SOUTH HOLLAND Living

Sept | Oct 2026



Back to School

Outside-the-Box Learning on the Playground

The Village of South Holland
Faith, Family, & Future

Join us for a fun and entertaining 5K run/walk through the streets of South Holland!

2026 SOUTH HOLLAND FUN RUN 5K



~ Celebrating 20 years of a 5K in South Holland! ~

Saturday, September 19
Opening Ceremony: 7am
Veterans Memorial Park • 500 E 160th Place

- Costumes/Accessories Encouraged
- Finisher's Medals
- Cash Prizes
- "Fun" Stations Along the Course!

Register Today!

Sign up at southholland.org

FROM YOUR MAYOR



Mayor De Graff with the 2026 Red Tulip Teacher Appreciation Award winners

Dear South Holland Residents and Friends,

It's hard to believe summer is over and we're already well into our school year. It always goes so fast! This summer has certainly been memorable. Together we've experienced weeks of extreme heat, along with a number of unforeseen storms that brought excessive rainfall, high winds, toppled trees, and extreme flooding. We're very thankful that no lives were lost. Two of the most horrific storms headed just south of us, and we're thankful the Village had the opportunity to share our Public Works staff and equipment with neighboring communities devastated by the storm.

As the new school year begins, this issue of *South Holland Living* highlights some of the innovative educational opportunities available throughout our community. The South Holland Education Commission continues to support our public and private schools, while ongoing collaboration with education leaders helps ensure that South Holland's schools remain innovative, creative, and welcoming to our young families.

The quality of a community is most often measured by its "streets and schools," and South Holland–with our very low crime rate, safe streets, and ever-improving educational rankings–continues to stand out as one of the most attractive communities in the Chicago Southland region. Without a doubt, South Holland is the best community to raise a family and enjoy a high quality of life, with Faith and Family values at the heart of who we are and what we do.

Enjoy this excellent issue, celebrating the fun events and activities enjoyed throughout the summer and inviting everyone to participate in our upcoming programs and gatherings taking place through the end of 2026.

Don A. De Graff
Mayor

VILLAGE BOARD

President
Don A. De Graff

Clerk
Dr. Sallie Penman

Trustees
Larry De Young
Andrew Johnson, Jr.
Cynthia Nylen
Vickie Perkins
Prince Reed
John Russell

ADMINISTRATION

Village Administrator
J. Wynsma

Deputy Village Administrator
Pat Mahon

EDITORIAL STAFF

Director of Communications
Julia Huisman

Contributing Writers
Josh Bootsma
Carrie Steinweg
Ronda Williams

Photographers
Josh Bootsma
David Bustos
Manuel Corazzari
Angela Jackson
Michael McGee

Designer
Jenni Hoekstra

Printed in South Holland at Park Press 930 E 162nd Street

©2026 Village of South Holland

WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND SOUTH HOLLAND



QUICK TRIP RIBBON CUTTING

The Village welcomed a brand-new QuikTrip travel center with a ribbon-cutting this summer. Located at 710 West 172nd St, the new location offers fuel, fresh made-to-order food, coffee, and grab-and-go options for residents and travelers alike. Please join us in welcoming QuikTrip to South Holland!



GARBAGE TOTER GUIDELINES

To help keep our neighborhoods clean and attractive, the Village has updated its rules for storing garbage and recycling containers.

- Store containers in a side yard or rear yard.
- Containers must be placed directly against your house, garage, or another accessory structure.
- Do not store containers between the front of your home and the street.
- Do not place containers in front of garage doors.
- Containers must remain behind the projected building line of your home or garage.
- Containers should be stored in a location where odors do not impact neighboring properties.

Thank you for helping keep our village looking its best. For complete details on the Village's property maintenance regulations, visit southholland.org.



HOW TO SUBMIT A POLICE TIP

The South Holland Police Department offers two convenient ways to share information that can help protect our community:

Phone Tip Line: Call 833.805.0187 to submit information directly.
Online Tip Submission: Share tips anonymously through our secure online system at southholland.org.

Anonymous tips allow you to report crimes or suspicious activity without revealing your identity. Your information, big or small, can make a difference in keeping South Holland safe.







