

Parks and Recreation

Phil Blasko, Park Superintendent

Mishawaka Parks and Recreation has the privilege of interacting with the community on a daily basis. All of our programming, events, and facilities are geared towards serving Mishawaka, the Best Hometown Ever. We are eternally grateful for the support of our citizens as we explore new ways to serve the community. The full-time and seasonal Park staff are dedicated to creating this experience for everyone. 2021 was a year of regrowth for our offerings, and we couldn't be happier with the turnout. Thank you, Mishawaka, for your continued support.

The Mishawaka Parks and Recreation Department celebrated ribbon cuttings on four parks projects in 2021: Central Park Pickleball Courts, Founders Circle, Heroes Park, and Portable Skate Park.

Founders Circle

Beutter Park became the new home to Founders Circle. The Circle features a Perkin's windmill and plaques honoring individuals who were instrumental in the founding and development of Mishawaka. The historical significance of the monument is reflected in its location. It was the site of the Perkin's windmill factory and is the exact location of Mishawaka's founding on January 21, 1835.



Founders Circle Ribbon Cutting

Pickleball Courts

The Central Park Pickleball Courts have brought the fastest growing sport to Central Park. The project consisted of removing a failing tennis court surface and creating four permanent, and two temporary Pickleball courts. It didn't take long until the courts were filled with residents of all ages enjoying the sport. Many leagues and learn to play events were hosted, which leads us to believe the courts will be a destination for years to come.



Portable Skate Park

The Merrifield Ice Rink has a new way to engage with the youth during the summer months with the new Portable Skate Park. The Portable Skate Park features amenities such as safety rails, manual pads, quarters pipe ramps, launch ramps, and wedge ramps for skateboards, bikes, and scooters. The skate park is a result of a collaboration between the



Mishawaka Parks Department, the Mishawaka Parks and Recreation Foundation, along with sponsor Indiana Center for Recovery and a number of other generous sponsors.

Heroes Park

Through a partnership with the Parks Department and the Mayor Dave Wood Youth Advisory Council, the first teen-centric park in the state of Indiana opened this year. The main feature of the park is a Fitcore extreme obstacle course resembling equipment seen on "American Ninja Warrior". The park also boasts cornhole boards, ping pong table, gaga pit, hammock station, a new playground, a basketball court, walking paths, and a fruit orchard. Each amenity in the park is named after heroes or local individuals that have made a lasting positive impact on our city.



Ninja Warrior Obstacle Course

Special Events and Activities

2021 saw a return to “normal” for many of our outdoor events and programs. While we still focused on the safety of our community, we were able to bring back the Mishawaka Parks magic to the citizens of Mishawaka this year.

The year started with our annual Easter Egg Hunt. While we couldn’t bring out a helicopter and had to adjust the event to accommodate COVID-19, we still planned for a fun-filled event. In typical Indiana weather style, we were hit with sideways rain and wind-gusts of 40 mph. Weather doesn’t get Parks down, though, and we were still able to serve a few hundred brave souls with candy and an Easter Bunny meet and greet. We are grateful to the community partners who made this possible, most notably Crossroads Community Church.



Ironworks Plaza Design

By the spring we were able to jump into more programming. We kicked off our Biergarten season with the first ever Derby Day. People came out in their Derby best sporting some impressive hats. The race aired live on a massive screen. It was great to be able to get out and socialize over some fun guessing, prizes, and drinks.

After the race to the roses, we were off on a race of our own for the summer. We were thrilled to host Kids to Parks Day again. This is an annual event that serves a community in need. We fed around 500 people, provided safe and free activities, and got to enjoy the park. This is a favorite of our department, a chance for us to really connect with the community. Park staff grilled, community members played, and the community had a blast!

The Mishawaka Farmers Market continues to grow. We love this new staple in Mishawaka. It is a way to connect Mishawaka with locally grown and made products. It is all about the community and the city supporting small business. This past year, we had 50 weekly vendors for 20 weeks straight at Ironworks Plaza. We are making some small changes to 2022, including a time change (10 am – 2 pm) and bringing back the free weekly non-profit space. Be sure to make the Market a part of your Sunday plans!



