00 a.m.

**Location:** Cullen Plaza

The Riverfront Run will kick off at Cullen Plaza again this year with 5K and 10K routes along the #1 Riverwalk in the US! Those who register for our 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Riverfront Run will receive a commemorative t-shirt and race medal, and we'll have free snacks and drinks to replenish after the race. Awards will be given to the top runner in each age category for both the 5K and 10K races. Registration for the Riverfront Run is now open. Visit <https://detroitriverfrontrun.com> for more information.

Visit [detroitriverfront.org/things-to-do](https://detroitriverfront.org/things-to-do)  
for a full list of programs and events.







## MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

May is Mental Health Awareness Month and the Conservancy is hosting a range of programming focused on mental health and mindfulness. Find all the details at [detroitriverfront.org/mentalhealth](http://detroitriverfront.org/mentalhealth)

### Labyrinth Walk

**Date:** Sunday, May 5

**Time:** 2:00 to 3:00 p.m.

**Location:** Gabriel Richard Park

Experience a guided meditation through the Labyrinth at Gabriel Richard Park.

### Southwest Greenway Health Crawl

**Date:** Saturday, May 11

**Time:** 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

**Location:** Southwest Greenway

Participate in health activations and activities all along the Southwest Greenway.

### Tone Matters: Sound Bowls 101

**Date:** Wednesday, May 22

**Time:** 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.

**Location:** Gabriel Richard Park

Explore the benefits of sound awareness.

### Working Well at Work from the Park

**Date:** Wednesday, May 29

**Time:** 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**Location:** Valade Park

Participate in wellness activities while working from Valade Park.



AWARENESS MONTH  
ON THE DETROIT RIVERFRONT



# SHIMMER ON THE RIVER 2024

## Shimmer on the River is back at Robert C. Valade Park

Kick off summer in style at the Conservancy's largest annual fundraiser, **Shimmer on the River**. Hosted on the Best Riverwalk in the USA, this unforgettable evening will be filled with all-ages fun, featuring live musical entertainment, a Riverfront Boardwalk lined with summer activities, a family-friendly Adventure Park, a Kids Dance Party on Valade Beach, delicious food and refreshments, and more! Join us as we celebrate the individuals and organizations who have supported our vision for a beautiful, safe, accessible, world-class gathering place for all.





# SHIMMER ON THE RIVER

JUNE 2024 | ROBERT C. VALADE PARK

5-6 PM VIP RECEPTION, 6-9 PM MAIN EVENT

## SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

### All Sponsors Receive

Recognition on DRFC website, in press release,  
and on promotional material

Inclusion in eblasts (30k+ subscribers)

Social media recognition (150k+ followers)

Listing on Sponsor Board at Shimmer

VIP tickets, which include exclusive VIP benefits

### Champions of the Conservancy

**\$10,000** 12 VIP tickets and a private chalet

### Riverwalk Partners

**\$5,000** 8 VIP tickets

### Shimmer Partners

**\$2,500** 6 VIP tickets

## TICKETS

### VIP Ticket | \$250

Includes access to the exclusive VIP Reception  
plus all Main Event benefits

### Main Event Ticket | \$150

Includes strolling dinner & refreshments, live entertainment, prizes,  
games, and free admission for up to two children 12-and-under

Visit [Detroitriverfront.org/Shimmer](https://detroitriverfront.org/Shimmer) to support this event and learn more!

## THANK YOU TO OUR SHIMMER SPONSORS

### PRESENTED BY

As of 3/7/2024

Friends of  
Robert C. Valade Park

### KIDS DANCE PARTY SPONSOR

Piston Group

### ADVENTURE PARK SPONSOR

Delta Dental

### CHAMPIONS OF THE CONSERVANCY

Matt & Karen Cullen, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, Visit Detroit

### RIVERWALK PARTNERS

A Kid Again, Diamond Jack's River Tours, Ralph & Erica Gerson, SmithGroup, Wolverine Packing Co.

### SHIMMER PARTNERS

MI Building & Construction Trades, Parade Company, Linda Schinkel Rodney & Theodore M. Schinkel

### IN-KIND PARTNERS

EXP Photo, Hour Detroit



Visit [Detroitriverfront.org/Shimmer](https://detroitriverfront.org/Shimmer) for up  
to date event information and to learn more.