HARVEST FEST

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29
6:00-7:30PM
SOUTH HOLLAND COMMUNITY CENTER

- Costume judging contest
- Candy bags (while supplies last)
- Games for children ages 3-12
- Craft projects
- Pumpkin decorating (bring a pumpkin from home)



Pre-registration is required. Register at the Community Center.
SPACE IS LIMITED!
This event is for South Holland Residents only. ID is required for registration.

FACES FROM EVENTS AROUND THE VILLAGE

COMING TOGETHER ON JUNETEENTH

The South Holland Ministerial Association and the Village of South Holland joined forces to host the 3rd Annual Coming Together on Juneteenth celebration in Veterans Park. The event honored the rich history, culture, and freedom of African Americans, featuring live music, an Underground Railroad presentation, vendors, food, and more.













FACES FROM EVENTS AROUND THE VILLAGE

CONCERT IN THE PARK

This summer, the Village hosted two concerts at Veterans Park. The first was a blues concert featuring Chicago Blues Lifters, and the second brought lively house music courtesy of DJs Hula Mahone and Maurice Joshua. In true Ravinia-style fashion, guests were invited to bring their own food and drinks, spread out on the lawn, and enjoy the music.















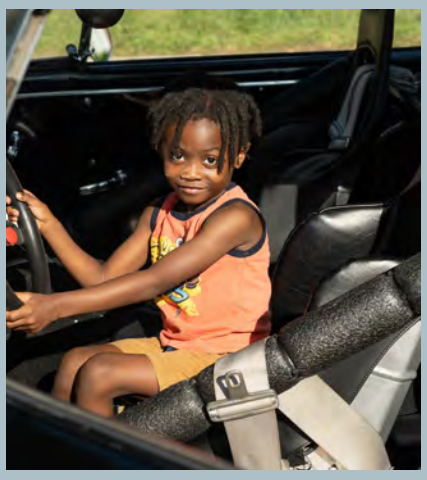
FACES FROM EVENTS AROUND THE VILLAGE

CRUISE NIGHT

This summer's two Cruise Nights, held in July and August, drew hundreds of visitors to South Park Avenue. Guests strolled the street to admire the classic, custom, antique, and exotic cars on display. Both events featured music, food trucks, and gas card giveaways.











FACES FROM EVENTS AROUND THE VILLAGE

EDUCATION FAIR

This year marked the 10th year of the Education Fair, held by the South Holland Education Commission. More than 30 organizations filled the South Holland Community Center, providing resources for students of all ages. Families in attendance also enjoyed food, face painting, raffle prizes, and free dental exams.









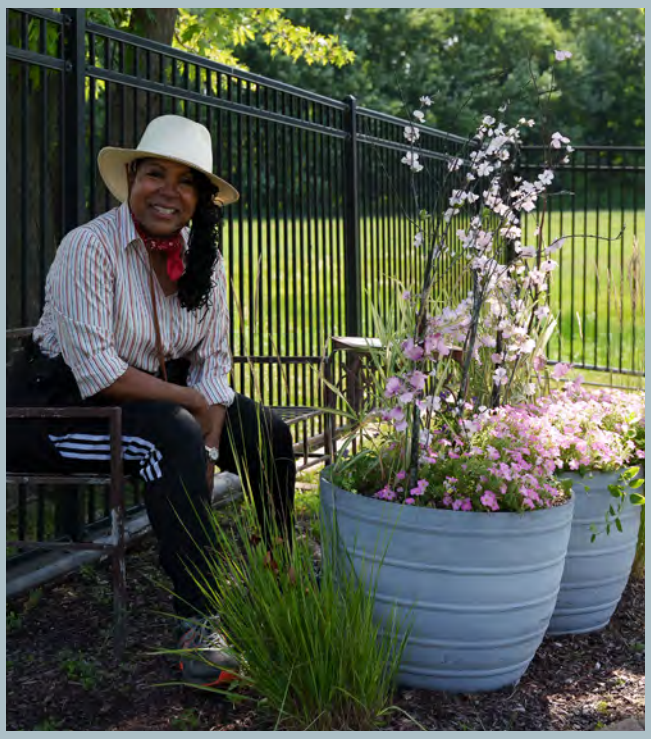


FACES FROM EVENTS AROUND THE VILLAGE

GARDEN WALK

The South Holland Garden Club hosted the 25th Annual Garden Walk this summer, showcasing five of the best gardens from the past 25 years. Visitors enjoyed a self-guided tour, taking in the beauty of each garden and the hard work of the gardeners who tend them.









