



Vol. 2, No. 2
Winter 2026

The Village Grapevine

A PUBLICATION OF THE VILLAGE OF YELLOW SPRINGS



Thank you, Lance Rudegear, for decades of dedication to a beloved Yellow Springs tradition.

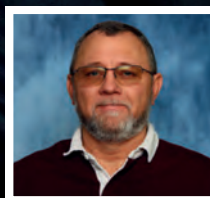
As we enter 2026, Yellow Springs enters a period of transition and opportunity. The turning of the calendar invites reflection on the past year while setting the stage for new and renewed leadership, continued investment in infrastructure and public services, and ongoing community collaboration in the months ahead.

2026 brings three new Village Council members and a new Mayor, as well as three newly seated school board members and one new township trustee. These changes reflect the ongoing civic engagement of our residents and the shared responsibility for responsive governance and public service to guide Yellow Springs into the future.

At the same time, important long-term projects continue to move forward. Work on the center circuit project represents a significant investment in the reliability and resilience of our electric system, creating an entirely new circuit to better serve the community and support both residential and economic growth. While much of this work happens behind the scenes, it is essential to supporting daily life in the Village and planning responsibly for the years ahead.

As the new year begins, the Village remains focused on transparency, collaboration and careful stewardship of community resources. Together we will continue building on the strengths of Yellow Springs while preparing for the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

We hope you enjoyed the holiday season and we wish you all the best in this new year.



JOHNNIE BURNS
VILLAGE MANAGER



Yellow Springs Hosts GDMMA

In January, Yellow Springs hosted the first 2025 Greater Dayton Mayors and Managers Association meeting, welcoming regional leaders to highlight local achievements and strengthen partnerships across the Miami Valley.



Diamond Status Reliability

The Village's electric utility was featured by the American Public Power Association, highlighting nearly 100 years of service, system upgrades, a Diamond-level reliability designation, and 100% renewable energy.



Community Space @ Short St.

Starting in June, the Village tested a new use of Short Street as a community gathering space, supporting walkability, safety, and downtown activity.



Ohio EPA Partnership

This year, Yellow Springs advanced its lead pipe replacement project, celebrating a partnership with the Ohio EPA that secured critical funding and modernized infrastructure without added cost to residents.



365 Project Collaboration

The 365 Project and Public Works installed new downtown plaques recognizing sites central to Yellow Springs' Black history, honoring the people, places, and stories that shaped our community.



YSConnect App Launch

In May, the Village launched YSConnect, a free mobile app delivering non-emergency alerts on closures, events, services, and Public Works updates, helping residents stay informed in real time.



Light Up Navajo Initiative

In July, Village electric staff joined the Light Up Navajo Initiative, partnering with the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority to bring electricity to homes without power, with support from Council and AMP.



Victim Advocacy Expansion

This year, the YSPD grew from one to two Community Outreach Specialist positions, greatly increasing the capacity to serve the community and expand victim advocacy services. Danny Steck, pictured here, joins Florence Randolph in these roles.



Welcoming New Leaders

Please join us in welcoming our newly elected Village Council members and Mayor. We're excited to work together as they step into their roles and help guide the future of Yellow Springs. Thank you to all who participated in this year's election.

Village Council



Gavin DeVore Leonard
President



Angie Hsu
Vice President



Carmen Brown



Senay Semere



Stephanie Pearce

Village Mayor

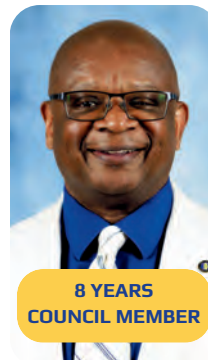


Steve McQueen

Outgoing Council Members & Mayor



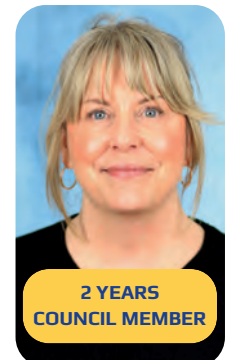
Brian Housh



Kevin Stokes



Pam Conine



Trish Gustafson

Thank you for your years of service!