This summer we offered a ton of opportunities to get out and get active – both free and charged. Every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Saturday we had a free fitness class out in the parks. Thanks to our community partnerships, we were able to offer The Bar Method, Pure Barre, Zumba Toning, Family Fitness, Aerobics, and more!

The community really appreciated a safe way to get out and get active this past summer. Be sure to check our Facebook page for the schedule for the summer. Other fun, fitness-oriented events and programs included: The 100 Mile Club, Riverwalk Virtual 5k, Visit Your Parks Challenge, Michiana Running Festival, the 80’s Color Run, and the Monster Dash and Dance.

The ever-popular Summer Concert Series ran the entire summer. Concerts were held at Battell Park, Central Park, and the Ball Band Biergarten. We were also thrilled to bring back the weekly For the Win Food Truck Wednesday and Happier Hours.



Biergarten



Summer Concert Series

For the first time since 2019, we were able to host the Independence Day Celebration. Mishawaka came together to celebrate festival food, games, attractions, live music, and of course, FIREWORKS! Mishawaka Parks couldn’t host this annual event without the support of Mishawaka Police Department, Mishawaka Fire Department, Mishawaka Electric Department,

and Mishawaka Central Services. This event is truly a passion project by the City for the City. 2022 will be better than ever!

With the limits of 2020, we pushed to be creative in our offerings to the city for outdoor events and programming. 2021 saw a number of new events and programs: Art in the Park, Cars and Coffee, Symphony in the Parks, Magic at Mary Gibbard, Trivia Night, Sports Galore, Splish Splash Mish, Dog Ice Cream Social, Tailgating, and Monster Dash and Dance.

Mishawaka Parks is a department on the move. Our outdoor events and programming reflect the dedication and creativity of the department. We hope to continue offering new, fun ways for the community to *#GetOutAndPlay* in the Parks!

Landscape Division

The vision of the Landscape & Garden Club flourishes as we recruit new students who are passionate about plants, landscaping, and all things green! Our Mishawaka Education Foundation Community Greenhouse provides a wide variety of projects, programming, and partnership opportunities with the community and schools. Grandma Barkers Garden expanded this past year with the help of Ron Barker and the Young Adult Students. This space serves the community by providing access to fresh, locally grown produce.

Our Adopt-a-Park program experienced a revival, and we are seeing a massive turnout from schools, churches, businesses, and individuals who are passionate about keeping the parks beautiful. We expanded our volunteer opportunities to include a work-with-us day every Wednesday at Beutter Park. This provides individuals with a unique way to learn more about landscaping and create a meaningful impact in one of our most beautiful parks.

Camp

Adventure Day Camp had a successful 2021 season. Mishawaka Parks served 720 campers (194 unique campers) across 2 sites over the course of 9 weeks. We had waitlists for most weeks of camp in 2021. 23 seasonal staff joined our team as counselors this summer including 11 returning staff. The quality of our camp counselors and the relationships they build with our campers is a huge part of what makes Adventure Day Camp the engaging experience it is for our campers.

We offered a 5 day Fall Day Camp corresponding with the School City of Mishawaka Fall Break schedule. We hosted a total of 60 campers over the course of the week. Campers enjoyed time outside hiking and exploring along the Riverwalk, played outdoor games and spent time inside creating fall themed crafts, STEM activities, and playing minute-to-win it style challenges. We worked with STAR Martial Arts and Martin's School of Cooking as community partners to bring special activities to our campers.

Community Engagement

In 2021, we secured \$22,000 in sponsorships from local businesses in support of rec sports, special events, camps, and other programs. We sent out weekly newsletters highlighting all of Mishawaka Parks programs and activities including direct links to registration when applicable. In addition, we consistently promoted all parks programs and activities on our Facebook and Instagram social media accounts and highlighted pictures of people in our community enjoying Mishawaka Parks.

With the help of the Mishawaka Parks and Recreation Foundation, we secured a Special Project Grant from the Community Foundation of St. Joseph County to be used towards the Temple Park Improvements that fall outside of TIF funding boundary.

Recreation Department

After the unordinary year of 2020, things returned mostly to normal in 2021. All youth sports leagues were held as scheduled and most saw record participation and revenue for the year. Youth soccer, t-ball, track & field and flag football were our most popular leagues with almost 1,500 children participating in total.

