

SPRING / SUMMER 2026



ELKHART
Environmental
— CENTER —



Visit Us!

Visitor's Cabin

Monday - Friday
8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Trails

Dawn - Dusk
Every Day



1717 E Lusher Ave, Elkhart, IN 46516

574-293-5070

EECmail@cityofelkhartin.gov

Highlights from 2025

Programs



4,660
participants



39
public
programs

Events



3,846
attendees



6
public
events

Education



497
students



22
student
programs

Volunteers



291
volunteers



282
volunteer
events

New in 2025

We introduced a brand new annual event: **Pollinator Promenade!** This event highlights our new 4 acre wildflower prairie with light-hearted competitive events, local vendors, and lots of fun! Join us for the 2nd annual Pollinator Promenade on Saturday, July 11. For more details, see **pages 7 and 9**.

We are always looking to expand our programming, and in 2025 we did! We hosted 7 brand new programs and workshops including:

- Upcycled Wind Chime Workshop
- Beginning Birder Series
- Hummingbird Yard Art
- Birds, Bees, & Beyond: Building a Backyard Habitat
- Junior Indiana Master Naturalist Day Camp
- Hummingbird Banding

Many of these programs will make a return this year--including the Junior Indiana Master Naturalist (IMN) Day Camp. This summer day camp is a blast! Kids cover a ton of topics (including aquatic biology, zoology, and astronomy, among many others!), enjoy fun activities, and become a certified Junior Indiana Master Naturalist. For more info, check out **page 5**.

New Staff!

The EEC has a new part-time staff position: Land Manager. In December, we hired Dalton Roose as our newest staff member and we are very excited to have him on our team!

Dalton has already been a huge help in organizing our volunteer shed and our new storage building. We look forward to working with Dalton on other big site projects, like completing the new boardwalk and stairs on the Christner Trail, and upgrading the ponds on the Upper Wetland Trails. Stay tuned!

Contents

2	2025 Recap: Programs
2	Education
3	Volunteers
3	Site Management
4	Trees for the Hart/ Elkhart's Climate Action Plan
5	Junior IMN Day Camp
6	Upcoming Programs/Events
8	Volunteer Opportunities
10	Fall/Winter Programs
12	Fall/Winter Events

2025 Programs/Events

We hosted 39 programs and 6 large events in 2025. In addition to our usual annual events, Earth Day, FishFest, EnviroFest, Waggin' in the Woods, and Haunted Walk Through the Woods (details on **pages 12 and 13**), we also hosted a BRAND NEW event: Pollinator Promenade!

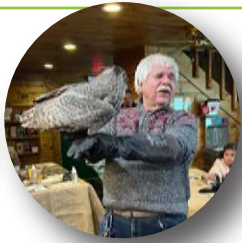
We introduced some new programs--many of which were so popular that we will be hosting them again in 2026!

Last year's programs are listed to the right (programs with an * were new!), and below are listed the wonderful organizations who partnered with us to support our goals and make our programs possible.

If you would like to share ideas for new programs or support upcoming events, we would love to hear from you! Reach out to EEC staff at EECmail@cityofelkhartin.gov or 574-293-5070.

2025 Programs

- Winter Nature Play Day
- DIY Lip Balm
- Upcycled Wind Chime*
- Eco-Valentine's Day
- Bluebird Box
- House Wren Box
- Beginning Birder Series*
- Birds, Bees, & Beyond:
- Building a Backyard Habitat*
- Easter Egg Hunt
- Recycled Oriole Feeder
- Hummingbird Yard Art*
- Rain Garden & Rain Barrel
- Nature Play Days
- Junior IMN Day Camp*
- Hummingbird Banding*
- Bat House
- Leaf Casting
- Natural Dye
- Pumpkin Hunt
- Owl Prowl
- Holiday Lights Recycling
- Holiday Hoorah!



