City of Crystal Lake, Illinois
CITYLETTER



Support Local - Small Business Saturday, November 28, 2026

Shopping locally plays a vital role in keeping our community vibrant and thriving. When individuals choose to spend their money in Crystal Lake, it helps boost the local economy, create and sustain jobs, and fund public services through local tax revenue. For every $100 spent at a local business, approximately $68 stays in the community, compared to just $43 when spent at non-local businesses. Small businesses in Crystal Lake are not just shops, they're our neighbors, friends, and supporters of local causes, from youth sports to community events.

Supporting Crystal Lake businesses both large and small also helps maintain the unique character of the area, encourages community growth, and ensures that local establishments can continue to serve and invest in the people who live here.

Whether you're dining, shopping, or using local services, every dollar spent in Crystal Lake helps build a stronger, more connected community, ensuring it remains a thriving place to live, work, and visit throughout the year.

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Cease the Grease

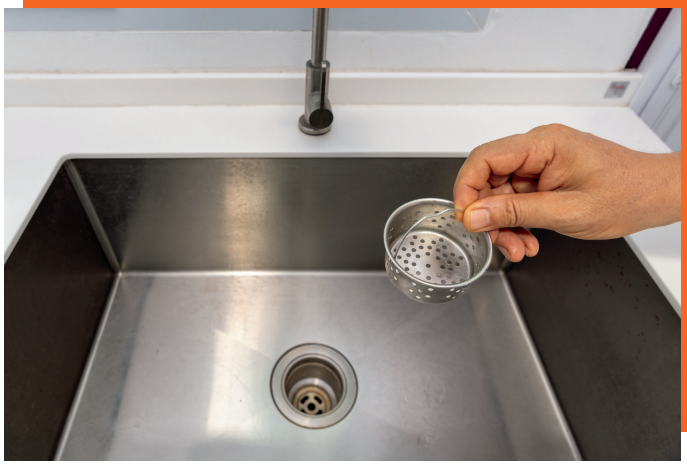
During the upcoming holiday season, it is important to remember that fats, oils and grease don't just clog your arteries; they can clog the City's arteries too. Grease can cause significant problems in the City's sewers and increases the potential for failure in the system. When a clog develops in the sanitary sewer, the line is surcharged behind the clog and can result in sewage overflowing into basements, roadways, or other low-lying public areas. These backups can create an environmental and health hazard depending on where the discharge point is located.

Grease is a byproduct from cooking with meat fats, lard, oils, shortening, butter, margarine, food scraps, baked goods, sauces, and dairy products.

When washed down the sink, grease sticks to the insides of sewer pipes (both on your property and under the street). Over a period of time, it can build up and block entire portions of your home's plumbing system. Remember, garbage disposals may allow table scraps to fit in the drain, but do not prevent grease from sticking in the sewer. The best way to prevent fats, oils and greases from clogging in your sewer is to never put these materials down the drain.

Here are some helpful tips:

- Never pour grease down sink drains or into toilets.
- Scrape grease and food scraps from trays, plates, pots, pans, utensils, grills and cooking surfaces into a can or the trash for disposal.
- Do not put grease down garbage disposals. Put baskets/strainers in sink drains to catch food scraps and other solids, and empty the drain baskets/strainers into the trash for disposal.



The Public Works Department needs your help to cease the grease buildup in the City's sewers. If you have any questions, or would like more information about the hazards of fats, oils and grease in your sewer system, contact the Public Works Department at (815) 356-3614.

Change Your Clocks, Check Your Smoke Alarms

Daylight saving time ends on Sunday, November 1, 2026. When you change your clocks, take a moment to check your smoke alarms! Press and hold the test button on your smoke alarm to verify it is in working condition. Replace any smoke alarms that are not working properly.

Smoke alarms make a big difference when it comes to safety. In the event of a fire emergency, smoke alarms enable residents within a home to be alerted to the present danger. Working smoke alarms cut the risk of a tragedy in a home fire by half!

Source: NFPA



FIRE RESCUE DEPARTMENT

Nation's First ADA-Accessible Fire Safety Trailer

On October 3rd, the Crystal Lake Fire Rescue Department unveiled a new Fire Safety Simulator to its community outreach program. This state-of-the-art, 30-foot mobile training unit, is designed to bring realistic and inclusive fire safety education directly to the community. It is currently the only ADA-accessible fire safety simulator of its kind in operation in the United States, expanding access to high-quality fire safety education for residents with neurodivergent, visual, hearing, and mobility-related needs.