CALENDAR OF EVENTS



Breast Cancer Walk/Drive

September 19

FUN RUN 5K WALK/RUN

7am, Veterans Memorial Park, 500 E 160th Pl

Join us for a fun and entertaining 5K run through the streets of South Holland. Costumes and accessories are encouraged. This event raises money for Restoration Ministries. Register at southholland.org.

October 3

LUNCH WITH FIREFIGHTERS

11am, Fire Station 1, 16230 Wausau Ave

Residents of all ages are invited to join the South Holland Fire Department for lunch and tours of the fire station! Enjoy hot dogs, chips, and ice cream while touring the ambulance and fire vehicles and learning about the life-saving equipment used every day by the SHFD. This event is taking the place of Coffee with Firefighters for the month of October only.

October 6

PARADE OF LIGHTS

6:30pm, Thorn Creek Reformed Church, 1875 E 170th St

The annual Parade of Lights honors the memory of South Holland firefighters and all others who have fallen. Fire and rescue vehicles conduct a "lights only" parade to honor those who have experienced a fire, loss of life, or fire-related injuries. Residents are invited to stand along the route with candles or lights for this solemn remembrance.

October 10

BREAST CANCER WALK/DRIVE

9am, Veterans Memorial Park, 500 E 160th Pl

Join us for a walk and car caravan that recognizes both female and male breast cancer survivors. Following the walk, there will be a ceremony to celebrate and honor survivors. Register at recservices.southholland.org.

October 13

COMMUNITY POLICING MEETING

10am, South Holland Community Center, 501 E 170th St

The South Holland Police Department hosts a Community Policing Meeting on the second Tuesday of every month, alternating mornings and evenings. This is an opportunity to address any questions or concerns for the Police Department.

October 22

HARVEST FEST

6pm, South Holland Community Center, 501 E 170th St

South Holland families with children are invited to the Community Center for a special fall-themed event featuring a costume contest, dance party, pumpkin decorating, and more. Pre-registration is required. Visit the Community Center to register.

November 4

MILITARY TRIBUTE

11am, South Holland Community Center, 501 E 170th St

Veterans and active duty members are invited to the 12th Annual Military Tribute, a special luncheon and ceremony honoring the brave men and women who have served our country. Tickets are free for veterans and $15 for guests. Please register at southholland.org or at the South Holland Community Center.

AT THE LIBRARY

The following programs are held at the South Holland Public Library, 16250 Wausau Ave, unless otherwise indicated.

September 12

NERDVANA

11am-3pm

Nerdvana is South Holland Public Library's very own fanfest. This free, family-friendly event is packed with fun for all ages, including cosplay, comics, games, and other types of fandom. Whether you're into superheroes, storytelling, or strategy, there's something for everyone.

September 19

DOCUMENT SHREDDING EVENT

10am-12pm

The library offers document shredding at this annual event. Limit 2 boxes of documents per vehicle. Please follow staff's directions to minimize wait times.

September 22

PERSONAL SAFETY AND SELF DEFENSE WORKSHOP

6-8pm

Take part in an interactive personal safety and self-defense workshop with Lindsey Daehnke of Strictly Self Defense. A safety waiver must be filled out at registration.

October 3

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH: ¡FIESTA HISPAÑA!

1-3pm

The Library is celebrating the vibrant cultures, traditions, and flavors of Hispanic Heritage Month! The event will feature a live performance, snacks, and fun table games.

October 10

DAY TRIPS ON A DIME

2pm

Adventure awaits! Melanie Holmes, author of the best-selling book ***100 Things to Do in Illinois Before You Die***, shares tips for Illinois day trips that cost little to nothing.

October 29

NOT-SO-SPOOKY BOOTACULAR PARTY

11am

Celebrate Halloween without the scares! Enjoy music, dancing, a special visit from Gru and a Minion, and trick-or-treating throughout the library. Costumes are encouraged, and all ages and groups are welcome.

FAITH IN Motion

MAKE YOUR LIFE A PRAYER
HOW TO INCORPORATE PRAYER INTO YOUR DAILY ROUTINE

By Elder Veronica Messenger, Free Spirit Ministerial Worship Center

Prayer is a direct, personal conversation with God consisting of communication, worship, and requests. Prayer is the declaration of our total dependence on God. When we pray, we are telling God we are desperate for Him. As believers, we should approach God with honesty, faith, and humility.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 encourages us to maintain a constant, open line of communication and a thankful attitude throughout our daily lives.