2025 Partners

- ADEC Elkhart Public Works & Street Department
- City of Goshen Foxwood Wildlife Rehabilitation
- Community Foundation of Elkhart County Indiana Michigan Power
- Elkhart Aquatic Biology Michiana Area Coalition of Governments
- Elkhart Buildings & Grounds/Forestry Michiana Master Gardeners Association
- Elkhart Community Schools Michiana VegFest
- Elkhart County 4H Fair Middlebury Parks & Recreation
- Elkhart County Convention & Visitor's Bureau OWLS Club
- Elkhart County Parks Premier Arts
- Elkhart County Soil & Water Conservation District Sound Management
- Elkhart Parks & Recreation Tracking in the Shadows
- Elkhart Public Library

2025 Education

We launched several new educational resources in 2025, including a variety of pre-built in-school programs and on-site field trips (a full list and details are available on our website at cityofelkhartindiana.gov/eec-education).

Our new rentable kit, N-DOTS (Nature Digital Observation Tools), made its debut into the classroom. This kit includes a variety of tools, such as a digital microscope, thermal imaging camera, GPS, weather meter, and more. It allows kids to explore nature and their environment in a new way and get hands-on experience with a variety of tools.

We worked with students from preschool to high school covering a variety of topics including recycling and sustainability, insects and pollinators, watersheds, wetlands, and more! Some students helped remove invasive plants and plant native plugs to help improve the habitat around the trails here at the EEC!





In 2025, a total of 291 volunteers gave over 2,141 hours (a record!) to support a variety of programs and projects (see list to right). Of the 291 volunteers, 242 were completely new volunteers. We were especially excited to see 49 volunteers return to help with some of their favorite projects!

Volunteers are always a HUMONGOUS help with our events, but we were thrilled to see the support for our brand new event, Pollinator Promenade! Volunteers came out in numbers AND in costumes!

2025 Volunteer Projects

Upcycled Wind Chime Workshop
EnviroFest Planning Committee
Adopt-A-Trail
Adopt-A-Plot
Prepping trees for Earth Day giveaway
Earth Day
Prepping rods and reels for FishFest Clinic
FishFest Clinic
Quilt Garden
Junior IMN Day Camp
Pollinator Promenade
Rain Garden
EnviroFest
Elkhart River Cleanup
Waggin' in the Woods
Haunted Walk Through the Woods
Invasive species removals
Native planting
Rain Barrel Workshops
Prairie Loop

2025 Site Management

In March, we planted 1,850 native ephemerals and ferns in the woods and wetlands along the River Greenway Trail.

Afterwards, we planted a mix of 400 ornamental and native large plant plugs right next to the River Greenway Trail to fill in and beautify some of the more open stretches of the trail.

Volunteers helped us maintain our new wildflower prairie in its first year of blooms. They helped remove invasive plants such as Japanese hops, poison hemlock, and more, until it was time to mow the prairie for fall/winter.

A new storage building was put up in our back area. This space has been a great addition for storing tools and supplies and has been useful as an indoor staging area for winter projects.

In December, we removed the stairs to the Christner Trail and cleared the sections of boardwalk that pass through the middle of the ponds.

We finished installing helical piers for the base of the new staircase and permanent boardwalks that will be installed in spring.

For 2026, we will:

- begin transitioning our trails to crushed gravel
- host a controlled burn for our western prairie
- repair/upgrade our Upper Wetland
- replace siding and windows on Visitor's Cabin





Trees for the Hart

2026

Tree Planting Dates

- Saturday, April 11
- Wednesday, April 15
- Saturday, May 16
- Thursday, May 28
- Sunday, June 14
- Wednesday, July 15
- _____
- Wednesday, September 9
- Saturday, September 19
- Friday, October 2
- Saturday, October 10
- Saturday, November 7
- Sunday, November 15

Elkhart's Trees for the Hart program is kicking off this spring with some major planting plans! Funding for the program is on, and the city is ready to support a variety of planting projects across every district. But we need YOUR help!

Each of these planting projects will need lots of volunteer support in order to be successful. Our goal is to plant at least 100 trees at each planting event. If 40 volunteers come out, that would take us about only 2 hours --think how many trees we could plant with even more help!

Planting events will take place throughout spring and fall and all across the city. Snacks, gloves, and tools will be provided. To sign up, visit elkhart.galaxydigital.com. For updates about upcoming planting dates and locations, email EECmail@cityofelkhartin.gov to be added to our e-mailing list.

