

Spring/Summer 2025

The Ruthmere Record

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Cover Photo: Tulips at the Havilah Beardsley House, taken by Campus Gardener Bree Askew

Running for the Roses: Ruthmere Derby Day 2025

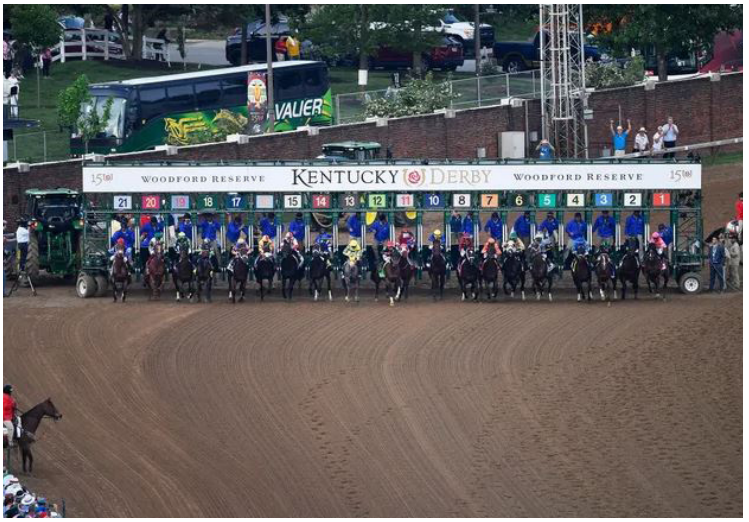
By William A. Firstenberger, Executive Director

Are you ready for some springtime fun?! Say, "Hello Y-all!" to Ruthmere Derby Day on Saturday, May 3 from 4-8pm as we transform the grounds of Ruthmere Mansion into a sprawling estate of activities that's an odds-on favorite to win!

Watch live races from Churchill Downs all afternoon on the Monster Message Board giant screen TV, and if you're chomping at the bit to try your luck with the ponies, Twin Spires online betting (legal in Indiana!) will be available with easy access on your phone. Ruthmere Staff will help you sign up in just 90 seconds, and "You're off and running!" Everyone gets to pick their favorite horse to win the Derby just for fun at The Gate upon arrival. If your horse wins, so do you—your choice of a classic music concert ticket or free membership—pretty fabulous for a door prize!

Sit back and soak up the atmosphere of Ruthmere's lush surroundings while you sip on a mint julep made to order with the premium bourbon of your choice. Or maybe you'd like to indulge in a straight up bourbon tasting while you enjoy a fine cigar on the Ruthmere Smoking Piazza? This is the only day of the year smoking is allowed on campus, so go ahead and have a puff. What's that sweet music you hear? None other than Abbie Thomas + 2 Crazy Hearts will keep the vibe fresh and lively in the gardens area.

Admission to this general public event includes a generous spread of gourmet hors d'oeuvres prepared by Chic Eats, two drink tickets for authentic mint juleps, wine or beer (additional drink tickets available for purchase), a Fancy Hat Fashion Show with prizes, and photo ops with our handsome but docile live horse "Sarge" in the paddock or when he parades the grounds.



Entry to Ruthmere Derby Day is just $75 per person (or only $60 for members), or better yet be a Big Shot Table Sponsor for only $500 and reserve a private table for eight with premium seating for watching the race. Table reservations are limited and on a first come, first served basis. Advanced tickets on sale now at Ruthmere.org.



New Season, New Faces at Ruthmere Spring Concerts

by Mark Doddington, Membership Coordinator

Once again, Ruthmere is polishing its piano keys to welcome in the 2025 Spring Concert Series. As per tradition, the season will open with the Fischoff Soirée on May 8. Since 1973, the Fischoff National Chamber Music Association has hosted its competition in South Bend, bringing a wide range of musical talent together to square off against each other in various divisions. Each year, the Fischoff committee selects a small sampling of their contenders to perform the opening night concert at Ruthmere. As these artists are not chosen until close to the actual concert date, we always tingle in anticipation to see who will represent Fischoff each year.

Ruthmere is proud to offer three brand new artists this Spring. Launching the season on May 22 is Tingting Yao, a graduate of the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire in England. She currently teaches piano at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas. Yao has degrees from the University of Melbourne in Australia and Tongji University in China. She has performed in major venues across four continents.

On June 5, Jasmine "Jas" Ogiste, a former Beardsley Prize entrant, will bring her piano reflections our way. Based in New York City, Ogiste holds a degree from Oberlin Conservatory's Black Musicians Guild and Latinx Music Union. Her career has focused largely on celebrating the achievements of Black artists in the field of classical music, reflecting her own Afro-Caribbean heritage.

Perhaps the youngest performer ever to grace our Steinway in a full concert will be 16-year old Tyler Reed, from New Jersey. Reed has won numerous awards in his young career, including the 2024 Gold Prize in the Young Pianist Competition of New Jersey. He also took top honors at the International Music Festival "Musica Chioggia" in Italy. Among other venues, he has been featured more than once at Carnegie Hall.

All concerts are on Thursday evenings, beginning at 7:00 pm. Tickets are $20 for Ruthmere members, $50 for non-members. Season passes are also available to members for $80. To reserve seats, please contact Ruthmere at (574) 264-0330 or visit Ruthmere.org.

