

# PROCLAMATION

SEOPCO DAY – SEPTEMBER 6, 2025

*In Honor of the 20th Anniversary of the South East Oak Park Community Organization (SEOPCO)*

**WHEREAS**, the Village of Oak Park proudly celebrates the 20th anniversary of the South East Oak Park Community Organization (SEOPCO), a neighborhood-rooted nonprofit first recognized by the state of Illinois in 2005 and dedicated to building a safer, more vibrant, and more connected Southeast Oak Park; and

**WHEREAS**, SEOPCO emerged from a time of environmental hardship and institutional mistrust following the discovery of coal tar contamination in Barrie Park in 1998. Instead of retreating, the residents of Southeast Oak Park—grounded in hope and community pride—responded with resilience, organizing through six years of remediation to reimagine their neighborhood as a place where everyone feels safe, heard, and respected; and

**WHEREAS**, from its founding, SEOPCO has embraced its role as a steward of public safety and social equity in a quadrant long underserved and misunderstood—bounded by I-290 to the north, Austin Boulevard to the east, Roosevelt Road to the south, and Wesley Avenue to the west. Through their efforts, neighbors created an open and inclusive community that believes safety includes not just protection from harm, but the presence of mutual respect, collaboration, and trust; and

**WHEREAS**, SEOPCO's early initiatives—from launching the Renaissance Festival with the Irving School PTO to celebrating the restoration of Barrie Park—brought people together in public spaces, creating a walkable and welcoming community where residents of all ages could gather, celebrate, and move freely. These efforts reflect SEOPCO's commitment to sustainable transportation and human connection, both within the neighborhood and to the greater Oak Park region; and

**WHEREAS**, the organization's leadership—including the inaugural Steering Committee members Stuart Barnes-Jamieson, Marion Biagi, Jack Chalabian, Peter Ferraro, Barb Hanzl, Jim Kelly, Patricia McMillen, and John Mikos—envisioned a prosperous community where neighbors invest their time, talents, and resources into local progress and collective well-being. That spirit of economic and civic investment has grown ever since; and

**WHEREAS**, over the last 20 years, SEOPCO has been a consistent champion for community pride and outreach—amplifying the diverse voices and rich cultural identities that define Southeast Oak Park. Through neighborhood block parties, advocacy for equitable public services, youth programming, and cross-sector partnerships with the

Village, schools, and the Park District, SEOPCO has deepened the sense of belonging and purpose among residents; and

**WHEREAS**, SEOPCO's model of civic engagement has cultivated a resilient and responsive community, one that adapts to change while honoring its roots. By listening deeply, acting locally, and empowering future leaders, SEOPCO has helped shape a Southeast Oak Park that is not only vibrant, but also visionary prepared to face the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow; and

**WHEREAS**, the Village of Oak Park proudly honored SEOPCO's 10th anniversary in 2013 and now celebrates this 20-year milestone of inclusive advocacy, neighborhood leadership, and transformational impact.

**NOW THEREFORE**, I, Vicki Scaman, President of the Village of Oak Park and the Board of Trustees, do hereby proclaim Saturday, **September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025**, as **SEOPCO Day** in the Village of Oak Park, Illinois, in recognition of the unwavering commitment, transformational advocacy, and deep community spirit SEOPCO has shown over the past 20 years. We extend our deepest appreciation to all SEOPCO leaders, volunteers, and neighbors—past and present—whose vision and action have strengthened the fabric of our Village. May SEOPCO continue to grow, inspire, and lead for generations to come. May the next 20 years be just as bold, just as neighborly, and just as inspiring. We invite all residents and friends to attend **SEOPCO's annual Barrie Fest in Barrie Park from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.**, a joyful neighborhood celebration of community spirit, culture, and connection.

**DATED** this 5<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2025.

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Vicki Scaman  
Village President

ATTEST:

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Christina M. Waters  
Village Clerk