



THE SWANSEA REPORT

VOLUME 31, ISSUE 11

NOVEMBER 2016

Thanks to Our Public Works Employees!

The Village is fortunate to have very talented and skilled employees, including those working in the Public Works Department.

While many of the larger components related to remodeling the new Government Center at 1444 Boul Avenue, such as roofing, plastering, HVAC, plumbing, ceilings and painting were awarded to outside contractors, there was a significant amount of work still performed by the Village's own employees. Those same employees then moved furniture and equipment to the new location and assembled it for the easy transition of staff to the new office.

As a result, the Village was able to stretch budget dollars and create a facility that should long serve our businesses and residents while providing a comfortable working environment for staff. While not plush by any means, the building strikes a balance between effectively, efficiently and economically providing public services.

We could not have done it as well without the hard work and dedication of those employees in the Public Works Department. Each tapped into their individual talents to contribute towards the final product.

We are pleased with the results. We hope you will be as well.

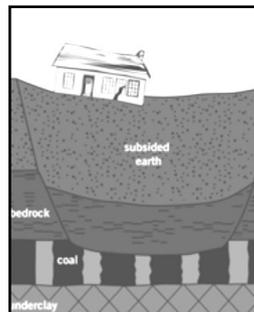
Subsidence Events Common In Swansea; Do You Have Insurance Coverage?

When the roof of a subsurface coal mine collapses, it causes the ground above it to sink or "subside". A number of these events have occurred in Swansea over the years and some are actively in play at this time, including one suspected event that is worsening in the commercial areas near IL Rte. 159 and Rosewood Village Drive.

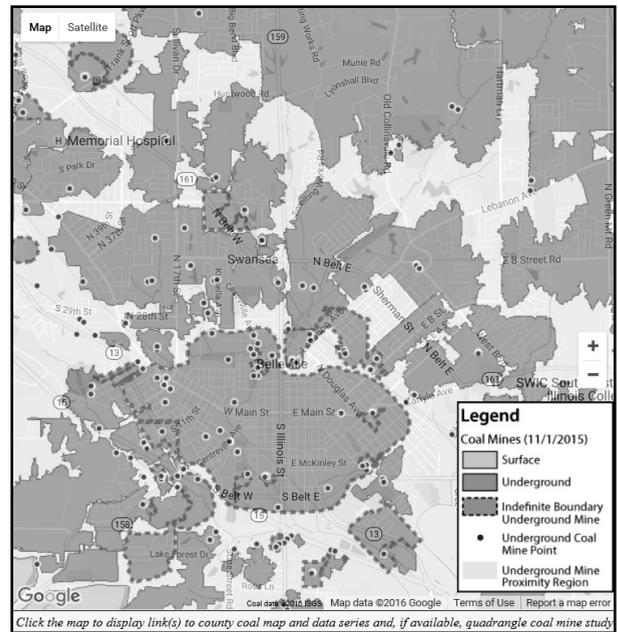
A quick look at the map to the right from the Illinois State Geological Survey website, illustrates that a significant portion of Swansea - actually most of St. Clair County - is

undermined. Most of these are "room and pillar" mines in which miners excavated coal in a sort of checkerboard pattern, leaving some pillars of coal to hold up the roof of the underground mine. But over the years, those 'pillars', can disintegrate and collapse into the mined void.

Most common is Sag Subsidence. It appears as a gentle depression in the ground that can then spread over a large area. This may occur suddenly, within hours or days. But gradual



movement may then continue for years. Damage can be hardly noticeable, or manifest as significant cracks in buildings and pavement.



Most experts agree that room and pillar mines will eventually experience some degree of collapse, but there is no way to know when or exactly where that will occur. It is safest to have mine subsidence insurance.

But you need to ask for this coverage. It typically is optional and if you have a subsidence event without it, repair costs would come out of pocket. The additional premium for a mine subsidence rider on a home valued at \$150,000 might be about \$60 per year.

For a good primer on subsidence, download the PDF pamphlet at <http://library.isgs.illinois.edu/Pubs/pdfs/circulars/c569-2013.pdf>.

An interactive mine map for the entire State of Illinois can be found at <http://isgs.illinois.edu/ilmines>.

News Briefs

Government Center Holiday Closings

Trash and Recycling Collection Will Be Delayed For Some

The Swansea Government Center and all non-emergency services of the Village will be closed on Friday, Nov 11th for Veteran's Day, and on Thursday and Friday, Nov 24th & 25th for the Thanksgiving holiday. No Village Board or committee meetings will be affected by the closings.

