

## **Parks and Recreation Department**

*Phil Blasko, Superintendent*

The major capital improvement for the department was the grand reopening of the Battell Community Center with the most visible feature of the renovation being the formal marquee style entry on the north side of the building. The project wrapped up in the fall of 2016 and classes and programs began to fill the Community Center once again. A Grand Re-Opening event welcomed hundreds of patrons on October 10<sup>th</sup> with building tours and the showing of the *Wizard of Oz* on the Auditorium's new 18'x24' projector screen system. The new projector screen system has been utilized for numerous special events including Brunch & a Movie, Family Fun Nights and Movie Nights. The renovations and improvements have allowed the department to expand and enhance our services to the community. Any given week, you can catch families enjoying movies in the auditorium, cheering on sporting events in the gymnasium, participating in youth and adult fitness classes, and taking advantage of our many special events. These renovations have brought new life and opportunities to our department.



*Battell Center*

One great highlight for the department in 2016 was the addition of inclusive playground components at Hillis Hans Park. The combination of the poured in place servicing, the OmniSpin Spinner and the Molded Bucket Seat swing have given children of all abilities the opportunity to play together. Our department realizes the need for inclusive play and we plan to continue to find creative ways to involve children of all abilities when designing and upgrading parks.

### **Eberhart-Petro Golf Course**

Eberhart golf course generated over 23,000 rounds of golf in 2016. This is down slightly from 2015, due to unusual rainfall amounts and some late fall course construction. We began utilizing Golf Now software, which allows patrons to book tee times online, creating additional convenience. Eberhart-Petro Golf Course continues to be a great amenity for the city and a vital part of Mishawaka's recreational lifestyle. This is evident based on the \$408,000 in golf revenue in 2016. Our maintenance continues to be second to none in the area and despite the removal of many dead ash trees, our course quality was not compromised.

Our Golf Pro continued to expand youth programs as well as lessons and classes, while sustaining a great flow of revenue year after year. The first ever Jr. Cavemen Golf Club feeder program with the School City of Mishawaka continues to be very successful. This year we had fifty golfers participate in its 3<sup>rd</sup> season free of charge. This unique partnership is a five week instructional and playing program to introduce second to eight grade to the game of golf.

One of our greatest traditions at Eberhart is the youth Garbage Open. This one of a kind program is still on the rise from near extinction in 2013 with a field of 45 kids in 2016. Extensive marketing and word of mouth helped continue an Eberhart tradition that can't be forgotten. This

is a free golf tournament for kids that involves golf, food, fun and trophies. We were proud to continue this 65+ year old tradition.

Two adult programs that had great turnouts were Ladies Golf 101 and the Men's Metro. Several brand new golfers participated in the Ladies Golf 101 program that covered all aspects of the game over four weeks. The public had a positive and enthusiastic response to the Men's Metro returning to a four-day tournament.

### **Merrifield Complex**

We are proud to announce that the Merrifield Pool had one of the largest attendances in the past five years with 17,445 guests. Our swim team rentals doubled for the 2016 season and Learn-to-swim had 138 participants this year. Family Movie Night was a new special event that allows families to swim while enjoying a movie. For 2017, we are looking to offer more programs to attract even more guests.

During the winter months, we had more guests visit our skating rink than in past years. Skating lessons grew again and the addition of our "Bobby" skate aid has allowed us to expand our lessons to our younger skaters. We held our 2<sup>nd</sup> Frozen Sister's Skate Day on February 6<sup>th</sup> and Merrifield hosted its first New Year's Eve Celebration this year. Guests enjoyed photo booth props, party favors, snacks and ringing in the New Year 80's style.

The ice rink made an effort to reach more customers through marketing, a simplified fee structure and the addition of accepting credit cards. Guests were able to take advantage of new programming such as Veteran Appreciation Nights, Friday Family Nights and DJ Nights.

