



**COOLEY PARK'S MURAL:
YOU CAN'T HELP BUT SMILE!**

Heather Williams | MAP Task Force 3 Chair

Thanks to local American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding allocated by the City of Muncie and managed by the Muncie Action Plan, several neighborhoods across Muncie are enjoying vibrant new public art this summer.

At Cooley Park, the Southside Neighborhood Association contracted talented artist Bryan Ballinger of breadwig.com to design and install a lively new mural. The artwork directly reflects community input gathered through multiple public conversations and voting opportunities, brought to life with the dedicated support of neighborhood association board members, city officials, and third-party consultant Marissa Byers.

The result is a transformative addition to the neighborhood. As Southside Neighborhood Association President Courtney Marsh noted, the mural energizes the park and brings a smile to everyone who visits.

NEIGHBORHOOD EVENTS

Historic Beech Grove Cemetery Tour

The Old West End Neighborhood Association
October 10th | 3:30–7 PM
Tickets are available on Eventbrite and may also be purchased at the Main Gate the day of the event until 6:30 PM.

50th Annual Old Washington St. Festival

The East Central Neighborhood Association
September 19th, 11–6 PM | September 20th, 11–5 PM
Washington St. from Madison to Hackley

Muncie's Bridge Dinner

September 17th | 5:30–7:30 PM
West Washington St. Bridge

Muncie Porch Parties

October 3rd | 3–6 PM
Locations within the Old West End neighborhood



**HALTEMAN PARK:
A NEW PLACE TO PARTY**

J.P. Hall

Halteman Park has changed significantly over the past several years, thanks largely to neighbors who came together around a shared vision for the space. New playground equipment, a walking path, landscaping, benches, shade structures, and other improvements have helped turn the park into a more active neighborhood gathering place. This summer's Halteman Park Party continued that work in another way -- bringing neighbors together to enjoy the park, meet one another, and build the relationships that make a neighborhood more than just a collection of houses.

FALL CLEANUPS

September 19th

McKinley | 8:00 AM
@ Destiny Christian Academy, 700 N. Jefferson St.

Industry | 8:00 AM
7:45 AM Breakfast @ Heekin Park Cabin, 9th and Penn St.

September 26th

Old West End | 7:45 AM
@ Clifton Wallace Park, 509 W. Charles St.

Whitely | 7:30 AM
@ Buley Center, 111 N. Penn St.



West Washington Street Bridge



Congerville (South Mulberry Street)

THE GREAT FLOOD OF 2026

Chris Flook

The heavy rains of August 2026 caused one of the most significant floods Muncie has experienced since the Great Depression.

One way to understand its historical context is through river flood crests: the max height reached by the river during a flood. The National Weather Service monitors the height of the White River in Muncie at a gauge near Minnetrista, west of the Walnut Street Bridge.

Reliable records for Muncie crests date to 1904. On Aug. 13, 2026 the river crested at 18.64 feet. NWS considers the major flood stage at 15 feet. This makes the Great Flood of 2026 the seventh-highest crest on record and the highest in 89 years. The last highest crest came in January 1937, when the river reached 21.07 feet.

The overall record crest for Muncie remains the Great Flood of 1913, when the White River crested at 22.6 feet on March 25. In Muncie, flood waters destroyed parts of Whitely, McKinley, Riverside City and West Side neighborhoods.

Direct comparisons with pre-1950 floods are imperfect. Beginning in the 1930s, federal flood-control projects widened, deepened and straightened portions of the river through Muncie. The Army Corps of Engineers completed levee and floodwall construction around 1950. Before last week, the highest post-levee crest was 14.98 feet in April 1964.

Even with those protections, flooding spread across Delaware County in August. Water entered homes along Burlington Pike and in the Irvington Addition; flooded McCulloch and Westside parks; affected low areas along York Prairie Creek, Buck Creek and the Southside; and inundated homes and the library in Yorktown. Farmland and low-lying roads throughout the county were also submerged.

The full scope of the Great Flood of 2026 will become clearer in the months ahead. For now, I'm grateful for our community's response and a durable levee system that passed a historic test of its limits.



STEP BACK IN TIME AND CELEBRATE 50 YEARS OF THE OLD WASHINGTON STREET FESTIVAL IN MUNCIE, INDIANA SEPTEMBER 19TH AND 20TH!

Kim Miller

Held on Washington St in the historic East Central Neighborhood, the festival celebrates the history, architecture, and community that have helped shape Muncie for generations. What began 50 years ago has grown into a beloved annual tradition that welcomes visitors from near and far.