The Thanksgiving holiday also affects trash and recycling collection for some residents. If those items are normally collected at your home on Thursdays, collection will be on Friday instead. And if normally on Fridays, collection will be on Saturday instead. The Wed collection of yard waste will not change.

Swansea Police Department's K9 Leo To Get Body Armor

Leo, Swansea Police Department's police dog, is scheduled to receive a donated bullet and stab protection

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vest thanks to the not-for-profit organization Vested Interest in K9s, Inc. Established in 2009, the organization is a 501c (3) charity located in East Taunton, MA whose mission is to provide such vests and other assistance to dogs of law enforcement and related agencies throughout the United States.

Since its inception, Vested Interest in K9s, Inc. has provided over 2,000 protective vests, in 50 states, through private and corporate donations, at a cost of over \$1.7 million. All vests are custom made in the USA by Armor Express in Central Lake, MI.

Each vest has a value up to \$2,234 and comes with a five-year warranty. Leo's vest will be embroidered with the sentiment "In memory of K9 Ike Vancouver Police Department".

Leo's vest should be delivered within eight to ten weeks.

Swansea Fire and Police Host Successful Open House

The Fire and Police Departments joined forces on Sunday, Oct 9th, to host an open house and safety day. A large number of residents attended the event at Engine House #2 on Huntwood Road.

Both departments demonstrated specific tasks they perform including auto extrication and the use of police canine, Leo. Children participated in a bike rodeo, put out a 'fire' while dressed in kid sized bunker gear, jumped in a fire truck bounce house and were allowed to sit in fire, police and EMS vehicles. Free hot dogs, popcorn and snow cones were available to those attending. The Fire Department Civic Association covered the cost of the event.

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Swansea Family Christmas Program Helps Those In Need

About thirty years ago, the administrative staff at the Village of Swansea decided to 'adopt' a local family at Christmas rather than exchange gifts with each other. Out of that act grew the "Swansea Family Christmas" program.

Today this program helps many local Swansea residents in need by providing a holiday dinner and / or gifts. It is completely funded by donations from generous residents, local businesses and civic organizations, and administered by volunteers. In 2015, more than 70 Swansea families, representing 254 individuals, applied for and received assistance.

IF YOU NEED HELP

If because of job loss, illness, or some other reason, you may not be able to provide Christmas gifts or a decent meal for your loved ones and could use some assistance, please let the Village of Swansea know.

There are generous individuals, businesses, and organizations in Swansea who are willing to help

individuals and families in these situations. The Village assists that effort by gathering information from residents who need help, and then providing that information to volunteers who distribute gift cards and donations to those families.

In order to be eligible, applicants must be:

- Swansea residents,
- have a genuine need, and
- provide current proof of residency.

Applications will be accepted in person at the Swansea Government Center, 1444 Boul Avenue, in the Meeting Room between 8:30 am and 3:30 pm, on the following dates:

- Tuesday, November 29th
 - Wednesday, November 30th
 - Thursday, December 1st
 - Friday, December 2nd
- No late applications will be accepted.*

Applicants should bring both:

- A current, valid driver's license or State I.D. card **AND**
- A current public aid card, or current power, water, or sewer bill showing the same name and Swansea address as proof of residency.

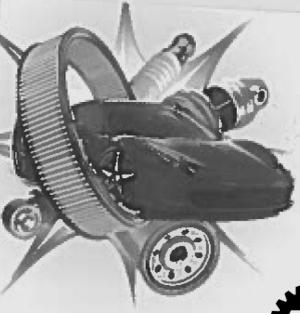
IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HELP

If you would like to help with this effort please consider a donation to the Swansea Family Christmas Program this year. Donations typically come from individuals, families, neighborhood associations, civic organizations, churches and businesses. While new toys and new clothing are always accepted, a donation of cash allows volunteers to purchase gift certificates which in turn allow families in need to purchase specific gifts for their children and buy food for their holiday meal.

Checks in any amount can be made payable to the "**Swansea Family Christmas Fund**" and mailed or delivered to the Swansea Government Center, 1444 Boul Ave. Please do so no later than **Thursday, Dec 8th.**

Any other donations may be dropped off to the same location. Please call the Village with any questions at 234-0044.