2025 Spring Concert Lineup



May 8
Fischoff Soirée
Sponsored by
Wade Mayberry



May 22
Tingting Yao
Sponsored by
Marie Smith



June 5
Jas Ogiste
Sponsored by
Janet Evanega Rieckhoff & Jim Rieckhoff



June 18
Tyler Reed
Sponsored by
Jim Kelly

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-SPONSOR NEEDED-

Concert Receptions Sponsors
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Sandra Van Tilburg

2025 Annual Season Sponsors
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Sandra Van Tilburg

Spring Series Sponsors
Nicholas Roth & Joe Freund
Brenda & Michael Tudor

Summer Exhibits at the Havilah Beardsley House

by Jennifer Johns, Curator

This summer, Ruthmere will be hosting two traveling exhibits from the Indiana Historical Society (IHS).

Indiana Through the Mapmaker's Eye will be on view July 2 – 31, 2025 at the Havilah Beardsley House.

Most people today are familiar with maps as tools used to locate a specific destination or for figuring out a route from point A to point B. Before today's more modern tools like apps and the internet, people relied on printed maps and mapmakers for a variety of reasons.

This exhibit shows maps used as documentation, tools, political images, and even art. Maps reflect the needs of the people who create and use them — from topographical to transportation maps. They can depict areas as large as the world or as small as a neighborhood.

Indiana Through the Mapmaker's Eye explores how maps can show how an area developed throughout the years, showing how counties were drawn, land was seized and infrastructure was created.

Be Heard: Latino Experiences in Indiana will be on view from September 3 – 28, 2025 at the Havilah Beardsley House.

Be Heard offers a glimpse into the stories of individuals of varying cultural backgrounds who recall what it has been like to be Latino in the Hoosier State throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. The stories reflect on the Latinos' cultures as well as on their contributions to local communities or to the state of Indiana.

This exhibit builds off the Indiana Historical Society's years-long collecting initiative to gather the often historically-excluded narratives of Hoosier Latinos who have settled in Indiana in large numbers for more than 100 years. Major immigration began in the late 1910s, but Latinos have appeared on the state's census rolls since the late 1800s. This community has seen its share of struggle, including a wave of repatriations and deportations in the 1930s, but has remained, contributing to the state through commerce, science, education, activism and more.

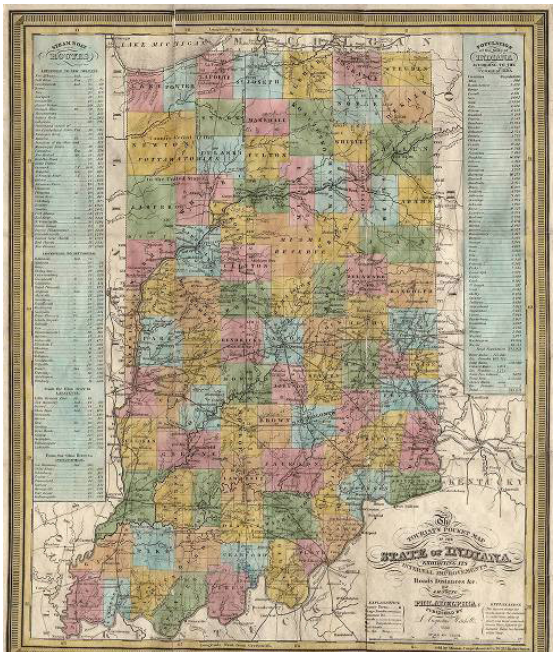


Photo from the Indiana Historical Society



Photo from Sandra Valdes, the Indiana Historical Society

Using photographs, oral histories, newspapers, letters and other documents, this exhibit introduces a larger story that is still being written — a story that has had and will continue to have a transformative impact on Indiana and beyond.

Be Heard: Latino Experiences in Indiana is made possible by a generous grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to the Indiana Historical Society.

These exhibits are generously sponsored by Steve & Julie Bachman - thank you!

Volunteer Awards & Honoring Ben Jeffery

by Andrea Hutslar, Outreach Curator

Ruthmere's volunteers always go above and beyond, and nothing we do would be possible without them. Every year, it's difficult to choose just a few individuals who will be honored with our annual volunteer recognition awards – each and every one of them contribute in meaningful ways and we are proud to have them represent our organization. In the past, we have given out two volunteer awards: the Annette Kozak Volunteer Award for Hospitality and the Laura Funk Volunteer Award for Education. Both are named after dedicated, exceptional volunteers who exemplified our mission and our goals for hospitality.

This year, the winner of the Annette Kozak Volunteer Award for Hospitality is Connie S.! Connie has been volunteering with Ruthmere since 2017. You will usually see Connie on Saturday mornings, working one of our busiest shifts of the week. She is always a friendly face at Coffee on the Piazza and loves to talk to and learn more about our visitors. When she isn't volunteering at Ruthmere, she volunteers at other nearby organizations, tends to her farm property, and spends time with her dog, Andy.

The winner of the 2025 Laura Funk Volunteer Award for Education is Steve Barton! Steve has also been volunteering since 2017, and has helped Ruthmere in many capacities over the years. Beyond being an informative docent, Steve has also given Gallery Talks, helped in our gardens, drove guests around in our Milburn Electric, helped with maintenance projects, and oversaw the operation of our trains during 2024's holiday tours. Steve is a train aficionado and also volunteers for the National New York Central Railroad Museum.