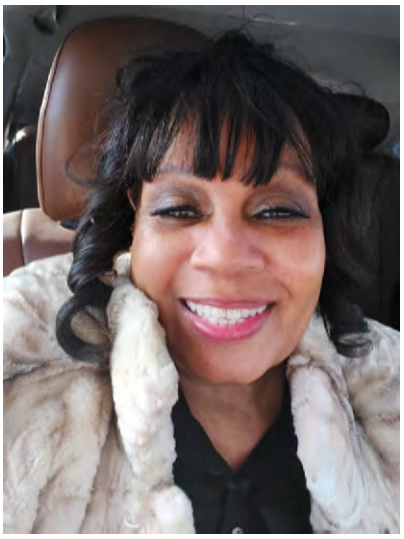
There are simple ways to incorporate prayer into your daily routine. If you're out walking, jogging, or riding your bike for exercise, pray for the people in your community.

Sometimes we are too busy talking to hear what God has to say. Don't let prayer become one-sided. Set aside time every day to clear your mind of all distractions, sit in God's presence, and just listen for His voice.

Recruit a prayer partner. Whether in person, on the telephone, or online, the power of prayer can be multiplied when people come together.

While driving to and fro, make your time behind the wheel a time of prayer. Pray for people who God brings to your mind. Make prayer a priority. In Psalm 63:1, the psalmist says, "Early will I seek you…"

The more important prayer is to us, and the more attention we give it, the stronger our relationship with God will grow.



Elder Veronica Messenger

Prayer should be our first response to any situation, not our last resort. Stop trying to work things out on your own. Instead, turn to your heavenly Father; He's a great listener. Matthew 6:33 says to "Seek ye first the kingdom…" We should pray non-stop, especially for each other.

When you are in need, ask for prayer. When someone asks you to pray for them– pray! Pray with them over the phone. Stop in the middle of the store or on the sidewalk. Pray with your children on the way to school.

Make prayer a natural and ongoing part of your daily life. Much prayer. Much power.

9th Annual
Village of South Holland

2026 BREAST CANCER WALK & DRIVE



Think Pink and Blue... Men Get It Too!

Saturday, October 10 | 9:00am
Veterans Memorial Park

Adults (18+): $30
Youth (17 & Under): $15

REGISTRATION: 8AM-10AM
CRUISE & WALK: 10:30AM

- Raffles
- Giveaways
- Awards for best costumes and best decorated vehicles

SHRS
SOUTH HOLLAND RECREATIONAL SERVICES

Register at southholland.org
or at the Community Center

LEARNING OUTSIDE THE LINES

WHERE PLAYGROUNDS AND GARDENS BECOME CLASSROOMS

By Josh Bootsma
Photos by David Bustos

From using spare parts to spark creativity at recess, to teaching botany lessons through dirty hands, to empowering students to resolve conflict on the playground, Calvin Christian School has established innovative ways to facilitate learning and growth beyond indoor classrooms.

PEACEMAKERS

If you drive past the South Holland PreK-8th school at recess time, you might notice some older students mixed in with the crowd of kindergarteners and first- and second-graders. Those students are part of a special program called Peacemakers.

The program trains and empowers fifth-grade students to serve as a community-building force on the playground, and in their own lives.

"Peacemakers is a program that teaches students conflict resolution skills. They go through a social-emotional learning curriculum where they learn how to solve problems out on the playground," says Leah Casson, Principal at Calvin. "They become leaders for our community by helping resolve student conflict among younger students."

The vast majority of fifth-graders opt to join the program, which includes a "vesting ceremony" when each student is given their own Peacemaker vest to wear. Students are then placed on a rotating schedule and take turns serving during both the PreK and K–2nd grade recesses. They



Peacemakers Program

are empowered to intervene when they see conflict, and they're also encouraged to step in to make sure all kids feel included at recess.

The program was started over ten years ago by Latrice Oglesby, a former counselor; it was then overseen by 5th grade teacher Melissa Bultema before school counselor Glinda Baker took the reins this year.

"A lot of our eighth-graders have said the skills they learned in the Peacemakers program directly impacted their ability to handle conflict at the middle school level," Casson says. "One of our targets for our profile of a graduate is that our students will be leaders for their community."