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News Briefs

Officers Commended For Life Saving Actions

Around midnight on July 15th, Police Officers Justin Schutzbach and Andrew Hewitt responded to a call of a man, possibly having a stroke, in a car on the Schnucks parking lot. On arrival, Officer Schutzbach remained with Gregory Hughes while Officer Hewitt went into Schnucks, obtained a bottle of aspirin and gave one to Hughes. EMS subsequently arrived and transported Hughes to Barnes-Jewish Hospital for treatment.

On Oct 3rd, Gregory Hughes was in attendance at the Village Board meeting to inform everyone that his doctor advised him that his quick recovery and lack of any long-term disabilities from the stroke are because of the astute actions of Officers Schutzbach and Hewitt. Hughes also wanted to be present and participate in recognizing both officers for their life-saving efforts.

Also noted: once EMS had assumed care, Officer Hewitt returned to Schnucks and paid for the aspirin with his own money.



Gary Reuter Sworn In As Additional Police Officer

In October, Mayor Ken Mueller swore in new Police Officer, Gary Reuter, who was hired off the recently established eligibility list. Reuter has

been an officer in Millstadt for the last 9 years but was originally from Swansea and a Swansea firefighter.

Reuter brings a great deal of experience to the Department. He is a certified K-9 handler, a juvenile officer, and lead homicide investigator. He started his field training with Swansea on Oct 11th. His addition to the force is intended to allow the Department to create a new position of School Resource Officer and assign a veteran officer to that position and duties.

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News Briefs

Yard Waste Burning Ends Nov 30th

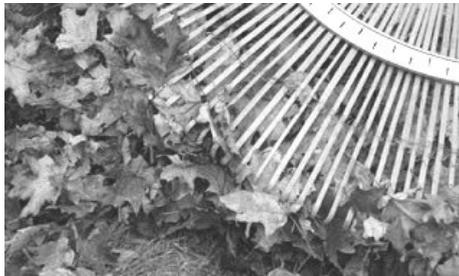
The last day allowed for the burning of yard waste in Swansea is Wed, Nov 30. After that date, burning will be banned again until next Spring.

This option for the disposal of yard waste is limited to only Wednesday's and Saturday's between 11:00am and 4:00pm. Any fire must be completely extinguished by 4:00pm each day, and any burning must occur on your property, and not along the edge of the Village's streets, on the Village's right-of-way, or in any ditch within that right-of-way.

Fires must be attended at all times and the Fire Department strongly encourages residents to refrain from burning on windy days when a small fire can quickly grow to be unmanageable and threaten your home and property. Residents may also want to be considerate of any neighbors with asthma or other conditions that might be aggravated by smoke from such burning.

Residents can of course mulch or compost leaves on site rather than burn, and there are other options also available. For example, those who have yard waste collection through Republic Services will continue to have that service available to them through the end of December.

For a fee, residents can also take yard waste to St. Louis Compost, located at 5841 Mine Haul Road. And some local companies, like Wilson's Landscaping & Lawn Service, at 106 Service Street, offer curbside/bulk leaf removal services, perhaps of interest to those who cannot remove the leaves themselves. The company can assist by performing complete leaf removal, or use their leaf vacuum machine to pick up leaves the resident has raked to the edge of the road. Their number 618-416-5393.



Swansea Fire Civic Association Selling Breast Cancer Awareness T-Shirts

The Civic Association of the Swansea Fire Dept. is selling T-shirts to increase awareness of breast cancer and raise funds to benefit the Siteman Cancer Center.



The pink on navy T-shirts are available for immediate pick up at Engine House #2 on Huntwood Road, or by email to whitakerjason@sbcglobal.net or bmcguire1978@hotmail.com. Cost is \$20 per shirt. In men's or women's shirt sizes from S-3X.

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Village Officials Deliberate Best Course of Action With Tax Levy a

The Village of Swansea has had a long tradition of keeping municipal tax rates low. Some might think otherwise because residents tend to look at their entire tax bill, which includes taxes collected for schools and other governmental entities as well as for the Village. But in reality the Village's specific portion of that bill is relatively small.

To provide an example, the median value of a home in Swansea is \$162,300. Assuming the assessed value is one third of that, or \$54,100, the Village's share of that owner's property taxes would only have been \$348.89 for 2015 taxes paid in 2016. Think of that as less than \$1 per day for all municipal services, including parks, police, fire protection, street maintenance and snow plowing.

Starting in the 1980's, Village officials prided themselves on keeping the tax rate steady from one year to the next. The Village was growing rapidly and many new homes and commercial buildings were being added to the tax roles each year. As a result, the same tax rate generated additional revenue each year to help with the Village's growing needs for services.