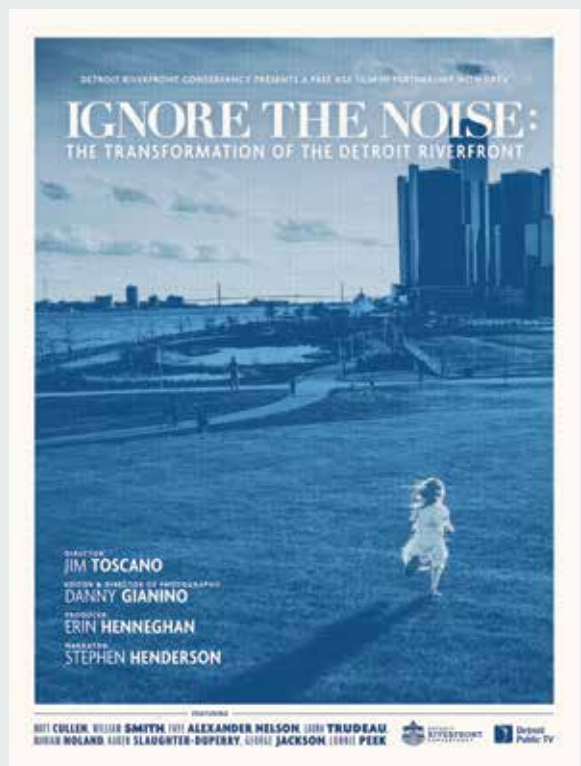


## RIVERFRONT DOCUMENTARY TO AIR ON DETROIT PUBLIC TELEVISION

On November 15, 2023, the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy, along with Detroit Public Television, premiered our first ever documentary film, “Ignore the Noise: The Transformation of the Detroit Riverfront” to a sold out crowd at the DIA’s Detroit Film Theatre.

Over 900 guests joined us to watch the one-hour film which tells the story of how the Detroit Riverfront evolved from industrial, blighted and underused to a vibrant world-class waterfront featuring parks, pathways and greenways.

Those who weren’t able to join us for the premiere event will have a chance to see the film airing on DPTV, April 29 at 9:00 p.m. Stay tuned for more opportunities to see “Ignore the Noise” on the big screen as we take the film to theaters across Michigan and the Midwest.



“Ignore the Noise:  
The Transformation of  
the Detroit Riverfront”  
is airing on DPTV,  
April 29 at 9 p.m.





# PARTNER SPOTLIGHTS

## DANCEABILITY DETROIT

**D**anceAbility Detroit is part of a global network of dance programs where people with and without disabilities dance together. It's a program of Detroit Disability Power (DDP), a local membership organization that works to build the political power of the disability community. DDP's DanceAbility artists Cara Graninger and Gwynneth VanLaven and their participants know that when people with diverse physical, cognitive and sensory abilities are included in dance, possibilities emerge that can't emerge in a homogenous group of movers. DanceAbility movement improvisation can be high-energy or slow and gentle, so come as you are to monthly drop in workshops at Cullen Plaza. For more information visit: <https://www.detroitdisabilitypower.org/danceability>

## DETROIT RIVER INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

**L**ocated in Trenton, the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge includes more than 6,000 acres of restored factory land along a critical migratory bird pathway. The only international wildlife refuge in North America, it was established in 2001 as part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In addition to conservation, the refuge team offers field trips for schools and youth-serving organizations, facilitates a wide variety of free public programs, and maintains groomed trails. The refuge team will once again partner with the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy for Sturgeon Day on May 4. For more information, visit: <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/detroit-river>



## DETROIT FOOD ACADEMY

**D**etroit Food Academy works to activate young Detroiters (ages 10-24) through culinary arts, wellness skills, and workforce readiness programs. DFA youth grow as holistic leaders who are healthy, connected, and powerful to affect change in our communities and beyond. Serving over 400 young Detroiters a year, DFA uses the universal connective power of food as a catalyst for youth to form community amongst their peers and caring adult mentors. Join DFA at the Southwest Greenway Health Crawl on May 11 and look for the Detroit Pop Shop at Detroit Riverfront events and around town to support the work of DFA. For more information visit: <https://www.detroitfoodacademy.org/>