The trailer is thoughtfully constructed to replicate a typical home environment, featuring a kitchen, bedroom, and outdoor porch with a grill. Inside, visitors encounter immersive simulators demonstrating common household hazards, including:

- **Kitchen & Outdoor Safety:** Simulated oven fires, a flaming pot on the stove, and outdoor grill hazards.
- **Bedroom Fire Scenarios:** A heated door and simulated smoke that illustrate how quickly everyday situations can become dangerous.
- **Informative Graphics:** Integrated visual guides offering clear, educational guidance on fire prevention and safety protocols.

The trailer was custom-built by JHB Group Inc., a manufacturer of specialty trailers and mobile training solutions for fire, law enforcement, and emergency management agencies nationwide. The full suite of ADA-accessible features includes:

- Braille signage and glowing exit signs
- Visual alert lighting
- Bed shakers
- Wayfinding beacons
- Voice-alert smoke detectors
- ADA-accessible ramp with hinge-gap covers and zero thresholds

These features allow the department to deliver hands-on safety training – including evacuation drills, smoke awareness, and emergency response practice – to individuals who are blind or low vision, deaf or hard of hearing, neurodivergent, or have mobility limitations, ensuring no resident is left out of critical fire safety education. All sensory elements in the trailer can be silenced or adjusted for residents who prefer a low-stimulus learning environment. The trailer also features an updated 911 phone simulator, giving community members an opportunity to practice making an emergency call in a realistic, low-pressure setting.

"We couldn't be more excited to introduce this new safety trailer to our community," said the Bureau Chief of Community Risk Management. "It's an invaluable tool that will take our community risk reduction and fire safety education efforts to the next level."

The Crystal Lake Fire Rescue Department will incorporate the trailer into school visits, community events, station tours, annual open house, and more.

ABOUT THE CRYSTAL LAKE FIRE RESCUE DEPARTMENT

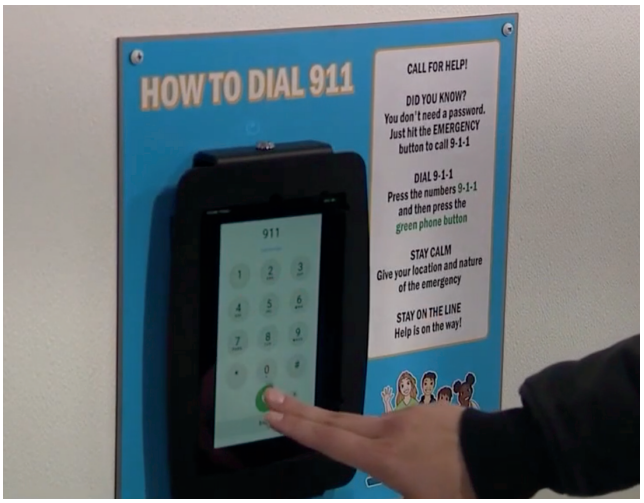
The Crystal Lake Fire Rescue Department provides fire protection, emergency medical care, fire inspections, public education, hazardous materials response, water rescue, wildland, and technical rescue response to the City of Crystal Lake, the Crystal Lake Rural Fire Protection District, and the Village of Lakewood. The Department is committed to protecting life and property while providing the best possible service to the community it serves.

The Crystal Lake Fire Rescue Department successfully secured grant funding from FEMA (Fire Prevention & Safety Grant) to purchase the Fire Safety Simulator.









Happy Thanksgiving

With Thanksgiving just around the corner, the kitchen quickly becomes the heart of the home. Kids often love joining in on the holiday fun, but keeping them safe is key. Encourage little helpers to take part in Thanksgiving traditions by giving them tasks that can be done outside the busy kitchen. It's a great way to keep them involved while ensuring a safe and smooth holiday meal.

Crystal Lake Fire Rescue Department (815) 356-3640

Follow the Crystal Lake Fire Rescue Department on Facebook for safety tips, events, and community updates!