But the economic downturn of the last few years dramatically slowed growth and property assessments dropped. At the same time, the costs of 'doing business' continue to rise, for things like liability and health insurance, fuel, and mandated pensions. Holding down property tax rates was great for Swansea property owners for many years, but continuing that practice now would

make it more challenging to fund public services.

The Swansea Report previously carried an article about pension funds and the challenge of keeping them fully funded. As the tax levy approaches, the Board of Trustees are currently struggling with that challenge.

The 2015 property tax levy, for taxes payable in 2016, included \$73,931.64 for the Firefighter's Pension Tax and \$817,487.85 for the Police Pension Tax. Both were increased by the County from the amounts initially levied by the Village: \$71,001 and \$785,909 respectively.

But now the actuarial for the Fire Pension fund recommends that the Village levy a 2016 tax of \$208,325 - \$134,393.36 and 181.78% more than last year's extension. And the recommendation for the Police Pension fund is \$1,033,507 - \$216,019.15 or 26.42% higher than last year.

In essence, if the total equalized assessed value of property in Swansea remains the same, and if the Village levies the same tax for all other services funded through property taxes, the total levy would still need to be \$335,980 more than last year just to cover the police and fire pension recommendations. And those additional taxes really provide no additional services, nor enhance any existing services.

While the Village values both police and fire employees and believes both

deserve a retirement plan, the systems and the rules are mandated by the State of Illinois. Municipalities have no control over those rules, but are limited to simply writing checks and sending them in. In fact, if a municipality does not adequately fund either of these pensions, the State has the power to take other revenues from the municipality and redirect them towards funding their pension obligations.

More than a few elected officials at the local level find it ironic that Illinois can so diligently mandate local pension compliance, while many consider the State's own pension funds to be a 'disaster'.

Yet faced with this mandate, the Village of Swansea has few choices. One of course would be to try to find the additional \$356,000 needed by cutting other items in an already tight budget - taking the money from other revenue sources which cuts out some other budget items currently funded by that money. Another would be to try to raise revenue from a source other than property taxes. And a third would be to raise the tax levy to the recommended amount for these pension taxes.

Trustees have discussed doing the later. While their preference might be to maintain the same tax rate for residents, their role as trustee requires that they act in the best interest of the Village as a whole and to find the best balance between the impact on individual tax payers and the need to meet these financial obligations.

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Julie Wieggers, FNP-BC

and Requirements of Police & Fire Pensions

The Village could in fact fund its share of the pension plan for all other employees through property taxes, but does not. It could have levied over \$660,000 last year for its 'Corporate Fund Tax', but chose to only levy \$185,000. It only levied \$50,000 for worker's comp and liability insurance in 2015, while the cost is expected to be \$310,000 for 2017. And it funds its annual cost of \$125,000 for street lighting using Motor Fuel Tax funds, rather than a separate property tax. Each of these illustrate how Swansea has chosen to use other monies for expenses

that are allowed to be funded through designated property taxes.

Once the Board has determined its final estimate of the tax levies, it must announce those at least 20 days prior to passage of the tax levy ordinance. If the total exceeds 105% of last year's levy, it must also publish a 'display ad' notice and hold a public hearing, giving residents a chance to comment on the proposed levy. The final ordinance must be passed in December and a certified copy filed with the County Clerk before the last Tuesday of December.

Swansea's Taxes Among The Lowest

While there is a perception among some that the Village's taxes are high, property tax collected by Swansea is among the lowest in the area. The far right column in the chart below indicates the municipal property taxes paid in each of those communities by the owner of a home with a market value of \$162,300 - the median home value in Swansea. Where a community does not have its own fire protection, but is served by a fire district, that rate has been added to the municipal tax rate to make it comparable to Swansea, which has its own fire department.

As you can see, the owner of a \$162,300 home in Swansea paid \$348.89 this year for municipal services. But if that owner, and the same valued home, was instead in Cahokia, they would have paid \$3,463.86. In Belleville, they would have paid \$1,108.18. And in Highland, \$1,007.02. The home owner in Swansea would in fact pay the second lowest total tax.

Now suppose there are identical \$162,300 homes on Beau Gon Drive, one on the north in Fairview Heights and one on the south in Swansea. While Fairview Heights has no municipal property tax, their owner would still pay \$302 to Northwest Fire District, simply for fire protection. However, the Swansea owner on the south side gets fire protection as well as police and all other services with their overall Swansea tax.