Elkhart's

Climate Action Plan

In 2025, the City of Elkhart passed Resolution No. R-12-25. The resolution was drafted and brought to the Elkhart City Council by Green Heart, a student group at Elkhart High School. The resolution acknowledges the city's history of environmental education and stewardship as well as the current and future threats and impacts from climate change. The resolution sets out plans for the city to conduct a greenhouse gas inventory and create a Climate Action Plan. In addition, the resolution created the Sustainability Officer role, which is housed under the Elkhart Environmental Center.

The Sustainability Officer will spearhead efforts on behalf of the city to engage and educate about environmental sustainability and cooperate with community partners and stakeholders to implement environmental sustainability and resilience initiatives. We will be starting internally by meeting with city departments to evaluate ways to save energy (and money!).

The city expects to begin work on an official Climate Action Plan this year. Stay tuned for ways to be involved/provide your input!

4

Where to Start?

Some of the "easy" places to start include implementing solar power, switching to electric vehicles, and transitioning to native plant landscaping. We look forward to working with each department to find what works best for their needs.



Native plant landscaping in parking lot at EEC



Solar and wind power at EEC



JUNIOR IMN DAY CAMP



**Junior Indiana Master Naturalist Camp is BACK
at the EEC this summer!**

Kids aged 9-12 will get to discover more about the natural world around them in this day camp. Each day, kids will learn about a different environmental topic with guest speakers and activities, and will complete 6 volunteer service hours. At the end of camp, kids who have met the program requirements will receive an official Junior IMN patch and certificate!

Register at cityofelkhartindiana.gov/Junior-IMN.
Send all completed forms to
allison.pudlo@cityofelkhartin.gov.

Registration is LIMITED and required by Friday, May 29th.

**June 12 - June 26
(no class June 19)
9 AM - 1 PM**

**Cost:
\$75/child**

Contact Us:
EECmail@cityofelkhartin.gov
574-293-5070
www.cityofelkhartin.gov/eec

Upcoming Programs & Events



Details for upcoming programs & events can be found on our website (cityofelkhartin.gov/eec) or our Facebook page. We're always adding more, so check online for updates! To register or purchase tickets for upcoming programs & events, please visit eventeny.com/company/ElkhartEnvironmentalCenter.

Spanish translations are available upon request!

March



Nature Story Hour

Wednesday, March 4
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM



Lawn Conversion Workshop 101 & 102

by The Botany Shop

Sunday, March 8

10:00 AM - 12:00 PM & 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM



Birding Hike

Thursday, March 12
7:30 AM - 9:00 AM



House Wren Box Workshop

Wednesday, March 18
6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

April



Easter Egg Hunt

All Month Long
(or until all eggs are found)



Nature Story Hour

Wednesday, April 1
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM



Recycled Oriole Feeder Workshops

Wednesday, April 8
5:00 PM - 6:30 PM & 7:00 - 8:30 PM



TREES FOR THE HART PLANTINGS

Saturday, April 11 & Wednesday, April 15
See page 8 for details.

Earth Day

Saturday, April 25 | 10 AM - 1 PM

Celebrate Earth Day with a FREE tree giveaway, Spring Seeds & Starters Plant Exchange, forest restoration project, local food vendors, LIVE fish demonstration, and lots of fun booths! Visit cityofelkhartin.gov/earth-day for details.

Volunteers needed! See page 8 for more info.

May

QUILT GARDEN PLANTING

May 21- 22 | 10 AM - 5 PM

Help us plant our brand new dragonfly quilt garden! Plants will arrive around 10 AM and we'll keep planting until it is finished. Last year, it only took 1 day!

Tools and gloves provided. We use drills with auger attachments to help planting go quickly.



Spring Foraging Program

Sunday, May 3
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM & 3:30 PM - 5:30 PM



Nature Story Hour

Wednesday, May 6
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM



Hummingbird Yard Art Workshop

Friday, May 8
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

6

TREES FOR THE HART PLANTINGS

Saturday, May 16
Thursday, May 28

See page 8 for details.

Upcoming Programs & Events

June

Fishing Clinic

Saturday, June 6 | 9 AM - 12 PM
at High Dive Park off of Baldwin St.