This year's festival brings the past and present together with live entertainment, local food, handmade arts and crafts,

historic home tours, and activities for all ages. Take a stroll through the historic neighborhood, discover local treasures, enjoy great music, and experience the welcoming spirit that makes this festival special. To learn more visit our Facebook page at Old Washington Street Festival.

Come celebrate 50 years of history, community, and tradition at the Old Washington Street Festival!

ROOTED IN LOVE: MARY KULT'S MAGIC KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM LEADS WITH LOVE

Kate H. Elliot

Nearly every day, young Mary Kult would climb into a treehouse built into the corner of her kindergarten classroom, sinking into a bean bag to read. Inspired by her own teacher's warmth, Mary knew early on that she wanted to create a classroom of her own—one that was safe, loving, and kind.

For the past eight years, Mary has done just that as a kindergarten teacher at South View Elementary. Her selfless energy and commitment to her students earned her Muncie Community Schools' 2024–25 Teacher of the Year for primary grades. MCS Director of Public Education and CEO Chuck Reynolds highlighted her exceptional classroom management and positive leadership, while South View Principal Casey Smitherman called watching Mary in action “pure magic.”

A Ball State alumna with a master's in education focusing on literacy, Mary leads with love on both the best and hardest days. "No matter the day or situation," she said, her students know they are safe, valued, and free to be themselves.

That dedication extends beyond the classroom walls. Recognizing how many of her students rely on the Boys and Girls Clubs of Muncie for after-school care, homework help, and summer programming, Mary chose to direct her \$20 Twenty Forward grant to the local nonprofit. She was particularly impressed by their initiative to send a representative to South View during recess to lead structured group activities and support students during free play.

“The Boys and Girls Clubs of Muncie has a direct impact on the students I work with each day,” Mary shared. “I hope this inspires others to invest in their after-school and summer programming.” By fostering strong relationships and community connections, Mary hopes to equip her students to become contributing, engaged members of the community who inspire the next generation.

MUNCIE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS CELEBRATE READING IMPROVEMENTS

Muncie Community Schools (MCS) students continue to make major gains in literacy. The latest Indiana Reading Evaluation and Determination (IREAD) assessment results show that 86.0% of MCS third graders demonstrated proficient reading skills—a nearly 7% jump over last year and a 16.2% improvement since 2024.

For the first time since MCS partnered with Ball State University in 2018, all six district elementary schools scored above 80%, led by Grissom Elementary at 89.7% and Longfellow Elementary, which saw a dramatic 15.8% leap to 83.7%.

“It just goes to show what can happen when people buy into a plan, and then work together to execute it,” said MCS Director of Public Education and CEO Dr. Chuck Reynolds.

District leadership attributes this sustained growth to dedicated educators, strong family involvement, and community partnerships—including Cradle to Career Muncie, Heart of Indiana United Way, and the Kiwanis Club of Muncie. Through these united efforts, Muncie's young learners are building the critical reading foundation needed for lifelong success.

This article is an excerpt of the full press release published on August 28th, which can be found on the www.muncie.k12.in.us website.



A MILESTONE FOR MUNCIE: WHITELY COMMUNITY COUNCIL CELEBRATES CENTENNIAL RESOURCE HUB GROUNDBREAKING

Frank Scott

On August 22, 2026, the Whitely Community Council (WCC) marked a monumental step forward with the groundbreaking ceremony for Phase I of the Centennial Resource Hub at 1208 E. Centennial Avenue. Community members, civic leaders, and local partners gathered to celebrate the transformation of the site into a multi-purpose space dedicated to health, education, and economic empowerment.

Located along East Centennial Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, the \$4.75 million development stands on property acquired by WCC in 2018. Once completed, the Hub will house a food pantry and commercial kitchen, educational tutoring spaces, business incubator facilities, and a walk-in health clinic operated by Open Door Health Services.

Having raised \$4 million toward its goal to initiate Phase I construction, WCC Executive Director Ken Hudson emphasized that the project represents years of listening and planning alongside local families. Board Chair Frank Scott noted that investing in neighborhood infrastructure strengthens Muncie for generations to come.

The Centennial Resource Hub promises to serve as a vital lifeline, empowering residents and fostering long-term community revitalization. To learn more or support Phase II fundraising, visit whitelycc.org.



To read the full article and discover more inspiring community stories, visit <https://muncineighborhoods.org/2026/04/10/twenty-forward/>.