Comparable Property Tax Rates

Municipality	Municipal Tax Rate	Fire District Tax Rate	Combined Tax Rate	Relative Tax On \$162,300 Home
Cahokia	5.9319	0.4708	6.4027	\$ 3,463.86
Belleville	2.0484	0.0000	2.0484	\$ 1,108.18
Highland	1.8614	0.0000	1.8614	\$ 1,007.02
Jerseyville	1.2708	0.2921	1.5629	\$ 845.55
Wood River	1.4577	0.0000	1.4577	\$ 788.62
Glen Carbon	0.8064	0.6419	1.4483	\$ 783.53
Mascoutah	1.4201	0.0000	1.4201	\$ 768.27
Bethalto	1.2178	0.0000	1.2178	\$ 658.83
Troy	0.7757	0.3644	1.1401	\$ 616.79
Columbia	0.7841	0.2500	1.0341	\$ 559.45
Maryville	0.9856	0.0000	0.9856	\$ 533.21
O'Fallon	0.8694	0.0000	0.8694	\$ 470.35
Waterloo	0.5399	0.3136	0.8535	\$ 461.73
Shiloh	0.1518	0.5066	0.6584	\$ 356.19
Swansea	0.6449	0.0000	0.6449	\$ 348.89
Fairview Heights	0.0000	0.5589	0.5589	\$ 302.36

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News Briefs

Village To Pass Credit Card Fees On To Users

For the convenience of residents, several years ago the Village of Swansea instituted a system for accepting credit cards, debit cards and on-line check processing for the payment of utility bills, purchase of trash stickers, and other financial transactions.

But each such transaction includes the payment of a convenience fee to the entity that processes those transactions on behalf of the Village. Since its inception, those fees have been absorbed by the Village. Yet the annual cost has grown to over \$27,000 in the last 12 months.

In essence, under this approach, all residents end up subsidizing that cost on behalf of the residents who actually use the option. In light of tightening budget constraints, the Village Board therefore adopted a resolution on Oct 17th that will now require the individuals using the convenience of those payment methods to pay the associated fees. While the Village receives none of that fee, the change will free up the \$27,000 for other budget needs.

In the future anyone paying by on-line check will be charged a flat fee of \$1.00 for each check processed. In addition, those using credit or debit cards either on-line or in person will be charged a fee equal to 2.75% of the transaction amount, plus \$.50 if the transaction is for an amount less than \$100.00.

Swansea Farmer's Market Wraps Up 8th Season

The Swansea Farmer's Market's 8th season came to a close at the end of October. The market saw many of its vendors from the past as well as some new ones - with an average of twenty vendors each Thursday. And every Thursday seemed to offer something new. Thank you to all who supported the market. They look forward to seeing you next May. For additional information: Norm Geolet President, 618-978-8753, swanseafarmersmarket@yahoo.com, or visit their Facebook page as Swansea Farmers.

Citizen Donating Police Support Sign Proceeds To PD

Local resident Jim Wolfe is selling 'Police Support' signs to residents for \$20 each, with 100% of the 'profit' and over 60% of the \$20.00 cost being donated to the Police Department to support the K-9 unit, or any of the other special programs the police have started.

If enough people are interested, Mr. Wolfe will buy another batch of signs and keep repeating the process to raise money to support the department. If you would like to support his efforts and the department as well by purchasing a sign call Jim Wolfe at 560-9758.

VILLAGE OF SWANSEA CONTACT INFO

Swansea Government Center
1444 Boul Avenue
Hours: 8:00am - 4:30pm, M-F
www.swanseail.org

**Administration,
Mayor's Office, Village Clerk,
Utility Billing & Public Works**
Phone: 618-234-0044
swanadmn@swanseail.org

Building, Zoning, Permits
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swanbnz@swanseail.org

**Swansea Police Department
Emergency: 911**
Non-emergency: 618-233-8114
swanseap@swanseail.org

**Swansea Fire Department
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Engine House: 618-234-3291

Village of Swansea Officials

President: Ken Mueller
mayor@swanseail.org

Village Clerk Lauren O'Neill
loneill@swanseail.org

Treasurer Michael W. Leopold
mleopold@swanseail.org

Trustee Matt Lanter
mlanter@swanseail.org

Trustee Brian McGuire
bmcguire@swanseail.org

Trustee Marilyn Neumeyer
mneumeyer@swanseail.org

Trustee Stephen Pulley
spulley@swanseail.org

Trustee Katherine Ruocco
kruocco@swanseail.org

Trustee Brian Wells
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If emailing multiple officials it may be best to also include swanadmn@swanseail.org among those email addresses so staff can help coordinate any requested response.