Join the EEC, City Parks, and Aquatic Biology Depts. for our annual free fishing clinic! Kids rotate through stations, learning how to fish, stay safe, and be good stewards! Kids who complete the clinic get a free fishing pole (while supplies last). Registration open 9 AM - 12 PM or until all spots are filled. Ideal for kids ages 7+. Visit cityofelkhartin.gov/fishing-clinic

Volunteers needed! See page 9 for more info.



TREES FOR THE HEART PLANTINGS

Sunday, June 14 | See page 8 for details.



Nature Story Hour

Wednesday, June 3
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM



Nature Play Day

Tuesday, June 9
10:00 AM - 11:30 AM



Birding Hike

Thursday, June 11
7:30 AM - 9:00 AM



Junior IMN Series

June 12 - 26 (NOT June 19)
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM



Hummingbird Banding Program

with Allen Chartier

Saturday, June 27
8:30 AM - 11:30 AM

July



Nature Story Hour

Wednesday, July 1
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM



Nature Play Day

Thursday, July 16
10:00 AM - 11:30 AM



TREES FOR THE HEART PLANTINGS

Wednesday, July 15 | See page 8 for details.



EEC's 35th Anniversary

Saturday, July 18 | 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM - Spanish
6:30 PM - 8:30 PM - English

Pollinator Promenade

Saturday, July 11 | 10 AM - 1 PM

Join us for a fun "run" around our newly planted prairie! Compete in a costume contest, speed walking race, scavenger hunt, or all 3! Enjoy food, spreading native seeds, and celebrating our local pollinators. Visit cityofelkhartin.gov/pollinator-promenade for details.

Volunteers needed! See page 9 for more info.

August

Envirofest

Friday, August 21 | 4 PM - 8 PM
at Island Park in Elkhart

Our annual EnviroFest is back with local food vendors, booths by environmental- and sustainability-oriented organizations, live music, Kids Area, kids entertainment, silent auction and more! Tickets are FREE (donations are always appreciated!). Visit ElkhartEnviroFest.com for details.

Volunteers needed--for planning and day-of! See page 9 for more info.



Nature Story Hour

Wednesday, August 5
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

RIVER CLEANUP

Saturday, August 29
8:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Date is tentative based on weather and river conditions. Locations TBD. Check out elkhart.galaxydigital.com for details or email EECmail@citofelkhartin.gov to be added to our email list.

Volunteer Opportunities

Details for volunteer opportunities can be found on our website (cityofelkhartin.gov/eec) or our Facebook page. We're always adding more, so check online for updates! To sign up for volunteer opportunities, please visit elkhart.galaxydigital.com.



Ongoing

TREES FOR THE HART PLANTINGS

Dates, Times, & Locations Vary

What better way to kick off spring and celebrate summer than by planting trees? Join us as we set out to plant 2,000 trees by 2028! We'll be doing major tree planting events in neighborhoods all around Elkhart and we need your help!

For details about times and locations, and to sign up to volunteer, check out our volunteer website elkhart.galaxydigital.com.

April

TREE PREP

Thursday, April 16 | 8 AM - 4 PM
at Elkhart 4H Fairgrounds

We're joining forces with the Elkhart County Soil & Water Conservation District to prep BOTH their tree sale trees and our Earth Day trees. Join the fun! We'll be working in Commercial Building F building all day. Stop by whenever is convenient!

Ongoing



Quilt Garden
(May - September)

Help us plant and take care of our pretty new quilt garden design! Great project for groups to come out through the summer.



Adopt-A-Trail
(Year-round)

Great for groups or individuals! Pick a trail, walk it regularly (at your convenience), and let us know if it needs anything.



Adopt-A-Plot
(March- November)

Adopt a plot in our Learning Garden to grow your own fruits, veggies, or flowers! Weed your plot(s) at least twice a month in the summer and keep whatever you grow.

8

April

Earth Day

Saturday, April 25 | 8 AM - 2 PM

Help us celebrate Earth Day! We need lots of extra hands for this event:

Setup

Help us get the event started: setting up tables, chairs, and getting everything ready for visitors!

