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Photo by Ethan Jackson

Happy New Year

As we welcome January and the start of a new year, we reflect on the cherished memories and achievements of the past while looking forward to exciting opportunities ahead. The Packard Proving Grounds, with its rich history and vibrant community, continues to celebrate the legacy of the Packard Motor Car Company.

We invite you to join us in this journey as we unveil upcoming events, share stories, and foster our passion for all things Packard. Here's to a year filled with friendship, discovery, and the spirit of innovation that defines the Packard legacy!

RESTORATION UPDATE

THE TANK TEST CENTER PROJECT



Photos by Dante Sabatino



We're SO close to completing this project, but there is work yet to be done.

- **Fire Suppression System Installed - needs Twp approval**
- **Fire Alarm System Installed**
- **HVAC units placed on the roof of the TTC**
- **Electrical work in progress**
- **Plumbing work in progress**
- **Gas line connections are in progress**

We're in hopes of having heat functioning by the end of the month.

Your generosity ensures that our historic artifacts will be preserved for generations to come. Together, we're closing in on the finish line — and we invite you to be part of making history!

Donate Today



UPCOMING EVENTS

Tue, Jan 20th	Blood Drive
Sun, Jan 25th	HSS: The Polio Vaccine Story
Sat, Feb 7th	The Wedding Collective
Sun, Feb 8th	HSS: Ocean to Ocean in a Model T
Sun, Feb 22nd	HSS: The Life of Dr. Bertha Van Hoosen
Sun, Mar 8th	HSS: Wills Sainte Claire Museum
Sun, Mar 22nd	HSS: Diego Rivera & the DIA Murals
Mar 28th & 29th	Metro Wood Carvers Show
Sat, Apr 25th	Great Gatsby Gala Fundraiser

BLOOD DRIVE 2025 RECAP

Because of the generosity of our community, the Historic Packard Proving Grounds collected **125 units of lifesaving blood in 2025**, an extraordinary outcome that extends far beyond our gates. Since every blood donation can help save up to three lives, that means **up to 375 patients in need were impacted** thanks to those who chose to roll up their sleeves and give. It's a powerful reminder that even a small act of service can make a life-changing difference.

Blood donation remains critically important year-round, especially as hospitals continue to face shortages and rising demand. From accident victims to cancer patients and those undergoing routine surgeries, donated blood is a resource that cannot be manufactured — it can only be given. The success of our 2025 drives reflects the compassion of a community that understands the importance of showing up when it matters most.

As we look ahead, the Packard Proving Grounds is proud to host the **first blood drive of 2026 on Tuesday, January 20**, from 12:00 to 6:00 PM, inside the Repair Garage. This drive kicks off another year of opportunities to give back, with multiple blood drives planned at the Grounds throughout the year.

Appointments are encouraged and can be scheduled through the American Red Cross by visiting **[RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.RedCrossBlood.org)** and entering sponsor code



PACKARDPG.

We invite you to join us on January 20 and to stay tuned to our **Upcoming Events** calendar for additional blood drive dates throughout 2026. Together, we can continue building on this momentum — and continue saving lives.



Volunteers Jim Mischel and Bruce Webster accepted a certificate of appreciation from the Red Cross on behalf of the PPG and the PMCF.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Meet Hilary Davis

If you've spent any amount of time at the Packard Proving Grounds, chances are you've felt its pull — that indescribable sense of history, place, and community that makes these grounds feel like stepping back in time. For longtime volunteer **Hilary Davis**, that feeling wasn't just an impression; it was a calling.

Hilary first discovered the Packard Proving Grounds in the late 1990s while driving Van Dyke on her daily commute. The architecture caught her eye, the gates stopped her in her tracks, and curiosity quickly turned into action. ***"I don't want to say I discovered it — I stumbled on it,"*** she laughed. But that moment of curiosity grew into decades of service, passion, and preservation.

In those early years, Hilary was part of the small, determined group that rolled up its sleeves to save the site from demolition. ***"It went from being abandoned and forgotten to thriving — the whole thing is amazing to witness,"*** she shared. From clearing overgrowth and painting the Lodge Garage to helping design restoration elements still used today, Hilary's fingerprints remain throughout the campus.

While the Proving Grounds has grown into a bustling event venue and community landmark, Hilary has always been drawn to the heart of its mission: historic

preservation. She's been deeply involved in research, restoration efforts, and tours that connect visitors to the spirit of the site. And just as importantly, she's been part of the Packard "family" — a term she doesn't use lightly but believes is true of the volunteers who build, fix, and steward these grounds together.

Hilary also brings her passion for history beyond Packard. As part of the Shelby Township Historical Committee, she works to preserve local heritage, including leading research and restoration efforts at two historic cemeteries. For her, history isn't a pastime — it's a thread woven into daily life.