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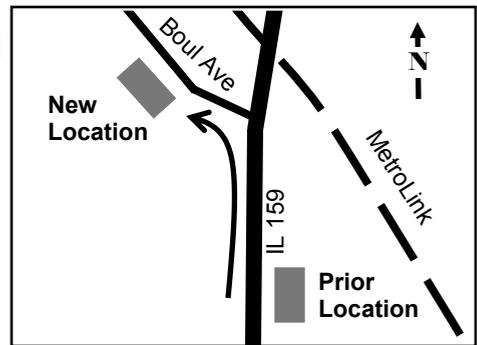
Government Center Open at New Location

It's finally official! The Village has relocated all elected, administrative, building / zoning, and sewer billing staff from 1400 N. Illinois Street to 1444 Boul Avenue. The new location is literally 'around the corner' and should be easy for anyone to find. It should also be easier for visitors to get in and out of the parking lot because the traffic volume is lower on Boul Avenue.

Main entrances are through two doors on the western side of the building. On meeting nights, those

attending will enter through a separate meeting room entrance on the eastern side of the building.

The vestibule will be locked and not accessible after hours, therefore a drop box has been added in the parking lot. Residents paying sewer bills or dropping off any other correspondence can easily do so by entering the parking lot on the east end, driving past the building to the western side in front of the flagpole, and deposit their payment/document without leaving their vehicle.



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News Briefs

Shop Local On Small Business Saturday

November 26th - the Saturday after Thanksgiving - has become "Small Business Saturday" in the U.S. - a day dedicated to supporting small businesses in local communities across the country. The concept originated with American Express in 2010, as an effort to help small businesses compete during the holiday shopping and dining season.

The Village of Swansea encourages residents to look for opportunities to support our locally owned and small businesses. Not only does it help those businesses and the people they employ, some of the sales taxes you pay on purchases made in Swansea come back to the Village.

That revenue helps to fund municipal services and offset the need for property taxes. So shop local every day!



Santa Arrives Dec 3

Santa plans to arrive at his special house in Melvin Price Memorial Park on Saturday, Dec. 3rd. While he may be busy at other times rechecking his list, he will be at his Swansea home from 1:00 pm until 5:00 pm on Saturday's and Sunday's, and from 6:00 pm until 8:00 pm each weekday evening, through December 22nd.

The house is the near the Lehr Community Center at the south end of the park. The park is in the 1500 block of Caseyville Ave.

Photos with Santa will be available for \$5.00, and every child will receive a small gift. The Swansea Santa House is sponsored by the Metro-East Regional Chamber of Commerce.



Santa could always use some extra help. If you might be interested, contact Marilyn Neumeyer at 234-6293 or 363-8694 for details.



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Swansea Community Calendar - November 2016

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4 Chamber of Commerce Morning Mingle 7:45am - 9:00am Recreation Center Fairview Heights Rec Center, 10025 Bunkum	5
6	7 Committee Meetings 6:00pm Govt. Center Village Board Meeting 7:30pm Govt. Center	8 Planning and Zoning Board Meeting 6:00pm Govt. Center	9	10	11  Veterans Day Veteran's Day Holiday Govt Center Closed	12 Swansea Park Board Meeting 7:00am Norman Lehr Center Swansea Patriots Meeting 8:00am Norman Lehr Center
13	14	15	16 Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours Sponsored by: Russell Stover Candies, 5:00-7:00pm	17	18	19
20	21 Committee Meetings 6:00pm Govt. Center Village Board Meeting 7:30pm Govt. Center	22	23	24  Happy Thanksgiving Thanksgiving Holidays		25 Govt Center Closed
27	28	29	30	26  SHOP SMALL Small Business Saturday Shop Swansea		
						

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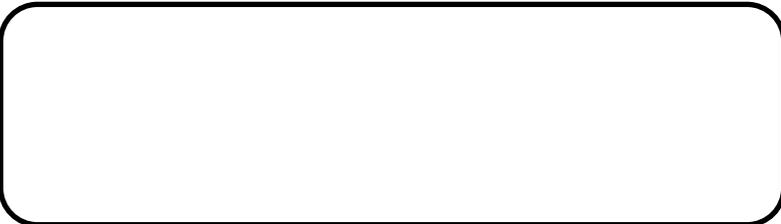
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