Adopt-A-Tree Booth

Give away FREE trees! Volunteers at this booth do 1 of 3 things:

- hand out tree species info
- hand out trees from storage
- help our GIS team map where the tree will be planted

Photographer

Get candid shots of the event! Snap photos of the different booths and activities and get some great pics of families and volunteers. We use these photos every year to promote the event, send special thank-yous to our sponsors and community partners, and to celebrate our accomplishments at the end of the year. Volunteers will need to provide their own camera.

Kids Activities

Have some fun! Help kids get into the Earth Day spirit with crafts/activities.

EEC & Event Info Booths

Spread the word about the EEC and answer questions about activities happening around our Earth Day event. All info will be provided at the booth.

Workshops

Assist visitors with assembling wildlife boxes.

Cleanup

Help us wrap up the event! Cleanup is usually very quick: grabbing tables, chairs, and event materials and getting everything put away.

Volunteers will receive free snacks and lunch. They also get first pick for a free tree (but the tree must be picked up before the event starts). A brief orientation will take place before the event, but additional training is available for anyone who would like it (please contact EEC staff to schedule). Don't forget to sign up for your preferred area online or with EEC staff. Bring family and friends with you!

Volunteer Opportunities

Ongoing



EnviroFest Committee
First Wednesday of the month
6 PM - 7 PM

We're looking for some **party planners** to help us throw a fun event for the city! Pick an area (or two!) to put your own special spin on. We meet once a month to collaborate on fun ideas and enjoy some tasty snacks!

We are always accepting new members--bring friends and family with you!

For more info or to be added to our email list, email EECmail@cityofelkhartin.gov.

June

fishing Clinic

Saturday, June 6 | 7:30 AM - 1 PM
at High Dive Park off of Baldwin St.

Volunteer orientation & setup will begin at 8 AM; the fishing clinic will start at 9 AM.

Setup - Help get stations ready

Registration - Get kids signed up

Conservation Station - Teach responsible practices

Stewardship Station - Teach management of natural resources

Basic Tackle - Teach kids about rods, tackle, etc.

Knot Tying - Teach kids basic fishing knots

Safety & Casting - Teach kids how to cast with a spinning rod and how to stay safe while fishing

Cleanup - Help us leave the park as we found it!

Breakfast, snacks, and lunch will be provided for volunteers. Bring friends and family with you!

July

Pollinator Promenade

Saturday, July 11 | 8 AM - 2 PM

This new event needs helpers for:

Setup - Tables, canopies, running track, etc.

Registration - Get "runners" set up for their activities, hand out t-shirts, etc.

Kids Activities - Run a variety of games and crafts

Photographer - Capture the magic of the moment!

Event Judges - Monitor the "races"

Parking - Direct cars to available spots

Cleanup - Help us stash our gear after the event!

Volunteers will receive free snacks throughout their shift(s) in addition to a free event shirt (supplies are limited, so register ASAP!). Volunteer with friends and family!

August

EnviroFest

Friday, August 21 | 12 PM - 10 PM
at Island Park in Elkhart

EnviroFest is one of our biggest events of the year and it could not be a success without the help of our amazing volunteers! Volunteers help with:

Setup

Help us kick things off with tables, chairs, and helping vendors and booths get unloaded/setup

EEC & Event Info Booths

Help promote the EEC and provide info about what's happening at this year's EnviroFest. All info will be provided at the booth.

Kids Area

Help lead games and activities to engage the kiddos!

Ticket Booths

Welcome visitors to the event! Take tickets and keep track of how many attendees come in.

Silent Auction

Answer questions about silent auction packages (all info provided), and post winners throughout the event.

Volunteer Station

Help volunteers get what they need: checked in, info about their shift, their free t-shirt, and food and drinks for a break

Event Helpers

The volunteers' volunteer! Help give breaks to volunteers throughout the event by sitting in on different shifts, help staff switch out trash/recycling, and/or be a runner for spur-of-the-moment needs.

Cleanup

Help us leave the park as we found it! Load materials into our box truck, help vendors pack up, and/or help direct traffic off the island.