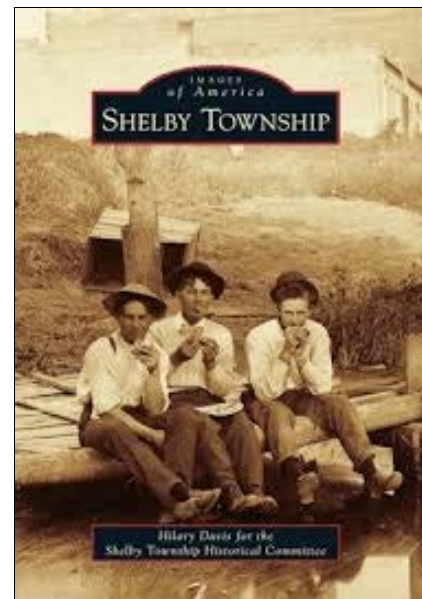
When asked what she would tell someone considering volunteering, Hilary didn't hesitate: ***"Try it all. There's so much here, and there will always be something you love. Give yourself time, and don't get overwhelmed."***

Her words ring true for anyone who has spent time on the grounds. From its architecture to its archives, its cars to its community events, the Packard Proving Grounds offers endless opportunities for people to find their place — just as Hilary did.

And while she has been part of countless projects, friendships, and milestones across her years of service, Hilary says her proudest accomplishment isn't a single moment. It's the entire journey.

"The whole thing — watching this place come back to life — that's the heartwarming part."

We're honored to celebrate Hilary Davis in this month's Volunteer Spotlight and grateful for her dedication, her expertise, and the passion she continues to bring to the Packard Proving Grounds.



Read more about her experiences with the PPG in her multi-part blog post titled **Serendipity**.

Also, check out her **Arcadia book** about the history of Shelby Twp.

Get Involved - Explore Volunteer Opportunities at the PPG

FROM THE PACKARD BLOG

PACKARD'S GUARDIANS: ROGER LUKSIK

By Amanda Demo



For some, the Packard Proving Grounds is a place discovered later in life. For **Roger Luksik**, it was something closer to an inheritance.

Long before Roger became a volunteer, board member, or president of the Packard Motor Car Foundation, Packard was already part of his family's story. During World War II, his parents worked for Packard at a time when precision and reliability were not just ideals, but national necessities.

"My interest in Packard really started with my parents," Roger shared. "My mother and several of her friends worked as inspectors on the Merlin engine assembly line, using precision gauges to measure close tolerances on small components. That accuracy is what gave the Merlin engine its power and endurance."

That early exposure to craftsmanship, responsibility, and purpose would quietly shape Roger's lifelong connection to Packard — and eventually, his commitment to preserving the place where so much of that history was tested and proven.

*Check out the **latest article** in our Guardians series to learn more about Roger's impact on the preservation and future of the Packard Proving Grounds.*

GEMS FROM THE VAULT

YOUNG DETROIT AUTOMOBILE ENTHUSIAST IS "CALLING ALL CARS"

by P.H. Connell



Young Larry Berndt of 11419 Saint Patrick Street in Detroit knew the names of automobiles by the age of two. Standing on the street corner, he could correctly identify 12 out of every 30 cars as they passed. He was truly a son of Detroit — a boy who was, quite literally, "Calling All Cars."



Without any prompting, Larry could also name each car's color, and he rarely missed. His father, Carl Berndt, worked briefly at Packard, further tying the family to Detroit's automotive story.

The *Detroit Free Press* took notice and ran its own story on the young Detroit, dated December 9, 1940. Following that attention, Packard Photographic visited the Berndt home in December 1941 for a series of publicity photographs. Today, eight of those photographs remain on file, dated December 8, 1941.

The car featured in the images is a 1941 Packard Eight Sedan, Chassis ID 1951, Body Type 1401 — the first year of this new body style. Notable is the fine-toothed grille design used only in 1941 and 1942. The vehicle bears a 1941 dealer license plate, and this new model was officially introduced to the public in April of that year.

Tragically, young Larry Berndt passed away just ten years later, dying of polio on October 3, 1950, at the age of twelve.



Every picture tells a story. History is wonderful. These photographs - and more than 14,000 others - are preserved in the Vault at the Packard Proving Grounds.

HISTORICAL SPEAKER SERIES

Click on the flyer images, then right click and select 'save image as' to save a .jpg file that you can share with your friends & family and help us spread the word!



Historical Speaker Series

**Sunday
January 25th
1-2pm**

\$5 for not yet members
(FREE for members)

Presented by
Don Calliban

Purchase Tickets @
PackardProvingGrounds.org/
Jan11-HSS-PPG

09065 Van Dyke Ave., Shelby Twp, MI 48317
Call or text us @ (508) 739-4800



Historical Speaker Series

**Sunday
February 8th
1-2pm**

\$5 for not yet members
(FREE for members)

Presented by
Steve Showell

Purchase Tickets @
PackardProvingGrounds.org/
Feb08-HSS-PPG

09065 Van Dyke Ave., Shelby Twp, MI 48317
Call or text us @ (508) 739-4800



Historical Speaker Series

**Sunday
February 22th
1-2pm**

\$5 for not yet members
(FREE for members)

Presented by
Samantha Lawrence

Purchase Tickets @
PackardProvingGrounds.org/
Feb22-HSS-PPG

09065 Van Dyke Ave., Shelby Twp, MI 48317
Call or text us @ (508) 739-4800



HISTORICAL SPEAKER SERIES

**C Harold Wills and the
Wills Sainte Claire Story**

Terry is a founder and has been the Executive Director of the Wills Sainte Claire Automobile Museum for the past 25 years. He is a past president of the National Association of Automobile Museums and a current board member. He is a Life Member of the Packard Proving Grounds.

