

LOCAL LITTLE LEAGUE SPORTS STRIVING TO BROADEN THEIR CAPACITIES

In 2024, the Ross Community Center transitioned from recreational sports to youth league sports. The change was driven largely by the opportunity to offer more sports and provide kids with expanded options.

David Robbins Sr., an administrator for the Ross Community Center, led the shift from recreational to youth sports. Previously, the community center could only offer baseball. Now as a youth league, it can host baseball, softball, basketball and a flag football league set to launch this summer.

The youth league format also allows kids to compete in tournaments outside of Muncie and, more importantly, gives coaches the opportunity to build deeper relationships with their players.

“When you interact with them like that, that’s what builds trust. And once you get that trust built, they’ll follow you into war,” Robbins said. “They may be 8 years old, but they’re coming with their T-ball bats, bro. I’m telling you right now, they’re coming.”

Those player-coach relationships are central to the center’s mission, so much so that coaches move up age groups alongside their players, creating a continuity rarely seen in youth sports. “You practice, but you have fun. You keep it fun. Not only do you keep it fun, but you coach them in a way that lets them know you care,” Robbins said.

Beyond relationships, the Ross Community Center emphasizes fun and development. Robbins noted that for some kids, practice is the best part of their day, and he believes sports provide an escape while teaching lifelong lessons.

“They’re learning adversity. There’s so much stuff that I’m cramming into those four weeks. You’re having them adjust so quickly; you’re having them learn on the fly. Those are major life skills,” Robbins said.

The Ross has also been steadily improving its facilities, adding three baseball and softball fields over the last decade. While work remains to add concession stands and restrooms, the progress has already proven beneficial given the league’s growth.

Growth is challenging for any nonprofit, but what sets the Ross Community Center apart is its commitment to reinvesting



every dollar from player registration fees directly back into the community.

“I’m very adamant that all the money we earn goes back into the community or to the children directly. It just has to,” Robbins said.

Registration for baseball and softball closes March 13, with all other sports open for registration through May.

For more information, contact the Ross Community Center at sports@rosscentermuncie.org.



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FEBRUARY/MARCH 2026 NEWSLETTER • 8TWELVEMUNCIE.COM

COMMUNITY LETTER



When the 8Twelve team asked me to share a few words for the newsletter, I thought about what I would want to tell the people of the Thomas Park/Avondale neighborhood, the Southside, and Muncie at large. I realized that if I could offer one small nugget of hope, it would be this: our best days are still ahead of us.

It’s easy to look around at the remnants of a bygone era and feel like Muncie’s greatest chapter has already been written. But when I look around, I see opportunity — a chance for our community to forge a new path forward.

Recent economic losses, like the closure of the GM Plant, have made life harder for many Muncie residents. But these painful realities have also given us a chance to rewrite our city’s future. The old model depended on large international corporations for our livelihoods. While those companies brought good wages and benefits, they also left us dependent on them for our health care, homeownership, and tax base. When corporations like GM are lured away by cheap labor, it is Muncie residents — and those across the Midwest Rust Belt — who are left to absorb the impact.

The new era of Muncie can be defined by self-reliance, community collaboration, and an entrepreneurial renaissance driven by small and locally owned businesses. We are already seeing out-of-state investors and remote workers choosing to live in and invest in Muncie — because Muncie makes sense as an economic investment. That same opportunity exists for our local residents. If it’s attractive to someone who has never set foot here, imagine what’s possible for those of us who call this place home. This can be the season of the citizen — if we turn our eyes toward the future and its opportunities rather than back toward the industrial age.

Keep the faith, and look for the helpers. Together, we can build a better tomorrow for this generation and the ones to come. The blood, sweat, and tears our families poured into this city are the reason these opportunities exist at all. We are standing on the shoulders of giants — let’s make them proud, Muncie.

— Mike Martin, 8twelve Community Member

THANK YOU, JACQUIE!

This winter, we gave our best wishes to the former executive director of the Ross Community Center, Jacquie Hanoman. Hanoman served as executive director for 10 years, starting in December 2015. Over the course of just six years, Hanoman wrote an array of grants that were awarded a total of \$2.8 million. In 2010, she earned her Ph.D. in education from Ball State University and her Ph.D. in philosophy in 2015 from Purdue University.

“It has been my honor and immense pleasure to have served the Ross Community Center and the people of our community these past ten years. It is a wonderful organization, which I will always carry in my heart and support in any way I can,” Hanoman said in an announcement.

Following her departure from the Ross Center, Hanoman will be moving to Portugal with her family.



Jacqueline Hanoman

A BETTER PLACE TO BE!
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JASMINE TAYLOR



Earlier this month, the 8twelve social media team highlighted Muncie local Jasmine Taylor for her work throughout the city, specifically the effort she has put in at the Avondale Community Garden. We caught up with Jasmine to get her thoughts on leadership in Muncie and the 8twelve area.

What does it mean to you to be a leader in the Muncie community? It means showing up consistently, even when the work is difficult. Leadership isn't just about giving direction, it's doing the work alongside the community. I strive to

uplift people, challenge negative narratives, and help others recognize their own value and ability to contribute.