POLICE DEPARTMENT

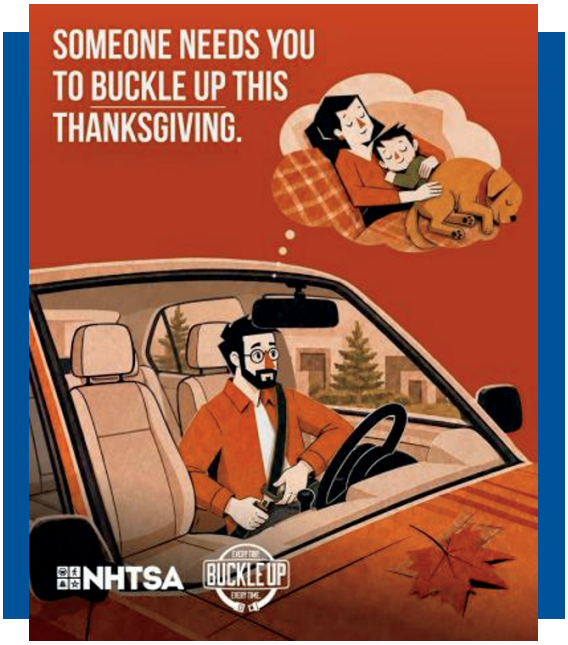
Thanksgiving Safety Tips

The night before Thanksgiving, often called “Blackout Wednesday,” is one of the busiest nights of the year for bars and alcohol-related incidents. The Crystal Lake Police Department will have increased patrols to keep our roads safe.

Please celebrate responsibly:

- Designate a sober driver or use a ride-share service.
- Buckle up — seatbelts save lives.
- Avoid distractions while driving. Stay off your phone and keep your focus on the road.
- Report suspected impaired drivers by calling 911.

Let’s work together to ensure a safe holiday weekend for everyone.



Veterans Day

Veterans Day is observed each year on November 11 to honor and recognize all who have served in the United States Armed Forces. The holiday originated as Armistice Day, marking the end of World War I. The armistice between the Allied nations and Germany took effect on November 11, 1918, at 11:00 a.m. In 1954, following World War II and the Korean War, Congress changed the name to Veterans Day to recognize and honor American veterans of all wars and military service.

Today, Veterans Day serves as an opportunity for communities across the country to express their gratitude to those who have served—and continue to serve—our nation.



Watch out for Holiday Scams

As the holiday season approaches, scams tend to spike. Here are a few reminders to protect yourself:

- Be cautious of unfamiliar charities or donation requests, always verify before giving.
- Watch out for online shopping scams and deals that seem too good to be true.
- Never share personal information or payment details via phone or email unless you're sure it's legitimate.
- Don't fall for gift card scams. No government agency will ever demand payment in gift cards.
- Lock your car doors and never leave valuables in plain sight. Thieves often target vehicles in parking lots, especially during busy shopping days.
- Avoid clicking on unfamiliar links. Always enable two-factor authentication on your accounts when possible for added security.
- Be aware of your surroundings when entering or exiting stores, especially at night.

If you believe you've been targeted by a scam, please report it to the Crystal Lake Police Department.



Toys for Tots

Every year, the Crystal Lake Police Department joins hands with the Marine Corps Reserve's Toys for Tots program to bring joy to children in McHenry County. The tradition continues this year as we collect new, unwrapped toys to brighten the holiday season for those in need.

You can drop off new, unwrapped toys in the marked Toys for Tots cardboard box located in the Crystal Lake Police Department Lobby, 100 W. Woodstock Street. Keep an eye out for the annual stuff the squad event!

The lobby is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Donations will be accepted through December 18th.

Your generous contributions will make a child's holiday truly special. Together, we can make a significant impact and bring smiles to many faces.



Crystal Lake Police Department (815) 356-3620

Officer Kelci McGrath - (815) 356-3620 or kmcgrath@crystallake.org

Follow The CLPD on Facebook and Instagram to stay up to date on the latest news, events, and safety tips!

WHO REMEMBERS WOOLWORTH'S? DIANA KENNEY

The baby boomer generation grew up shopping at the "Five-and-Dime" for fun, cheap toys, candy and gadgets. For only a nickel or a dime, one could choose from a wide variety of small, inexpensive household products. Some of the best-known Five-and-Dimes were Hornsby's, Kresge's, Ben Franklin and Woolworth's.