Recreation programs have continued to thrive and grow since beginning in 2017. Parents enjoy the low participation cost and relaxed environment in which their children can experience playing different sports. George Wilson Park had a great winter tubing and disc golf season in 2021. The tubing park opened in mid-January 2021 and was open through the end of February thanks to an abundance of snow and cold temperatures. The first ever Glow in the Snow tubing event was held in February 2021 which featured color dyed snow, DJ music, lights, glow sticks, and LED lit apparel.

Slide the Hill event returned in August 2021 to George Wilson and featured four 300-foot-long inflatable slip n' slides that were purchased at the end of 2019. The event was reformatted into a pre-registration entry event which helped to control the flow of traffic and offer a more engaging experience for all participants.



Disc golf at George Wilson also continued to be a staple feature of the park in the spring, summer, and fall. 2021 had six tournaments at the park, one of them being the Indiana State Disc Golf Club Challenge which featured disc golf teams from around the entire state competing against one another. The course currently has a 4.4 rating out of 5 on Udisc.com which is the highest rating of courses in the 574 area-code.

Merrifield Complex

After being closed for the 2020 summer season, we were happy to welcome the community back to Merrifield Pool for the 2021 season. We were also able to bring back our popular learn to swim, preschool, and parent-child lessons. The swim lessons consisted of 152 participants. With the community in mind, we added a few new and exciting amenities. This season we installed two, 16-foot rock walls and an aqua zip-line for all to enjoy.

Merrifield Ice Rink opened for the season on December 4th. This season kicked off with a large crowd with free skating at Winterfest. In addition to our public skate hours, we offered the private birthday party rental, private rentals for Irish Youth Hockey league practice, and private rentals for multiple adult pick-up hockey groups. New this season, we hosted a weekly Neon Skate Night on Saturday evenings.

Eberhart-Petro Golf Course

The golf course generated nearly 25,000 rounds in 2021 which is a similar number to 2020 in rounds played. Even though rounds were similar in 2020, revenue was up for 2021. We increased revenues by over \$100,000 for the 2021 golf season with a total of \$534,000. With the ongoing improvements continuing to be made to the golf course, we should see these types of numbers as a new normal.

Eberhart-Petro Golf Course Maintenance

2021 was a busy year for golf. With COVID precautions still in place, many people took advantage of outdoor activities which provided the golf course with a lot of rounds. The maintenance crew worked diligently to keep up with the demand and provide the best conditions possible.

With continued improvements around the course, there are a few highlights to mention. A section of Willow Creek was excavated in front of the hole number 16 green. This gives the hole a new look, as well as exposing some of the WPA work that was completed during the depression era. Preserving this history and bringing to surface the contributions of generations past adds to the character of the course.

The tee boxes on holes 14 and 15 were expanded, and a new tee was built for hole 11. This was done to accommodate a wider skill set of golfers, as well as provide more tee space to keep up with the higher number of rounds being played.

Battell Community Center

The Battell Community Center provides organized programming for the development of our children and teens; activities and services for adults and senior citizens; and affordable recreational, social, and educational activities to community members of all ages. We strive to create a vibrant and welcoming hub for our patrons.

Our free daily recreational clubs include ping pong, aerobics, painting, pastels, senior shape up, line dancing and more. We also serve as a Real Services focal point and nutritional site for those 60 and over.

Youth programming and special events have not only expanded in scope, but in attendance as well. Some of the highlights include youth basketball, youth volleyball, youth soccer, Teen Game



WPA Work Preservation



Willow Creek Excavation



Willow Creek Excavation

Nights, A Community Yard Sale, Holiday Craft Fair, Table or Treat, Chill with a Cop, and various food and supply drives.

We are grateful that building rentals have picked back up after a difficult pandemic year. Our evening rental space has become quite limited in availability, with groups consistently utilizing the facility.

We continue to collaborate with a wide variety of partners and advocates to meet the needs of Mishawaka. This year's partnerships with School City of Mishawaka, Crossroads Community Church, REAL Services, The Mishawaka Public Library, St. Joe Health Systems, and the South Bend Civic Theater have proven to be successful and mutually beneficial. We look forward to building and maintaining programs and positive partnerships within the community.