Volunteers receive free snacks and meals throughout their shift(s), as well as a free event t-shirt (but supplies are limited, so register ASAP!). Brief, optional orientations are available before the event (contact EEC staff to schedule). Family and friends are welcome to volunteer together!

2025 Fall/Winter Programs



Natural Dye Workshop

Guest presenter, Julie Tourtillotte, led this sold out program in September. Participants learned how to dye fabric with beautiful dyes made from local plants such as goldenrod and walnut.



Pumpkin Hunt

Our annual October Pumpkin Hunt started off with 2 winners on the 1st day! Each winner took home a fun gift bag. Almost all pumpkins were found--there was only one left at the end of the month!



Bat House Workshop

This popular program has become semiannual! Last year's fall program sold out. Participants learned about local bat species and assembled their own bat house to take home.



Owl Prowl

This year, the program featured guest speakers (and owls!) from Foxwood Wildlife Rehabilitation. Participants got to dissect owl pellets and venture out on a night hike for a chance to see an owl.



Holiday Hoorah!

New this year, we added holiday lights to our Upper Wetland Trail for a festive night hike. Participants enjoyed tasty treats, holiday music, and fun, winter-themed crafts throughout the evening.



WinterFest Parade

We won an award for Best Use of Lights in the Elkhart Parks & Recreation WinterFest parade this year! We dressed our electric truck up as Rudolph and cruised Main St. handing out candy canes.



2025 Fall/Winter Programs



Winter Nature Play Day

We kicked off 2026 with fun in the snow! Kids got to make crafts and snowmen--and search for hidden snowmen to win a prize! They could also explore the trails with a winter nature scavenger hunt.



Upcycled Wind Chime Workshop

For the 2nd year in a row, this workshop sold out! Participants got to craft to their heart's content making their very own wind chime out of glass bottles and a variety of decorations.



Birds, Bees, & Beyond: Building a Backyard Habitat

What better way to get through the dreary winter days than dreaming of your spring and summer garden? Participants learned all about how to landscape with our wild friends in mind.

Holiday Lights Recycling

We once again partnered with Schupan Recycling to collect broken holiday lights. This year we collected 116 lbs!



Eco-Valentine's Day

Participants dropped by for holiday treats, explored the trails for a heart-themed scavenger hunt, and dove into heart-themed crafts.

Bluebird Box Workshops

So popular we had to host 2! Participants learned all about Eastern Bluebirds and made a nest box to take home!



Pileated Woodpecker Box Workshop

A brand new program! Participants learned all about Pileated Woodpeckers and built a nest box to take home.



2025 Fall/Winter Events

EnviroFest

The 28th EnviroFest was a fun day! In addition to the EnviroFest basics (Kids Area, live music, silent auction, beer garden, fantastic vendors and food vendors from around the area), we added some extra fun features including a rock climbing wall, gyroscope, and inflatable obstacle course. We also continued to host free workshops--this year we offered a free version of our Bluebird Box Workshop, our popular birdhouse workshop! We saw higher attendance this year and are looking forward to another fun EnviroFest in 2026!

If you would like to help make this year's event the best one yet, let us know! We're always looking for more help on our event planning committee.



Photos by Connie Roberts

Waggin' in the Woods

Our 6th annual Waggin' in the Woods was a record-setter! Thanks to our partnership with local dog rescue, Tracking in the Shadows, and a dedicated committee of volunteers, we saw over 600 visitors and enjoyed another fantastic pooch parade, led for the first time by Mayor Rod! The weather was perfect (if a little on the warm side) and we had lots of water bowls and doggy pools that were taken full advantage of. As a bonus, the event generated an overwhelming amount of donations for Tracking in the Shadows! We can't wait for next year! If you'd like to help with this event, email

EEEmail@cityofelkhart.in.gov to get involved.



Photos by Rose Goyette





NATURAL DYES WORKSHOP



OWL PROWL



UPCYCLED WIND CHIME WORKSHOP



ENVIROFEST



HOLIDAY HOORAH!



BAT HOUSE WORKSHOP



JUNIOR IMN CAMP



WAGGIN' IN THE WOODS



HAUNTED WALK THROUGH THE WOODS