In addition, we now have a new award: the Ben Jeffery Community Kindness Award. As many of you know, Ben started volunteering at the Havilah Beardsley House last summer. He was always enthusiastic to learn and a friendly, approachable person. He was not an Elkhart native, but planted his roots here and became very involved in the community, also volunteering with Emergency Management Assistance and the Red Cross. Tragically, Ben lost his life during the senseless violence that occurred at Martin's Supermarket on January 27. In his memory, we have created this award to be given annually to a volunteer who makes an impact not just at Ruthmere, but by volunteering across the community.



Ben Jeffery

The inaugural winner of this award is Ann Wroblewski! Like the others, she has been volunteering since 2017, and can be seen at Ruthmere or the Havilah Beardsley House. She is a proud advocate and owner of cats and also volunteers for the Humane Society of Elkhart County and Catsnip Etc.

The winners were honored at our annual volunteer celebration on March 17th, where we presented volunteers with a high tea instead of our usual luncheon. Thank you to our award winners and ALL of our volunteers – we are so grateful for all that you do!



Ann Wroblewski, Steve Barton, & Connie S.

Gearing Up for Beardsley Discovery Center

by William A. Firstenberger, Executive Director



The wheels are in motion and the Beardsley Discovery Center (BDC) will soon transform the way we deliver services to the public. Reflecting back, we have been delivering docent-led tours of Ruthmere Mansion for over fifty years, and in 2025 we will celebrate the ten-year anniversary since the Havilah Beardsley House opened full-time as Ruthmere Campus' second house museum, also with guided, immersive tours and wonderful special exhibits.

With the opening of the BDC, we will soon offer a third main line public service, our new Family Tree Explorer program available during all normal days of operation. Family Tree Explorer will be delivered via a workstation(s) in the Beardsley Discovery Center and will be led by Ruthmere Curator Jennifer Johns, who carries extensive genealogy experience, and a cultivated team of qualified staff and specially trained volunteers. The program is 100% digital, zero paper and carbon neutral. We will subscribe to numerous online genealogy databases, cumulatively an expense that would be far out of reach of most individuals and their families. The Ruthmere Family Tree Team will coach public participants in the methods and techniques for researching family genealogy, meeting each person where they are in their quest for knowledge. Takeaways for the public will be in the form of emailed files or downloaded files on stick drives available for purchase in the gift shop. If you like doing online research and helping people find answers through history, consider volunteering for this new exciting program!

The BDC is currently slated to open in late summer 2025 with a Grand Opening date yet to be announced.

Exciting Staff Updates at Ruthmere

by Jennifer Johns, Curator

As Ruthmere continues to expand our programs and events, our team is evolving to best serve our community. We are fortunate to have a dedicated group of employees whose individual strengths help us excel.

We are pleased to announce the following staff role updates: Linnea Wuorenmaa is now our Volunteer Coordinator and Gift Shop Manager! She oversees the recruitment, training, and coordination of our wonderful volunteers. With the Beardsley Discovery Center opening later this year, as Gift Shop Manager, she will curate merchandise, manage inventory, and ensure a welcoming shopping experience for visitors. In addition to managing our wonderful volunteers and gift shop, she also facilitates our monthly Book Club.

Tehillah Moses is now our Program Educator! She oversees the Lincoln Penny Story Hour by coordinating speakers and scheduling the schools to attend the series, and also assists Linnea with the monthly Book Club.

We are grateful for their hard work and dedication to making Ruthmere a welcoming and enriching place for all. Please join us in congratulating them on their new roles!





Tehillah Moses & Linnea Wuorenmaa

2024 Ruthmere Forever Donors

We would like to acknowledge everyone who contributed to our Ruthmere Forever campaign in 2024! THANK YOU for your support of Ruthmere!

Monica Abair
Marilynn Anson
Linda Armstrong
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Cheryl Waldman
Steve Watterson
Steve & Carol Weld
Jeff & Phid Wells
Ann Wroblewski
Arthur & Suzanne Wyatt
Teryl Yoder

Grants in Action: Powering Ruthmere's Future

by Karen Shirk, Grants Coordinator

As the Grants Coordinator for the Ruthmere Museum campus, I'm excited to be part of such a remarkable institution. It's been a rewarding first year of service, where I've had the wonderful opportunity to combine my love for writing with my passion for history to help support the museum's needs. In 2024, I completed 23 grant proposals, and I've already wrapped up 8 in 2025—each one working to fund the programs and preservation efforts that make this museum campus so special.

These funds will support a range of projects, from the Beardsley Discovery Center and computer hardware for our new genealogy research station to school field trip scholarships, special exhibitions, and arts programming. We are especially grateful to the Indiana Arts Commission and the Community Foundation of Elkhart County for their support of our arts and cultural programming, which continues to enrich the Ruthmere experience.

One exciting development we're proud to announce is securing a Historic Preservation Education Grant for our "Introduction to Our Museum" cartoon—a fun and engaging children's history video. This project was made possible through generous funding from Indiana Landmarks, Indiana Humanities, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

We're grateful for the ongoing support of these and all our amazing grantors, whose commitment helps Ruthmere continue its mission of preserving history and inspiring future generations.

This Program is Sponsored By...

By Andrea Hutslar, Outreach Curator

…and your name goes here!

Become one of our 2025 program sponsors and see your name attached to one of Ruthmere's high-quality programs that fits your passions and interests. Ruthmere sponsors are what make our programs so high-quality – your support means we can step up our game to make events bigger, better, and more memorable for everyone involved. Not to mention the fact that sponsors also enjoy special perks for their selected programs!