### **Athletics**

The Mishawaka Football League had another successful season of teaching future football players the fundamentals of tackle football. The league is open to children in grades 3 through 6 and continues to stress to all players, parents and volunteer coaches the importance of being "heads up" safe when it comes to concussion awareness. Beginning in 2017, the parks department will expand their athletics programs for youth and adults and will see the return of adult men's and co-ed recreational softball leagues as well as new youth soccer, T-ball and cross country programming.

### **Recreation**

Warm spring temperatures led to an early start of the 2016 disc golf season at George Wilson Park and kept players visiting the park well into the late fall. Multiple sanctioned and non-sanctioned tournaments were held throughout the season hosted by local disc golf clubs. An early December snow allowed for several days of ideal tubing conditions on the hill. The implementation of the Tyler Technologies software now enables park visitors to pay for their disc golf and tubing activities via credit card.

### **Special Events**

Mishawaka Parks Department special events continued to be popular and well attended throughout 2016. Featured Parks Department events included the Daddy Daughter Dance, Easter

Egg Hunt, Summerfest, Summer Concert Series, Fall Harvesfest and Winterfest. We also played an important role in hosting the Mishawaka Heritage Festival, Kamm Island Fest, Renaissance Festival and the Indiana Bicentennial Torch Relay Celebration, as well as several other smaller events throughout the year. Great weather, food, entertainment and the beautiful setting of Mishawaka's downtown river walk area is the centerpiece for a wide array of family friendly community oriented special events.

## **Landscaping Division**

The Landscape Department was able to accomplish several special projects this year in addition to the routine maintenance of the Parks System. A notable project was the removal of undesirable plant material from along the Riverwalk with the help of the Central Services



*Destiny Burgess*

Maintenance Division. Six days were spent removing invasive plants that obstructed view, while also encouraging growth of existing native hardwood trees.

Bethel College helped plant over 900 new perennials at Beutter Park to revitalize several areas. The Landscaping and Central Service workers came together to do a detailed cleaning of the Beutter Park Raceway to remove algae and sediment from the water feature. The department used recycled wood chips that are processed at our 5th street waste facility

to supplement our large need for mulch throughout the City. These wood chips are a result of the standard brush management practices implemented at the facility and saved a few thousand dollars by reducing the amount of mulch that had to be purchased.

Over 1400 park trees were inventoried and assessed with the assistance of the City Geographic Information System Department. The data collected from this project will help the City make informed urban forestry decisions. As the department continues into 2017 we have created an Adopt-A-Park program that encourages community involvement and park stewardship. We currently have several organizations interested in this program and some that have already adopted parks. The department is going to be hosting an afterschool horticulture club in conjunction with Mishawaka High School to involve students in projects in the community and grow and propagate new plant material for the City. We will continue to maintain our City landscape to the best of our ability and look forward to a new year.

## **Battell Center**

Since reopening the Battell Community Center in October, we have had a chance to take advantage of offering new youth and adult programming. Some of the new programs and events for 2016 were Youth Basketball, Holiday Movie Night, Breakfast with Santa and Trunk or Treat. Many patrons took advantage of monthly passes to utilize the newly renovated fitness center.

Our traditional Rec Clubs are back at full capacity, including adult enrichment, dance and sports. The renovation has brought new life and new faces to the historic building. The continued focus

of the Community Center will be to serve patrons of all ages with health, fitness and recreational programs and activities.

**Park Board**

The City’s Park and Recreation Board has continued its dedication and devotion to the city patrons as well as our agency. The Board’s passion and drive to meet the needs and desires of the community is proven through the continued growth of recreational programs offered each year. Through their guidance, recreation and special events will continue to evolve for people of all ages now and well into the future.

Members of the Mishawaka Park Board for 2016 were:

Reg Wagle	President
John Coppens, Jr.	Vice President
Carolyn Teeter	Secretary
Ellen West	Member
Tony Violi	Member
Michael Faulkner	Member