Although Downtown Crystal Lake already had a Hornsby's store, it was announced in August 1954 that a 60x100 foot Woolworth's store was going to be built at the southeast corner of Williams & Brink (where Dalzell Jewelers and Nu Image are today). The site had recently been vacated with the move of the Methodist-Episcopal parsonage to Paddock Street. Many other houses and buildings were either demolished or moved in the mid-1950s as the south block of N. Williams Street between Brink Street and Crystal Lake Avenue was changing from residential to commercial.

After navigating a maze of permits for setbacks, alley widths, etc., construction of the Woolworth's store was underway in the Spring of 1955. The new store opened for business on February 23, 1956. It was hailed as one of the largest and most modern stores in Crystal Lake.

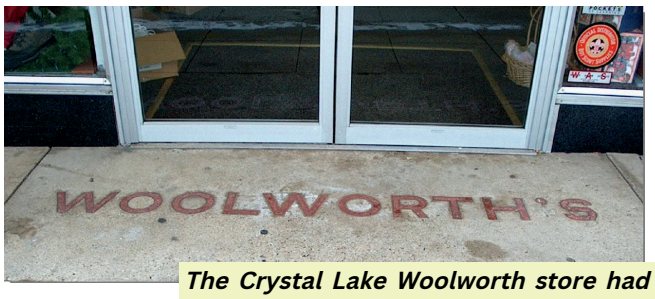


Photo ca. 1960

A full-page advertisement for the grand opening describes the store as, "Completely new and is the finest air-conditioned variety store in Crystal Lake." D.V. Lyons was the store manager. Items advertised include: Ladies Blouses $1, Ladies Nylons 98¢ per pair, AC-DC Plastic Table Radios $12.95, Two Houseplants for $1, and even a Young Parakeet complete with modern cage and food pack for $5.49.

Many may also recall the Luncheonette, which was located on the front left wall of the store. Opening day specials included: Grilled Hamburger on a Bun for 35¢, ¼ pound Jumbo Frankfurter on a Roll for 29¢, Super Jumbo Banana Split for 39¢ and Jumbo Ice Cream Sandwich for 9¢.

In addition to Toyland in the basement, which became Santaland in December, Woolworths sold everything from 45RPM records to hair spray to garbage cans. It truly lived up to its name as a Five-and-Dime variety store.



The Crystal Lake Woolworth store had two entrances, each boasting the store name in the sidewalk. This photo was taken prior to removal ca. 2004.

Crystal Lake's Woolworth's store closed its doors 20 years after opening. A tangible reminder of the store is at the Colonel Palmer House today, where a large glass Woolworth sign is on display. The sign was donated to the Crystal Lake Historical Society by Steve Yopp, a former building owner. Steve found the sign in the basement of the building. Heartland Cabinetry of Crystal Lake generously donated their time, expertise and materials to frame and secure the fragile glass sign.



About the Author: Diana Kenney is President of the Crystal Lake Historical Society. To contact Diana, email info@cl-hs.org

2026 Crystal Lake Calendar

The Crystal Lake HerStorical Society (that's not a typo - keep reading!) is happy to announce the publication of the annual fundraising calendar for 2027 featuring the stories of women who shaped our city. Titled "Crystal Lake HerStory" the calendar honors women who were influential in politics, business, athletics, publishing, education and much more.

Did you know that the first women's organization in Crystal Lake was formed in 1914 to teach women to use their newly acquired right to vote? Did you know that the first woman in the Northern Illinois Umpires Association was a Crystal Lake native? These and many other interesting stories are featured throughout the 2027 calendar.

The calendar can be purchased in person for $10.00 at:

- Crystal Lake City Hall
- Colonel Palmer House
- Heisler's Bootery
- The Inside Scoop Ice Cream

The calendar can also be purchased online for $14.00 at: www.cl-hs.org in the Highlights section. The online price includes shipping. Order your copy today and get a head start on the New Year!



Fall Leaf Collection - No Leaves in the Street

Raking leaves into the street is a violation of City Code and can lead to blocked storm drains. To help dispose of leaves, the City's Annual Fall Leaf Pick-up Program will continue to run until Tuesday, December 15th. Lakeshore Recycling Systems (LRS) crews will collect bagged leaves placed at the curbside in front of residential homes along public streets. Bags must be placed in the parkway before 7:00 a.m. on residents' regular refuse collection day.