How has your perspective on the people of Muncie changed since you started your role? Tremendously. I've come to see how much strength and potential exists here. Our neighbors know what they need, they often just need support and someone to say, "I see you, and I believe in you." I've watched people move from surviving to truly thriving, and that has only deepened my belief in this community.

What is the most important part of instilling change in the community? Cooperation. Real cooperation means setting aside personal, political, and religious differences to focus on what we all agree on: That every person deserves safe housing, that no child should go hungry, that we all want better for the next generation. When we start there, real progress becomes possible.

What are some of the best experiences you've had working in the community garden? Watching the kids is what gets me every time, seeing a child go from not knowing what they're doing to standing there proud, calling themselves a "real gardener." But some of my most meaningful moments had nothing to do with plants. Neighbors stop by just to talk, share their struggles, sometimes cry. The garden became a place for all of that.

WALK A MILE.

This month, the Muncie Mission hosted its annual "Walk a Mile in My Shoes" fundraising event, raising a total of \$194,227.64 — surpassing its goal of \$175,000 by nearly \$20,000. The top team was Mary's Merry Marchers, which raised \$30,576.37, with The Gathering and True Light Baptist Church following with \$23,364.36 and \$7,174 respectively.



COME ON OVER!

The southside's 2024 Come On Over campaign has been redeployed on billboards throughout the Thomas Park–Avondale and South Central neighborhoods, as well as in high-traffic corridors like McGalliard Road. "Come On Over: We Have What You Need" is designed not only to spark curiosity, but also to playfully challenge long-standing "other side of the tracks" stereotypes that have shaped perceptions of our community for decades.

Residents already know how much is happening here. New businesses are opening, longtime establishments are expanding, and neighbors are showing up for one another in ways that strengthen both commerce and community life. Energy is building block by block, event by event, and conversation by conversation. The campaign simply invites others to see for themselves what southside residents experience every day: opportunity, connection, and pride of place.

What comes next depends on all of us. Billboards can capture attention, but lasting change happens when residents share their stories, support local businesses, and welcome visitors with the same authenticity that defines this neighborhood. Crossing the tracks is ultimately about more than geography - it is about rethinking assumptions and discovering value where it has always existed.

The message is simple and sincere: come on over. You may arrive out of curiosity, but you will leave with a deeper appreciation for the future we're building here.

ROSEBUD COFFEE HOUSE

In December 2025, the Rosebud Coffee House celebrated its five-year anniversary. Founded by Tiara Hicks, the café has become a pillar of the 8Twelve community, providing a space for residents to gather, work and relax, all while offering an array of caffeinated drinks. Located on the corner of Memorial and Hoyt, Rosebud Coffee House is committed to being present and available for the community. To commemorate the anniversary, Hicks sat down with the 8Twelve team.

Looking back on the past five years, what has been Rosebud's biggest milestone?

The biggest milestone for Rosebud has been longevity with purpose, making it to five years as a locally owned coffee shop while staying true to our mission. Opening our doors was one thing, but sustaining a business through a pandemic, changing consumer habits and economic uncertainty — while continuing to grow relationships — has been the real accomplishment. Reaching five years confirms that Rosebud isn't just a place to grab coffee; it's a place people have chosen to support, return to and make part of their routine.

In what ways do you think Rosebud has impacted the community?

Rosebud has become a gathering place for connection. We've intentionally created a space where students, professionals, families and neighbors feel welcome, whether they're meeting for work, studying for finals, hosting a small event or just needing a moment of calm in their day. Beyond coffee, we've supported local makers, partnered with community events like the Farmers Market, and offered our meeting rooms as a resource for collaboration. I'm proud that Rosebud has played a small but meaningful role in strengthening relationships and fostering a sense of belonging in Muncie.

How is Rosebud marking its five-year anniversary?

We celebrated the way that feels most "Rosebud," by thanking the community that made it possible. It's less about us and more about honoring the customers, partners and team members who have supported us from day one.



What goals or aspirations do you have for Rosebud over the next five years?

Looking ahead, my goal is sustainable growth while preserving the heart of Rosebud. That means continuing to evolve our offerings, expanding community partnerships and deepening the experience for our customers without losing the warmth and personal touch that define us. I want Rosebud to remain a trusted, familiar place that adapts with the community it serves, while also creating opportunities for our team and contributing positively to the local economy.

WINTER ISN'T OVER YET — KNOW WHERE TO GO IF YOU NEED WARMTH

Winter in Muncie is far from finished. Temperatures can still drop dangerously low, and warming centers remain open and available to anyone in need. Warming centers are typically activated once temperatures fall below 32 degrees, offering a safe place to get out of the cold — and in some cases, overnight shelter.

- Center Township Trustee Office: 1200 E. Main St. Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–4 p.m. 765-288-8876

- The Muncie HUB: 318 W. 8th St. Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–noon and 1–4 p.m. 765-282-3948
- YWCA: 310 E. Charles St. Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–6 p.m. | Saturday–Sunday, 7 a.m.–3 p.m. 765-284-3345
- Salvation Army: 1015 N. Wheeling Ave. Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m. 765-289-7924
- Muncie Mission: 1725 S. Liberty St. Open 24/7 765-288-9122



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