Vision for the Village

In 2017, Ben Sparks, the Village’s Superintendent of Electric and Water Distribution, began anticipating the needs of a growing community when Cresco Labs was approved to build a 50,000-square-foot medical marijuana facility at the Village’s Center for Business and Education (CBE).

At the time, Sparks wondered, “How can we get the CBE fed with enough power if more big companies come here?”

That question proved insightful. Other areas of growth have occurred in the village since Cresco Labs began operations, most notably the Spring Meadows neighborhood, with proposed developments on the horizon.

In addition to construction of new homes and facilities, existing homes and businesses draw more power than in years past, as the prevalence of products such as electric vehicles and consumer electronics have steadily increased. Taken collectively, there is both a present and upcoming need for expanded electric distribution.

“What really put the icing on the cake was when Spring Meadows went in,” Sparks says. “I knew something had to happen.”

What happened was the concept and design for what is now referred to as the “center circuit.” The Village’s power distribution is currently accomplished by an “east circuit” and a “west circuit,” each providing electric service to their respective sides of the community. The center circuit will not only provide power directly to Spring Meadows and other neighborhoods near the middle of the village but will also help to supplement electric demands of both the east and west circuits.

The ability to distribute power along the center circuit will be especially important when it comes to alleviating the demand of the west circuit, which currently provides electric service to several sites with significant draw. Cresco Labs, the Village’s Water Treatment Plant, the recently constructed Miami Township Fire-Rescue station and a newly remodeled Yellow Springs High School are all on the west circuit.

Once the new center circuit is completed, the Village will be prepared for increased demand from both current and future customers. Years of research and planning are now being realized, and the Village is enjoying the benefits of Sparks’ proactive approach.

One unintended benefit of having the plan for a center circuit in place prior to the proposal for the Spring Meadows development was that it allowed the site’s developer, DDC Management, LLC, to share in the cost of implementing the Village’s expansion of electric distribution. This allowed Sparks and his team, in addition to planning a new center circuit, to ensure that crucial elements of the Village’s electric system, most notably the switch station, are reinforced.

“Everything will basically be brand new,” said Sparks. “We’ll be sitting pretty for years to come, and if there’s ever more expansion needed here at the switch station, we have a design now where we can go in that direction.”



Ben Sparks, Superintendent of Electric and Water Distribution,
at the Village switch station.

More Than a Place to Live

For more than forty years, Friends Care Community has been an essential part of life in Yellow Springs, quietly providing compassionate, high-quality care while providing a welcoming, vibrant, and homelike environment.

Friends Care Community traces its roots to 1977, when the Yellow Springs Friends Meeting, the meeting of the Quaker community in Yellow Springs, recognized a clear need for a local nursing home and mobilized community support to make it happen. The Friends Health Care Association was formed that year as a nonprofit organization, and Friends Care Community opened in August 1980, offering 50 beds for skilled long-term care.

From the start, Friends Care has been locally grounded. Its Board of Trustees is made up of community members, with ongoing involvement from the Friends Meeting, ensuring decisions are guided by mission rather than profit and reinforcing a long-standing commitment to dignity, respect, and person-centered care.

As community needs evolved, Friends Care expanded to include assisted living in 1999 and independent living cottages in 2002, becoming a Continuing Care Retirement Community offering independent living, assisted living, and skilled nursing on one campus. Today, the community serves about 90 residents from Yellow Springs and across the Miami Valley while remaining deeply connected to village life.

What truly sets Friends Care apart is its culture. Recently retired administrator Mike Montgomery, who spent more than eight years with Friends Care, emphasizes that, "Resident centered care is



Exterior view of Friends Care Community.