Leaves can only be placed in biodegradable paper bags or resident-owned waste bins clearly marked for leaf disposal in order to be collected. Paper leaf bags are available at local grocery and hardware stores. The City and Lakeshore Recycling Systems do not provide leaf bags. There is a 50-pound maximum weight limit per bag. Please be aware that wet leaves will add to the weight of the bag. Leaves placed in containers such as plastic bags, unmarked waste bins, boxes, or in bags too large for one person to handle will not be accepted.

To contact Lakeshore Recycling Systems with any questions, please call their customer service number, (844) 633-3577 or visit their website at www.lrsrecycles.com.

As a reminder, leaves are not accepted as part of the City's brush drop-off program.

BRUSH DROP-OFF SITE CLOSES

The Brush Drop-off Site is located at 410 S. Main Street in Crystal Lake. It is open 8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month from April through November. Residents may dispose of brush, sticks, and branches six inches or under in diameter, and six feet or less in length. This site cannot accept leaves, grass clippings, root balls, twine-bound bundles of sticks, or branches bigger than the stated parameters. If you used twine to bind brush during transport, you must remove the twine once you get to the site.

Remaining brush drop-off dates for 2026:
November 7 & November 21

THREE OAKS RECREATION AREA

Park Hours
6:30 A.M. - Sunset

Trails and Sled Hill

The Lake Loop trail will remain open daily, year round. The sled hill will open when snowfall has accumulated during regular park hours. Use of the sled hill is at your own risk as staff members are not always present during this time.

Fishing along the shoreline is open until the lake begins to freeze. For the safety of our patrons, ice fishing is not allowed.

Employment

Beginning in November, the City of Crystal Lake will open its annual employment application for seasonal positions at Three Oaks for the 2027 season. Keep an eye out for these openings on the City website under the employment tab!

www.crystallake.org/three-oaks-recreation
Information Line: (815) 356-2447 | Rainout Line: (815) 506-9333 | threeoaks@crystallake.org
5517 Northwest Highway, Crystal Lake, IL 60014

Community Photos

Do you have any great pictures you want to share with the community? Submit your pictures to the City of Crystal Lake for the opportunity to have them featured right here in the City Newsletter! Proper photo credits will be given once permission from the individual who submits the picture is received.

Pictures can be submitted to comments@crystallake.org. Please include 'Community Photos' in the subject line with your submittal. We look forward to seeing Crystal Lake from your point of view!


Brice Alt

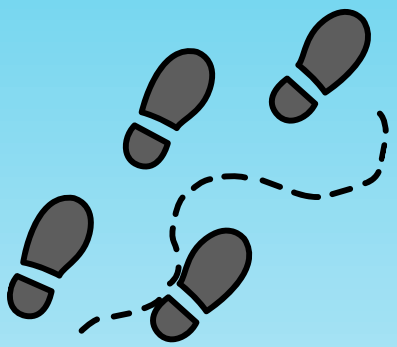

Linda Lipecki

CLEARLY CRYSTAL LAKE CORNER

Fall into Local: The Clearly Crystal Lake Mug Hunt

The Clearly Crystal Lake Mug Hunt is still underway! Each week through Thanksgiving, the mug will have a new home at a Crystal Lake business. Follow along for clues shared on social media, visit the featured business, and see if you can be the first to find it. Hints will be posted on Monday of where the mug might be, while the answer is revealed on Friday!

The scavenger hunt is about more than finding the mug, it's a fun way to discover new local businesses, explore the community, and support the businesses that make Crystal Lake special.