School Garden

SCHOOL GARDEN

For Calvin's second-graders, food science lessons come with dirty hands! Led by teacher Julie Jann, students have enjoyed planting, weeding, cultivating, and harvesting a variety of plants.

In addition to growing flowers, students have planted cucumbers, tomatoes, basil, watermelon, pickles, potatoes, and other fruits and vegetables.

"Just recently, I cut up last year's cucumbers and gave them to the third-graders, who planted them last year," Jann says. "For some of these kids, it's their first time trying this type of vegetable. I love that it can be a first step to eating something from a garden—and the students knowing that they were a part of the growing, that part is really fun."

Jann describes herself as "not afraid to try" anything the kids might want. For example, last year's class was excited to plant potatoes to enjoy french fries after harvest. During this year's food science summer camp, students who said they don't normally like tomatoes were excited to try their class-made salsa anyway.



Loose Parts Playground

"I love that this garden can be a learning tool for how plants grow and what they need, but also just teaching kids where food comes from," Jann says. "It also leads to cooking projects that are community-building activities. Everyone has a job to do like weeding, or watering, or harvesting."

LOOSE PARTS PLAYGROUND

At Calvin, there's a stash of logs, tires, wood scraps, PVC pieces, and other stray materials. But it's not junk. In fact, every day at recess, the ragtag collection becomes a spaceship, a truck, or an ice cream shop—whatever the imaginations of Calvin's youngest students come up with.

Calvin's Loose Parts Playground started last school year and has proven to be a big hit with preschoolers, kindergarteners, and first- and second-graders.

"It's new every time, it's very open-ended and our kids get to change it up each recess. Maybe in the morning it was a space station and in the afternoon it's a pirate ship," Casson says. "Data shows that the more kids move, the easier time they have with learning and retaining information."

The program was initiated by Head of School Randy Moes, and it has strengthened community bonds as various people and organizations have donated materials to the Loose Parts Playground. The program also gives new life to materials that would otherwise be thrown away.

"We firmly believe at Calvin that kids need to be outside, playing, out in sunlight, in order to be their best as scholars," Casson says.

Calvin Christian School is located at 528 East 161st Place in South Holland. More information about the school can be found at CalvinSchool.org.

Homeschooling REIMAGINED

HOW A SOUTH HOLLAND TEACHER FOUNDED A FLEXIBLE LEARNING COMMUNITY

By Carrie Steinweg
Photos by White Houze Media



WeSchool Academy was born from Aziza Butler's desire to empower and equip parents to lead their children's education. Butler is a former public school teacher who earned her degree from the University of Virginia (UVa) and DePaul University.

"I learned that a child's educational outcome is largely impacted by parental involvement. However,





my early teaching exposure disappointed me when I saw firsthand the lack of ownership parents felt regarding their child's education," Butler says. "They seemed content to entrust it completely to the classroom teacher while undervaluing their own crucial role in their child's success. I knew the public school system perpetuated the mentality that parents aren't truly qualified or capable." Butler knew that wasn't true. "The deeper our society embraces this mindset, the more student performance continues to plummet," she says.

She had experience teaching in both public and private school when her first child was born. "When I prayed about what school to send her to, I felt the Lord calling me to homeschool. Though I was extremely uninformed and detached from homeschooling, I took the leap of faith."

She quickly embraced this method of education, where she could give personalized attention and customize lessons. "We were able to explore museums, parks, farms, businesses, professional offices and so much more every week," she says.





As Butler's journey of homeschooling progressed, she met more families who were interested in homeschooling, but with schedules that weren't conducive to it.

"Why should they lose this privilege because they are a single parent, have an entrepreneurial venture, work part-time hours, or simply desire break days?" Butler says.

From these encounters she saw a need to accommodate other homeschool families. In 2017, she founded WeSchool Academy. "We are a flexible-schedule learning center for families who homeschool, allowing parents to access as much or as little support as they need to make their homeschooling journey successful and enjoyable," Butler says. "Some children come only for learning excursions, one class weekly or for the full three days that we meet."

The learning center is located at 15910 Cottage Grove. Butler said it is designed for families to choose what works best for their child and family unit. "We support parents with coaching, resources and community. WeSchool offers small, Christ-centered learning environments to provide personalized and individualized education for children ages 4-17 years old," she says. "Parents drop off their children or volunteer to instruct courses in areas where they are both passionate and highly trained."