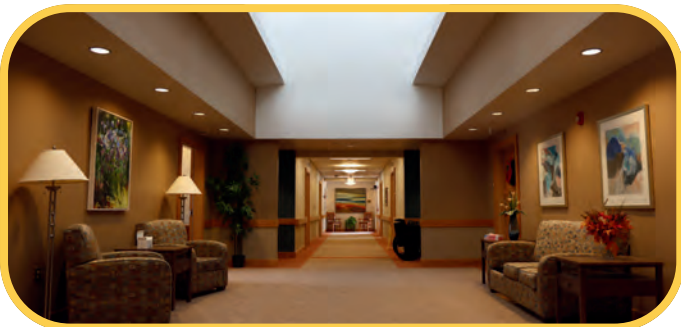
important to everybody here. We put our residents first, from the housekeeper to the board of directors." Staff are encouraged not only to meet medical needs, but also to spend time talking, playing games, walking outdoors, or simply sitting with residents. These small moments make a big difference.

That philosophy extends to life's most difficult moments through the Walk of Honor, a tradition in which staff and residents line the halls to accompany a resident who has passed away. It is a powerful reflection of the respect and humanity that define the community.

Friends Care's commitment to quality is reflected in outcomes. The facility consistently earns a five-star rating from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and experienced zero positive COVID-19 cases among residents during the height of the pandemic, a distinction shared by fewer than one percent of skilled nursing facilities nationwide.

While nonprofit senior care facilities face growing challenges nationwide, Friends Care continues to thrive thanks to its mission-driven focus and extraordinary staff. It remains one of the brightest examples of compassion, dedication, and excellence in our community.

Friends Care Community is a critical piece of the Yellow Springs community. Those interested in volunteering or supporting Friends Care are encouraged to contact Volunteer Coordinator Kelli Baxter at kbaxter@friendshealthcare.org.



Interior view of Friends Care Community.



New Faces at the Village



Darius Brown
Utility Service Worker



Erin Groom
YSPD Dispatcher



Wesley McAfee
Water Dist. Utility Service Worker



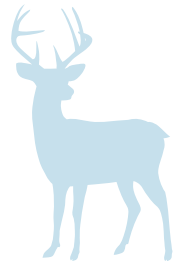
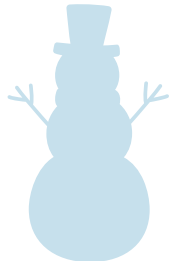
Mike Werling
Utility Service Worker



Kori Whittaker
YSPD Dispatcher

Resident and staff member Kori Whittaker recently made the transition from utility clerk to YSPD dispatcher.

With a lifelong interest in criminal justice, she is excited to serve the community in this new capacity.



Winter Tips



Winter in Yellow Springs can be beautiful, but it can also be slippery! Our Police Department shares these essential tips to help you stay safe this season:



On the Roads:

- Snow and ice may be present even when roads look clear. Slow down and give yourself extra space, especially when stopping or turning.
- Clear all snow and ice from your car, including the roof, lights, and license plate, before hitting the road.
- Keep your gas tank at least half full. This helps ensure you won't get stranded in bad weather and prevents moisture in your fuel lines from freezing.

Around Your Home:

- Keep walkways and steps free of snow and ice to prevent slips and falls.
- Check the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors – especially important when heaters and fireplaces are in use.
- Prevent frozen pipes by letting faucets drip slightly during very cold weather to keep water flowing and avoid pipe bursts.



A little preparation goes a long way toward a safe and enjoyable winter.
Stay warm, stay safe, and enjoy the rest of the season!

For more information and updates, please follow the official YSPD Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/YellowSpringsPD



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Village of Yellow Springs

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Carmen Brown, Council Member
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Senay Semere, Council Member
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Stephanie Pearce, Council Member
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Judy Kintner, Council Clerk
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Aaron Arellano, Planning & Econ. Dev. Coord.
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767-7206

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MacKenzie Baird, Clerk of Mayor's Court
mackenzie.baird@yellowsprings.gov

PUBLIC MEETING SCHEDULE

Village Council

First & Third Mondays at 6:00 PM

Planning Commission

Second Tuesdays at 6:00 PM

Environmental Commission

Currently on Hiatus

Public Arts and Culture Commission

First Tuesday at 6:30 PM

Check out our YouTube channel to watch livestreams of
Village Council and Planning Commission meetings:
youtube.com/@yellowspringscommunityaccess



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TAP LINK



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