Sponsorships are offered at varying levels that shoulder everything from Presenting Sponsor exclusivity to everyday fan enthusiasm. There's something for everyone's pocketbook (literally from $50 to $5,000), but most importantly, we hope that the end result is YOU feeling better connected to Ruthmere, and the parts of Ruthmere that keep you coming back.

Here is a list of program sponsors so far for 2025. Want to see your name on this list? Contact Bill Firstenberger (bfirstenberger@ruthmere.org or (574) 264-0330) and arrange a time to chat over a nice cup of tea.

Gallery Talks
Individual Talk Sponsors:
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The Grace Hopkins Ruml Charitable Trust
Connie S.
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Ann Wroblewski

Book Club
Feature Sponsors:
Gordon & Phyllis Hostetler

Seasonal Teas
Mother & Me Tea:
Debbie Kulwicki

Free Family Sunday
Presenting Sponsor:
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Individual Concert Sponsors:
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Terry Trimmer
Eric Trotter
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Robert B. Beardsley Piano Prize Competition
Presenting Sponsor:
Doug Beardsley

Derby Day
Abbie Thomas Stage Sponsor:
Tom Myers

Coffee on the Piazza
Presenting Sponsor:
Tom Myers

Lincoln Penny Story Hour
Presenting Sponsor:
Centier Bank

Exhibits from Indiana Humanities
Presenting Sponsors:
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Ceramic Showcase
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Ruthmere Holiday Tours
Decorations Sponsor:
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Pocketsights
Beardsley Avenue District Tree Tour:
Kallimani Tree Services

The Ruthmere Record
Spring/Summer:
Linda Armstrong

Good Neighbor Memberships
Presenting Sponsor:
1st Source Bank

Program Sponsorships Still Available For:

Off-the-Record
2026 Ruthmere Calendar
Mousley Craft Day
Cemetery Walk
Patriotic Program Series
Tuesday Teas @ 2
Heart City Heritage Series
EOQ Cocktails
Founder's Day
Bus Trip to the Moon
Student Field Trips
Family Tree Explorer

...as well as ADDITIONAL sponsorship opportunities for any of the programs listed on this page!

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Business Membership

1st Source Bank
Anderson Photography
Big Brothers Big Sisters
Coppins Investigative & Security Group
D's Nutz Donuts
Friends of Elkhart Public Library
Goshen Public Library
Hotel Elkhart
Indiana Trust Wealth Management
Nappanee Public Library
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Stephenson's of Elkhart

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Heather Becker
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Jody & Bill Comer
Joel Conrad
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Dena Phillips
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Rusty & Anita Ritchie
Ruth Rockwell
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Rev. Willard & Alice Roth
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Linda Rupnow
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Dale & Shelly Seely
Jacob & Kimberly Shearer
Carolyn Shelley
Tim & Meg Shelly
James Siegmann
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Becky Skipper
Nancy Slimak
Brian & Lauri Smith
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Marie Smith
Jon & Carol Smoker
Diane Soptich
Loretta Souder
Marc & Kris Stahl
Jeri Stahr
Connie Stamper
Cookie Stenberg
Kirk & Linda Stolley
Raymond & Teri Stout
Amber & Kent Taylor
Matt Thomas
Valerie Thompson
Terry Trimmer
Eric Trotter
Rowena Troup
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Learn about our membership and support structure at Ruthmere.org.

Do you have questions or need to update your membership? Contact Membership Coordinator Mark Doddington at (574) 264-0330 ext. 107 or mdoddington@ruthmere.org.

Ruthmere's Bus Trip to the Moon

by William A. Firstenberger, Executive Director

Ruthmere is planning another in its series of fabulous experiential bus trips for the Fall of 2025! Have you ever been to the Moon?? The Wild Rose Moon, of course, in beautiful downtown Plymouth! Get ready to blast off!!

Join me as I pack the Royal Excursion "Rock Star Bus" with 55 of my favorite Ruthmere-ites for a chance to be part of music history and made famous through radio and television!

THE COST: Trip is available for Ruthmere Members Only at $150 per seat!

WE LEAVE: Ruthmere, 302 E. Beardsley Ave., Elkhart at 4pm on 10/25/2025.

EN ROUTE: We will watch a medley of Wild Rose Moon Radio Show videos on the bus' ample video screens. Harvest Moon Cocktails will be served on the bus.

WE DINE: We will dine in style at Opie's Deli in downtown Plymouth. If you haven't been there, don't be fooled by the name. Gourmet foodie options (dinners pre-ordered and ready for us) and a superb selection of craft beers and fine wines from the bar will have us ready for the show ACROSS THE STREET at the Wild Rose Moon Performing Arts Center!

WE ENJOY THE SHOW: The featured artist will be the phenomenally talented Calvin Hinds—winner of the 2021 Young Artist Award at Interlochen. Our host, the one and only George Schricker, will welcome our merry band to "The Moon." But it's more than just a great live show with audience participation. The Wild Rose Moon is a cultural icon, a radio show broadcast on WVPE as well as a television show on WNIT—you're all about to get a little famous!

WE RETURN: Bus arrives back at Ruthmere approximately 10:30pm

MEMORIES MADE: Plan for them to last a lifetime or we have not done our job!

Stay tuned for registration information at Ruthmere.org. Contact Bill Firstenberger at bfirstenberger@ruthmere.org with any questions or to learn more about this opportunity!