## BLOOM TRANSFORMATION

**I**n the midst of Detroit's resurgence and transformation, it is more important than ever for people to have a safe, inclusive and empowering environment to achieve their own personal transformation. BLOOM Transformation Center, founded by clinical psychologist and Detroit native, Dr. Rose Moten, cultivates an opportunity for a new narrative of wellness. BLOOM Transformation Center offers traditional mental health services, as well as holistic services including soothing Sound Healing Meditation, revolutionary Trauma and Stress Release Training (TRE), community wellness workshops and more! The center is situated on Detroit's famed Riverwalk overlooking the beautiful Detroit River. For more information visit: <https://bloomtransformationcenter.com/>







## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

**Christina Ilijanic**

**T**welve years ago, Christina Ilijanic began looking for a way to give back to her Michigan community. She did some research, and after attending a volunteer orientation with the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy, she fell in love with the Conservancy's mission to develop five-and-a-half-miles of riverfront property from the Ambassador Bridge to Gabriel Richard Park.

"I loved the private and public partnership and how that came together," said Christina. "I love that they're on the path to completing bridge to bridge, but they aren't stopping after that. They are using green spaces to connect neighborhoods to the riverfront and expanding their offering of events to build community in Detroit."

Since she began volunteering on the riverfront, Christina has logged more than 473 volunteer hours with the Conservancy. While she's

always happy to help wherever needed, her favorite volunteer tasks involve working with kids at the arts and crafts tables or running carnival games.

Over the years, the riverfront has become an integral part of Christina's life. She even held her wedding reception at the Rattlesnake Club and took wedding photos at Cullen Plaza. It's also a place where she loves to take her two young children to enjoy the outdoors and the many events put on by the Conservancy.

"I think, for me, it kinda has become the heart of the city," said Christina. "I have so much love for the riverfront, and it's one of my favorite places in the world."

For Christina, one of her favorite parts of volunteering with the Conservancy is the people that she meets every day – be they visitors to the many parks and greenspaces or her fellow volunteers. For that reason, she would encourage anyone who is interested in volunteering to give it a try.

"Some of the best people I have met are volunteers with the Conservancy," said Christina. "I find it so impressive the way the other volunteers give back their time and energy. They are just wonderful people, and I can't say enough good things about them."







Interested in wearing  
your support of our  
efforts on your sleeve  
for all to see?

Check out [detroitriverfront.org/RiverfrontMerch](http://detroitriverfront.org/RiverfrontMerch) to purchase a wide variety of Detroit Riverfront gear, from Dequindre Cut hoodies, to Best Riverwalk T shirts and baby onesies.

## SUPPORTING THE DETROIT RIVERFRONT

Last year, we were given the opportunity to reflect on 20 years of transformation and all that we've accomplished, together, through our work at the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy. Hundreds of thousands of people joined us for programs on the riverfront and millions of visitors enjoyed the #1 Riverwalk in the US while out for walk or exploring the city. As we said goodbye to our landmark year and charged forward into the next, we didn't slow down one bit.

Our team is working hard to expand on our popular programming and find ways to bring new faces to the riverfront. Our operations crew are fully engaged in our parks and on the Riverwalk keeping our spaces clean and safe from morning until night. The construction at Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park is in full swing, where a new element of the park comes to life each day.

These efforts are only made possible by the support of our generous community. Every dollar donated, ticket purchased and sponsorship provided directly supports the ongoing work of programming, securing and transforming the Detroit Riverfront.

Every day we are reminded of the impact our work is having on the community and every day we are grateful for the support that makes this possible. Thank you for your commitment to the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy.



## ADDITIONAL WAYS TO GIVE

In addition to visiting our online store, 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
- 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)

## DONATE ONLINE







DETROIT  
**RIVERFRONT**  
CONSERVANCY

600 Renaissance Center Suite 1720 Detroit, MI 48243-1805  
313.566.8200 | [DETROITRIVERFRONT.ORG](http://DETROITRIVERFRONT.ORG)

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