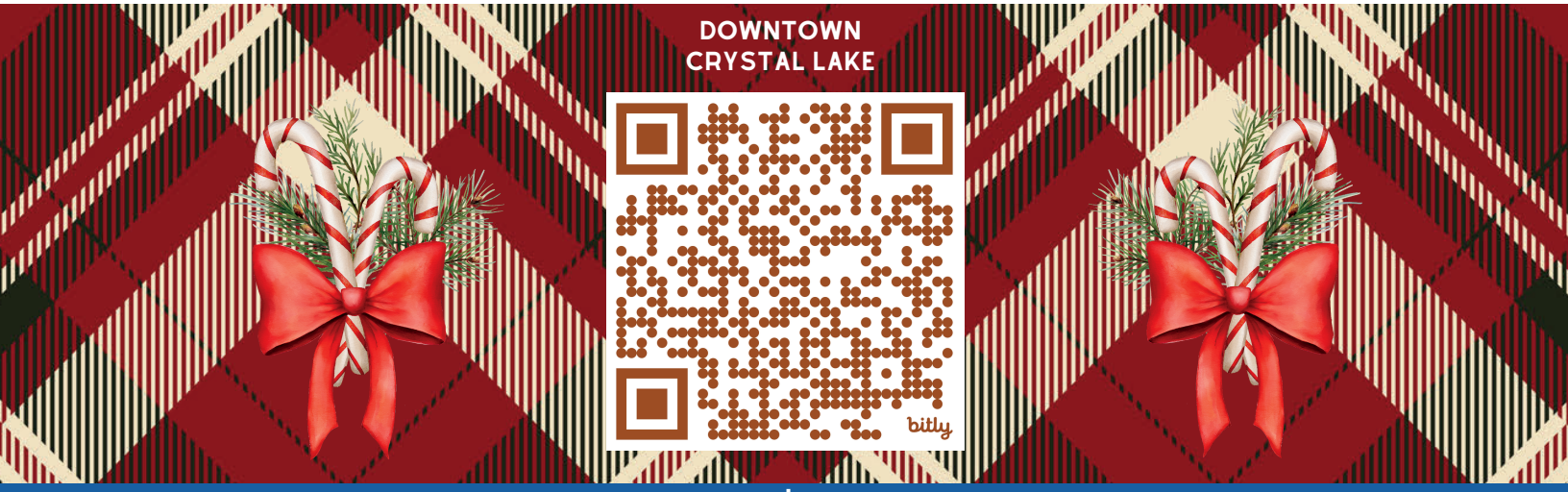




www.clearlycrystallake.com
www.facebook.com/clearlycrystallake www.instagram.com/clearlycrystallake/

Holiday Happenings

Scan the QR code below to view various events and things to do this holiday season!



CALENDAR | NOVEMBER 2026

Monday, November 2
Historic Preservation Commission Meeting
4:30 P.M.

Tuesday, November 3
NO CITY COUNCIL MEETING
Election Day

Wednesday, November 4
Public Arts Commission Meeting
8:00 A.M.

Wednesday, November 4
Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting
7:00 P.M.

Thursday, November 12
Youth Commission Meeting
4:00 P.M.

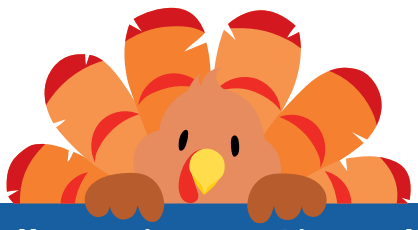
Tuesday, November 17
City Council Meeting
7:00 P.M.

Wednesday, November 18
Sustainability Committee Meeting
6:30 P.M.

Wednesday, November 18
Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting
7:00 P.M.

Thursday, November 26
City Hall Closed - Thanksgiving Holiday

Friday, November 27
City Hall Closed - Thanksgiving Holiday



All Meetings at City Hall
100 W. Woodstock Street

City of Crystal Lake, Illinois

MAYOR
Haig Haleblian

COUNCILMEMBER
Ellen Brady
Brett Hopkins
Cameron Hubbard
Ian Philpot
Denise Smith
Natasha Teetsov

CITY MANAGER
Eric Helm

Police/Fire/Ambulance Emergency Only
911

All Other Departments (Non-Emergency)
815-459-2020

www.crystallake.org

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Visit: https://www.crystallake.org/your-government/communications/enews-sign-up

to receive the newsletter by e-mail only.

WE VALUE YOUR OPINION

The City of Crystal Lake values the opinion of its residents. If you have any concerns or comments about the City Newsletter, please email City staff at comments@crystallake.org.

If you have questions or concerns for specific City departments, please contact the following:

City Manager's Office	(815) 459-2020	Option 5
Community Development Department	(815) 356-3605	
Finance Department	(815) 459-2020	Option 0
Fire Rescue Department	(815) 356-3640	
Human Resources Department	(815) 459-2020	Option 7
Police Department	(815) 356-3620	
Public Works and Engineering Department	(815) 356-3614	