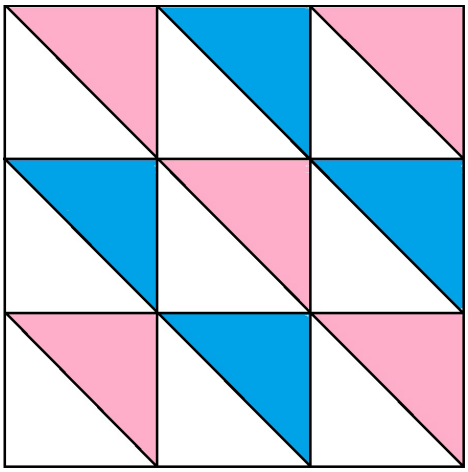
Calvin Hinds

2025 Quilt Garden: Flying Swallows at Ruthmere

by Bree Askew, Campus Gardener & Andrea Hutslar, Outreach Curator

Spring is slowly arriving, and that means that preparations are underway for the 2025 Quilt Garden! We are thrilled once again to participate in the Quilt Gardens Along Heritage Trail, one of the most popular tourist attractions of our region. The Elkhart County Convention & Visitors Bureau oversees these annual displays of garden artistry that incorporate over a million flowers county-wide. This year's gardens will be on display from May 30 – September 15.

Ruthmere's design for this year is called "Flying Swallows at Ruthmere," inspired by frequent feathered visitors to Ruthmere's Quilt Garden Green. The nearby St. Joseph and Elkhart Rivers create a perfect natural environment for wildlife to thrive, providing water and food sources for multiple species of bird. Around dawn and dusk, you can see swallows diving to catch insects around the quilt garden. Swallows can eat thousands of insects in a single day and help to maintain a balance in our ecosystem.



The connection between man and nature has a long history, even in this exact location. In the late 1820s, Elkhart founder Havilah Beardsley was drawn to this area by the water power and its potential uses. He was standing approximately where Ruthmere stands when he decided he would move his family and settle here to build mills. He was undoubtedly surrounded by wildlife, and may have watched a swallow or two diving for insects by the river, just as we do today. Water connects us to nature and is a vital part of our Elkhart ecosystem – Havilah Beardsley used it, the swallows use it, and we continue to depend on water as a clean energy source.

This garden will consist of white and pink begonias and Aloha Blue ageratum.

If you are interested in helping with the quilt garden planting this year, please contact our Campus Gardener, Bree Askew, at baskew@ruthmere.org or by calling (574) 264-0330.

Porch Restoration Project

by Jennifer Johns, Curator

Restoring an old house, especially one with historical significance like the Havilah Beardsley House, can be a challenging task. The front porch of the house has been deteriorating over the past 15 years due to moisture. Initially, the intent was to repair the damaged parts, but a photograph was donated in 2012 that revealed the original design of the porch during James Rufus Beardsley's time. This inspired the dream of restoring the porch to its former state. Americana Corner has provided a lead grant award and we continue to seek additional grant support to fund the project. However, with the Beardsley Discovery Center opening soon, restoring the porch became a priority to complete in 2025. Graber Custom Remodeling has been hired to rebuild the porch, including custom columns, spindles, and a new deck to recreate its original Victorian design.





Right, Above: The Havilah Beardsley House, circa 1917
Right, Below: The Havilah Beardsley House today

Ruthmere Rising - Refined for 2025

by William A. Firstenberger, Executive Director

Most of you will recall that in January of 2023, Ruthmere launched a bold new development plan called Ruthmere Rising which had two main goals. First, it simplified giving by sweeping away the old stair-step membership ladder of levels and benefits, and instead made membership accessible and available to everyone at the same level. Second, we opened up sponsorship opportunities to ALL members and provided a variety of price points of support so that YOU could put YOUR NAME in connection with the parts of Ruthmere Campus programs that YOU LIKED BEST. After two years, I'm happy to report that Ruthmere Rising works! In total, public giving to ALL Ruthmere operations, projects and programs has increased by 78% over these two years. We are keeping ALL the Ruthmere Rising advantages that we've experienced over the past two years, but it's now time to build upon that success, and REFINE our development plan as we look to a future with the Beardsley Discovery Center as part of the Ruthmere Campus.

NEW Ruthmere Rising developments for 2025:

- Our special event fundraisers are now classed into three distinct categories:
  1. Invitation Only Gala Events (like our 50th Anniversary Gala) which we will offer on meaningful occasions and have high expectations of event proceeds.
  2. Audience Expander Events offered annually that welcome both members and non-members alike to engage in the excitement of a Ruthmere event and generate significant positive revenue.
  3. Exclusive Member-Only Events that provide added value to Ruthmere membership with modest expectations of additional revenue.

- Ruthmere is launching a NEW major donor giving circle called **Ruthmere Cornerstones** for donors giving $5,000 or more annually as philanthropic gifts to Ruthmere. Cornerstones understand and are committed to the Ruthmere mission and vision. By joining this giving circle, Cornerstones will have opportunities to meet with Ruthmere Board and Executive Staff to offer guidance and suggestions.