Beyond the educational opportunities, Butler says parents really appreciate the community they are able to connect with at WeSchool Academy. "We take learning out of the box and approach education in creative ways," she says. "We definitely have a ton of fun together and love challenging our children to reach high standards."

For more information on joining WeSchool and for options of participation, visit weschoolacademy.com.

"I recommend that all parents own their child's education and not be afraid to pivot from the traditional system to give their child exactly what they need in the 21st century," Butler says. "You have permission to dream and envision what works best for your child and family. You are capable and qualified because you love your child and you'll always want the very best for them. We're here to help you whenever you make the leap."

Home Safe

A GUIDE TO KEEPING (AND FINDING) YOUR DOG

Losing a pet is every dog owner's worst nightmare, but a fast, informed response can make all the difference. Local shelters and lost-pet organizations agree: acting quickly and correctly in the first hours matters most.

LOST DOG? ACT FAST.
If your dog goes missing, put food, water, and your dog's bed (or a piece of your clothing) at the spot where they were last seen. Dogs often circle back to familiar scents. Post flyers and yard-sign-style signs in the neighborhood with a clear photo and your phone number, and go door-to-door while checking your phone often.

Next, contact every local resource you can: animal shelters, animal control, vet clinics, and police departments. Send them a photo and your contact info, and don't forget to report your dog lost with the microchip company if they're chipped. Tell everyone helping you search to resist the urge to chase or call out to the dog, as this can actually scare them further away. Instead, have searchers sit or lie down, avoid eye contact, and toss out treats to coax the dog closer. Finally, post your dog's information on PetFBI.org, Nextdoor, Craigslist, and local lost-and-found Facebook groups to widen the search.



SOUTH SUBURBAN HUMANE SOCIETY

21800 Central Ave
Matteson, IL 60443
708.755.7387
southsuburbanhumane.org

SERVICES INCLUDE:

- **Animal Adoption**
- **Low Cost Spay/Neuter Clinic**
- **Low Cost Veterinary Clinic**
- **Pet Identification and Microchipping**
- **SSHS Resale Shop**

PREVENTION MATTERS TOO.
Nationally, about 1 in 3 family pets will go missing at some point. The good news: microchipped dogs are more than twice as likely to be reunited with their owners, and microchipped cats are more than 20 times as likely. Unfortunately, only about 6 in 10 microchips are actually registered, and outdated contact information is the most common reason a chipped pet doesn't make it home.

South Suburban Humane Society (SHSS) offers free microchipping and registration at its Matteson Resource Center (Suite B, 21800 Central Avenue), daily from 10am to 4pm. The South Holland Police Department also partners with the SSHS periodically on free microchip clinics for the dogs of South Holland residents. Future microchip clinics will be publicized on Village social media and at southholland.org.

Take a few minutes this week to check your pet's chip info. It could make all the difference if the unexpected happens.



A SAFER PLACE TO PLAY: CENTRAL BARK

Want your dog to burn off energy without the risk of bolting loose? South Holland's own Central Bark dog park offers a secure, fenced-in space to run free.

Where: **510 Thornwood Drive, South Holland**
Hours: **Sunrise to sunset, every day**
Features: **Separate small- and large-dog areas, key-card gated access, water fountains, waste bags, and a shaded shelter**
Membership: **Open to residents and non-residents; requires a current animal license and proof of vaccinations. Annual passes start at $35 for residents (first dog); day passes are $20/dog.**

Register at the South Holland Community Center 501 E 170th Street.

Learn more at southholland.org/community/central-bark.

Winter Wonderland

Friday, December 4

6:00-8:00pm

Veterans Memorial Park

500 E 160th Place

JOIN US FOR FUN FAMILY ACTIVITIES INCLUDING:

- Tree lighting
- Skating rink
- Trolley rides
- Holiday crafts and vendors
- Cookies and hot chocolate
- Train rides on the South Holland Express

SouthHolland.org

The Village of South Holland
Faith, Family, & Future

PRSRT STD
ECRWSS
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SO. HOLLAND, IL
PERMIT #4

12TH ANNUAL

Military Tribute

THANKING OUR VETERANS

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4

SOUTH HOLLAND COMMUNITY CENTER
501 E. 170TH STREET
708.331.2940 • SOUTHHOLLAND.ORG

Lunch: 10:30-11:30am • Program begins: 11:30am

Please register at the Community Center by October 2.

The Village of South Holland
Faith, Family, & Future

southholland.org