Terry and Jim own 14 unique cars including a Wills Sainte Claire Roadster and a 1938 12-cylinder Packard Roadster. Before retiring, Terry owned a camera store in Port Huron and was a professional photographer for 40 years. Terry enjoys learning new things about C. Harold Wills and the importance to the early auto industry. Terry and his wife Rita reside in Port Huron.

**Sunday
March 8th
1-2pm**

\$5 for not yet members
(FREE for members)

Presented by
Terry Ernest

Purchase Tickets @
PackardProvingGrounds.org/
Mar08-HSS-PPG

09065 Van Dyke Ave., Shelby Twp, MI 48317
Call or text us @ (508) 739-4800



HISTORICAL SPEAKER SERIES

**Diego Rivera:
The Detroit Industry
Murals at the DIA**

Diego Rivera was celebrated for his murals. He covered more walls with frescos than any other artist. The Detroit Institute of Arts boasts the fresco-cycle Diego Rivera called his "finest work." How did the DIA get the most famous mural painter to come paint its walls? What is so special about what he accomplished in just 11 months in Detroit? Those and other stories are what art historian Wendy Evans will explore in a richly illustrated presentation.

**Sunday
March 22nd
1-2pm**

\$5 for not yet members
(FREE for members)

Presented by
Wendy Evans

Purchase Tickets @
PackardProvingGrounds.org/
Mar22-HSS-PPG

09065 Van Dyke Ave., Shelby Twp, MI 48317
Call or text us @ (508) 739-4800



HISTORICAL SPEAKER SERIES

**The Rise and Fall
of the DeLorean
Motor Company**

Chris Duvall will discuss John DeLorean's early years, education and work experiences. He will also discuss: 1. John's vision for his car and look at the DMG 12 to understand his vision including design and engineering and 2. how the company came to be manufactured in Ireland and the growing pains that the company could not overcome. He will end with what is going on with the current DeLorean community.

**Sunday
April 12th
1-2pm**

\$5 for not yet members
(FREE for members)

Presented by
Chris Duvall

Purchase Tickets @
PackardProvingGrounds.org/
Apr12-HSS-PPG

09065 Van Dyke Ave., Shelby Twp, MI 48317
Call or text us @ (508) 739-4800



Purchase Tickets



Heartfelt Gratitude

As we close out 2025, we extend our deepest gratitude to **Mark Smucker, Jon Hatfield, and Tom Tuls** for their invaluable service on the Packard Motor Car Foundation Board. Your dedication and leadership have significantly advanced our mission, and we are sincerely thankful for your contributions.

We are also thrilled to announce our new officers for 2026: **Matt Reynolds** as President, **Dennis Kuhn** as Secretary, and **Bruce Webster** returning as Treasurer. Additionally, we welcome two new trustees, **Mike Borsuck** and **Paul Grant**, to the board. With this fresh leadership and enthusiasm, we eagerly look forward to the bright future ahead for the

Packard Motor Car Foundation. Thank you all for your ongoing support!

THE PACKARD PROVING GROUNDS GIFT SHOP

NEW YEAR. NEW MERCH.



Local Artist
Todd Ortbring

Gift Shop purchases directly support the Packard Motor Car Foundation.

We teamed up with local artist, Todd Ortbring, to bring you new, limited release merchandise. Stop in and see these incredible pieces today!

Check out more of Todd's work [here](#).

Shop Now



GATSBY

GALA FUNDRAISER



Saturday
April 25, 2026
6-11 PM

Tickets
\$100 Per Person

Dinner, drinks, live music,
and a roaring night hosted by

Roop Raj
from Fox 2 News



Packard
PROVING GROUNDS
HISTORIC SITE



More info @ PackardProvingGrounds.org/GreatGatsby
49965 Van Dyke Ave., Shelby Twp., MI 48317 | Call or Text (586) 739-4800



2026 Great Gatsby Gala

We're excited to announce that tickets for the 2026 Great Gatsby Gala Annual Fundraiser are now available! Join us for a night of glamour and nostalgia while supporting a great cause. Consider purchasing a table of 8 and invite four couples to enjoy this wonderful evening together.

If you can't be in the area for the big night, you can still make a difference by becoming a sponsor for this important event. For more information on tickets and sponsorship opportunities, please reach out to Jeannine Morris.

Don't miss out on this chance to celebrate and support the Packard Proving Grounds and the Packard Motor Car Foundation!



Donate Today



586-739-4800 Call or text us
We're happy to help!



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Our mailing address is:
Packard Proving Grounds Historic Site
49965 Van Dyke Ave. Shelby Twp, MI 48317

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