- **The Ruthmere Golden Pass** is your chance to buy a complete ALL-ACCESS pass to all Ruthmere events for the one-time per year discounted amount of $1,000! The value of each Golden Pass is over $1,500.* The Golden Pass is good for one person for an entire calendar year of events and for 2025 includes:

  -1 Year Private Membership with Unlimited Free Tours
  -Reciprocal Museum Benefits Across USA with Time Travelers
  -4 EOQ (End of Quarter) Cocktail Parties
  -8 Classical Music Concerts
  -2 Two Pianos at Ruthmere Concerts
  -1 Piano Competition
  -1 Student Music Recital
  -4 Seasonal Teas
  -8 Tuesday Teas
  -3 Garden Workshops
  -2 Heart City Heritage Lectures
  -11 Gallery Talks
  -13 Coffee on the Piazzas including Morning Yoga
  -1 Ice Cream Social
  -12 Book Club Discussions
  -2 Open Public Date Lincoln Penny Story Hours
  -1 Derby Day Special Event
  -1 Ruthmere on the Road Bus Trip
  -$30 spending voucher at Ceramic Showcase

  *Golden Pass is not transferable and reservation is required for every event.

- Sponsorships took off in 2023-24 and we have expanded in 2025 with even more opportunities. Our goal is simple. If you have a favorite program or element of the Ruthmere Campus offerings, we want to give you the opportunity to place your support dollars directly toward that part of Ruthmere through recognition sponsorship. There are many price points for sponsorship, each with tailored perks and benefits. If there's something that you love about Ruthmere that is not currently offered as a sponsorship, call Executive Director Bill Firstenberger at 574-264-0330 ext. 105 to discuss the possibilities. Ruthmere Campus belongs to everyone.

Unrelated Events From Dree

by Andrea "Dree" Hutslar, Outreach Curator

Though none of the following events are at all related, they do all have something in common: I'm in charge of them. So I'm promoting them here. I would be remiss if I didn't take an opportunity to use this platform to build hype for stuff I'm excited about. So… ta-da!

First of all, we are once again holding a Mousley Craft Day this year! This time, we are returning to our original format of an open craft day rather than a tea so that more familiies can attend. This event is slated for Saturday, June 28th from 2-4 pm. There will likely be a small admission fee to help cover expenses of craft supplies and the return of our balloon and face paint artists from the T.A.G. Art Company. Those with kids or grandkids, mark your calendars!

Next up, we have our Cemetery Walk making a return after taking a hiatus in 2024. This year's Walk will be on October 11th at Grace Lawn Cemetery. I've just confirmed a partnership with an organization that's near and dear to my heart: The Acting Ensemble in Mishawaka. I have been an active participant with the Ensemble, both by acting in several shows and serving on the committee that selects their annual plays. After getting to know the people involved, I am thrilled to be able to work with the Director, Melissa Gard, to find actors and actresses to portray historic figures in the cemetery. This will hopefully open up more doors for theatrical programs in the future, too – the Ensemble has been working with local museums to create "museum theater" programs such as *Blue Sox* last summer and *Kluckers* in 2022.

And finally… who's up for some trivia? I come from a family of ardent trivia enthusiasts, and it finally dawned on me that Ruthmere needs its own trivia night. I am tentatively planning for Ruthmere to host this event sometime after the opening of the Beardsley Discovery Center, since I think we need a larger, more accessible indoor space to make it work. The date is TBD.

If you're interested in sponsoring the Mousley Craft Day or the Cemetery Walk, please contact me (ahutslar@ruthmere.org) or Bill Firstenberger (bfirstenberger@ruthmere.org). You can also call us at (574) 264-0330. Sponsors help us make these events bigger and better for everyone, and having your name attached to an event you enjoy is pretty cool, too!

Participate in Ruthmere's Lincoln Penny Story Hour

by Tehillah Moses, Program Educator

It's been a busy couple months for the Lincoln Penny Story Hour (LPSH)! We had 3 community members speak for the LPSH so far in 2025. We are always looking for special group audiences! If you are a parent or teacher and want to share the value of diversity of our community by being part of our audience, call Ruthmere at (574) 264-0330 and ask for Bill or Tehillah. Or, you can email Tehillah Moses at tmoses@ruthmere.org.

The Lincoln Penny Story Hour is generously supported by the Presenting Sponsor, Centier Bank.



If One Piano is Good, Two Pianos are Better!

by William A. Firstenberger, Executive Director



Ruthmere is proud to announce the launch of a NEW music series that will be twice the fun—The Two Pianos at Ruthmere Concert Series! While audience members have a long-standing love of our classical music series delivered via our Spring and Fall Concerts, we have come to realize that there is room for more—more types of music and more ways to get people excited about experiencing live music.

Some of the most popular of our classical concerts have been ones that made use of BOTH of our wonderful pianos. Norell Duo and Nick Susi, Bob Milne and Jeff Barnhart, the AR Piano Duo, and Felix and Fingers Dueling Pianos have all performed at Ruthmere in the past 8 years utilizing two pianos. And what pianos we have!

Almost everyone is familiar with the story behind our 1951 Steinway concert grand D, Arthur Rubinstein's practice piano: the genius and good fortune possessed by our Founding Director Robert Beardsley when he was given the opportunity to purchase and bring this special piano to Elkhart. His idea of using the Rubinstein piano as an "artist magnet" has paid off 100 times over.

Less well-known is the story behind the 1938 Baldwin baby grand which came back to Ruthmere in 2016. This piano was a prized possession of the Deputy family, the last private family to live in Ruthmere. This piano was a personal wedding gift during their first year of marriage from Sherrill Deputy to his bride, Helen Deputy. Like any treasured family heirloom, it traveled with the Deputy family over the years, including the magical decades that the Deputy family called Ruthmere their home. The family generously donated their prized 1938 Baldwin Baby Grand back to Ruthmere so that audiences could experience a new range of creative performance experiences when combined with the Steinway. Restored by Chupp Pianos, owner Dennis Chupp called the Deputy piano "the finest Baldwin piano I have ever touched, and I've worked on thousands."

Together the 1951 Steinway and the 1938 Baldwin offer an incomparable combination of dynamic range and harmony, and it is this fusion of sound that will be on full display for future concerts in the Two Pianos at Ruthmere Series. Best of all, this new series is being supported by Juke and the Music Town Elkhart initiative which is bringing new and exciting forms of live music to Elkhart. To get plugged in to all local live music happening in Elkhart, scan the Juke QR code below:

The Two Pianos at Ruthmere Series kicks off on July 17 with Abbie Thomas and Simon Kauffman Hurst with set list mix curated to Abbie's unique blend of jazz, pop and more! On December 11, the Norell Duo will return to Ruthmere featuring a two piano version of the classic Nutcracker Suite, and more is in store from them in this series in 2026 to celebrate the national 250th celebration of the United States of America Semi-Q! Stay tuned, our two pianos are just getting warmed up.

Sip, Sip, Hooray! Ruthmere's New House Tea

By Joy Olsen, Collections Manager

January is a hard month for us that live in Indiana. Way too cold and way too much snow. But did you know that January is "National Hot TEA month?" Now, for me and probably several readers of this publication, EVERY month is "Hot Tea Month," but it's nice to know that our beloved beverage gets more attention on a national scale during January.

If you or someone you know wants to learn more about this comforting drink, I invite you to join us for tea at Ruthmere. There are several teas offered this year. But plan early, they sell out quick!



I serve as Ruthmere's Tea Hostess. My talented, hardworking tea team and I have developed a memorable tradition of serving teas at this elegant and beautiful historic home. Several years ago, I questioned why we were not offering this event. I'm sure the first lady of the house, Elizabeth Beardsley, graciously served tea; it just seemed right to carry on that tradition.

This idea stirred an excitement in me. I wanted to know as much about teas, blends, styles, and how to properly serve teas as I could. That passion has taken my husband and I to different parts of England three different times. I have indulged in afternoon teas in tea rooms in Bath, on a boat traveling on the Thames River, haunted prison cells in York, the grounds at Highclere Castle (Downton Abbey), The Bridge Tea room at Bradford-on-Avon, Chatsworth Estate, an old steam train, and many, many, MANY more. One of my favorites was just last July in London at the Orangery. That is a tea experience at Kensington Palace, the childhood home of Queen Victoria! I could not have believed I would ever be at a place that Victoria had walked. I was in awe.

So, what did all these places show to me? What have I learned? I've said this before. We do a wonderful job at mimicking an English tea, but there was one thing different. All British tea is served loose leaf, not tea bags. Now most of the tea, almost always, was Earl Gray. That's what you were served, Earl Gray. In a pot, that was steeped from tea leaves. We must do this! Okay, not Earl Gray, but a blend that will compliment Ruthmere. A taste that will linger on your tongue and in your brain. Our own blend!

I started this quest in England to find our perfect blend of tea. I researched companies in Scotland and China. But I finally found our company - want to guess where? Right here in Indiana! If I can't have a British tea, I'll take a Hoosier company! I am very happy and proud to be working with The Nelson's Tea Company in Indianapolis. It is a wonderful white tea with a pomegranate blend. If you know Ruthmere, you will understand why I chose a pomegranate tea.

Never before has Ruthmere had its own tea blend or a "House Tea." I am very proud of this achievement. So what I need from you, the reader, is to help us find a name for this tea - this is your chance to take part in a historic moment for Ruthmere!

Let's lift our cups to salute this momentous occasion. SIP, SIP, HOORAY!

We need your help! If you have any ideas about what to name our new house tea, send ideas to Joy Olsen by email at jolsen@ruthmere.org or by mail at Ruthmere Museum, 302 E. Beardsley Ave., Elkhart, IN 46514. We plan to serve this tea at our Mother & Me Tea on April 27th, so please have your ideas submitted by April 11th.

Something Old, Something New at Coffee

by Mark Doddington, Membership Coordinator

As the weather begins to heat up, so does our enthusiasm for live music. For more than a dozen years, Ruthmere has spent its summers welcoming local musicians to its outdoor Coffee on the Piazza. The tradition continues this year, introducing new talents to our audience as well as inviting back a few old friends.



Guests enjoy crafts as they listen to music at Coffee on the Piazza

Each Saturday morning in June, July and August, from 10:30 until noon, Ruthmere will feature exciting musical artists to perform in our historic loggia. On June 7, Dave Van Dyke returns, bringing his unique style of folk/pop. June 14 celebrates the classic American Big Band with 20-piece (and more) jazz combo Sentimental Journeys. This larger-than-life brigade presents a stunning array of vocal and instrumental classics. Darby O. Bell brings us her take on contemporary pop on June 21, and first-timers Thirsty Thelma and the Half Pints will close out the month on June 28. This lively trio brings the best of 60s, 70s and 80s Top 40 standards.

New faces join us on July 5 as we host A Guy and A Girl with their take on Top 40 classics. Next, we welcome back Mike Vial, who has played at Coffee on several occasions over the past decade. Known for his original tunes, Mike will grace us on July 12. As a bonus, we have The Erly performing in the afternoon at our Ceramic Showcase. On July 19, we feature one of my new faves, pop vocalist Mykayla Cynthia. And, making her first Ruthmere appearance in nine years, Dena Woods returns to the loggia on July 26. After laying low for a few years, Dena is eagerly making her way back into the spotlight.

In addition to three favorites, August sees two new artists making their Ruthmere debuts. On August 2, we welcome folk vocal/string duo Bobcat Opossum. Blending Celtic roots with classic Americana, they bring something quite different to our home. Long-time fave Jeff Colin steps forward on August 9 with his take on country music old and new. On the 16th, the Irish rise again as we bring back joHn Kennedy and Kennedy's Kitchen. On August 23, Rachel Eichhorn returns with her Janet Joplin-esque style of cool. We close out the season on August 30 with another newcomer, Noach Tangeras. Noach spent several years in Nashville with her band, and brings a rollicking country vibe to wind up the season.

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Prairie Street Studios

Rise 'n Roll
BAKERY

As always, Coffee on the Piazza is free and open to the public. In addition to free music, we will also serve up free coffee courtesy of The Refinery in Goshen. Rise 'n' Roll donuts will also be available for $2 apiece. Stop by early before Coffee to partake in yoga with Prairie Street Studios, returning for their second year of relaxing meditation on Ruthmere grounds. Ruthmere mansion will also be open for tours on its regular hourly schedule. Admission is charged for these tours. Bring the whole family to soak up the sun and sounds, to play games, or just chat. Gates open at 10 a.m. We hope to see you there!

Thank you to our Presenting Sponsor, Tom Myers!



Rachel Eichhorn & guitarist Barry Clark

Spotlight on Abbie Thomas

By William A. Firstenberger, Executive Director

If you've been reading this issue of *The Ruthmere Record* closely there's a name that you've already seen a couple of times—Abbie Thomas. Abbie is a phenomenal talent who was first brought to Ruthmere staff's attention by Board member (and Abbie's BIGGEST FAN) Tom Myers. She has twice been a past Coffee on the Piazza artist, and over the winter she came to us with a special request. Abbie wanted to know if she could record her 2025 NPR Tiny Desk Concert submission video in Ruthmere's Game Room in January while we were closed. "Ahh…YES!" was our very quick answer, but we wanted to meet with her first so she could check out the setting more closely. So on a cold January morning, Collections Manager Joy Olsen and I met with Abbie and her pianist Simon Kauffman Hurst. She shared her vision and plan, and a week later in early February, the Ruthmere Game Room would become a recording studio.



Abbie Thomas at 2024 Coffee on the Piazza

She spared no expense on recording day bringing in her full Crazy Heart Band along with a video and sound engineer. Good luck, Abbie! We'll be watching for your results in May! Speaking of Abbie Thomas in May—you may have noticed that she will be the featured live music for our inaugural Derby Day event on May 3 on our "Ruthmere Garage Stage."

"She does blues rock like it deserves to be done—and sometimes even more…worthy of many replays."
Patrick O'Hefernan
Indie Pulse Music



Abbie Thomas and Simon Kauffman Hurst, who is playing our Steinway piano. This is a screenshot from her video submission for the NPR Tiny Desk Contest.

And something else wonderful happened on that day in January when we met Abbie and Simon. Just for fun we had the two split up and each play piano, Abbie on the Steinway while Simon was on the Baldwin. Joy and I looked at each other thinking the same thing at the same time—this was magic! A quick check of the calendar and with our Concert Committee, and we had booked "One Night, Two Pianos: Abbie Thomas featuring Simon Kauffman Hurst" for July 17 (See "If One Piano is Good, Two Pianos are Better!" on page 16). This concert will be $50 per seat and feature a pre-concert food and drink summer garden reception in the hour before the performance. Tickets are on sale now at Ruthmere.org.

Come see the phenomenal rising talent Abbie Thomas before she becomes "the next REAL BIG thing in America."

Ruthmere
An Experience in History, Art & Architecture
The Ruthmere Foundation, Inc.
302 East Beardsley Avenue
Elkhart, Indiana 46514
(574) 264-0330
www.Ruthmere.org

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The Place to Be! 2025 Ceramic Showcase

by Carolyn S. Bonanno, Communications Coordinator

The 2025 Ruthmere Ceramic Showcase is set for Saturday, July 12th from 10 – 3pm on the Ruthmere Quilt Garden Green. Ruthmere's partnership with the Northern Indiana Clay Alliance (NICA) was a remarkable success in 2024, and one that is building this event bigger and better in 2025! NICA is an arts-focused organization that coordinates several events throughout the year which bring exceptional clay artists together with the public in unique gatherings. The Ceramic Showcase is one of Ruthmere's busiest marquis events of the year with many hundreds in attendance. NEW for 2025 will be the addition of a craft beer and wine tent in the afternoon hours of 1-3pm. as well as live music from The Erly, keeping the summer vibes warm and breezy.

Northern Indiana Clay Alliance



The Ceramic Showcase is generously sponsored by Jack and Karen Cittadine, making it FREE ADMISSION for all to attend. Enjoy complimentary cup of coffee in the morning, purchase lunch on site from one of our tasty food vendors, and for those 21 and over, chill with an ice cold locally crafted beer or wine as you venture through four spacious tents of amazing clay creations. It is a fun day for everyone, and of course, a great place to purchase a one-of-a-kind ceramic work of art.