

PARKS AND RECREATION

Jay Hutchison, Director

As you will see in our annual report, the Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for a wide range of programs, activities, and facilities that provide both active and passive leisure opportunities for the youngest to the oldest of the community's citizens. Some of these opportunities include: neighborhood parks, playground equipment, basketball courts, tennis courts, ball fields, fishing areas and piers, natural open spaces, picnic areas, an aquatic center, senior citizens center, civic theatre and ice arena. I want to take the opportunity to recognize the entire staff of the Parks and Recreation Department. They do an outstanding job in providing the community of Albert Lea with quality programs and attractive parks and facilities. I also want to recognize the ten members of the Park and Recreation Advisory Board, who give of their time and energy to enhance the quality of life in Albert Lea. They are:

Sue Zimmerman	Thelma Foss	Greg Deyak
Heather Benda	Davis Gilbertson	Jan Mattson
Kevin Dulitz	Jay Dopplehammer	Brian Paul
Al (Minnow) Brooks, City Council Liaison		

The Board meets the second Wednesday, on a bi-monthly basis. All meetings are open to the public and a copy of the agenda can be found at the Parks and Recreation Office the Friday before each meeting.

Forestry Department and Tree Program

2004 was the eleventh consecutive year the City of Albert Lea qualified for the designation, "Tree City USA". The city parks department is responsible for tree care; tree maintenance and hazard tree removal on city owned land. Approximately 127 trees were removed. As in the previous years, park department employees did the majority of work. Large tree removals were contracted out. The park department planted approximately 75 trees during the 2004 calendar year. The staff also gave away 150 two to three year old hardwood seedlings to celebrate Arbor Day. The city forester and parks department staff also assists citizens with tree and landscape questions.

Park Department

The park department staff is busy year around with regular maintenance. During seasonally warm weather this maintenance includes mowing, trimming, noxious weed control, bike trail maintenance, road right-of way mowing (such as right-of-ways on bridge avenue, highways 13, 69 and 46), landscaping, city-wide garbage removal, painting park buildings and sport courts, soccer, baseball and softball field maintenance. During the winter months the staff is normally busy with snow and ice removal, building repair and maintenance, ice rinks and grounds equipment repair and maintenance. Some of the projects that were completed in 2004 are as follows: Brookside Boat Landing landscaping, Fountain Lake Park landscaping and limestone over-look repairs, new gates at Edgewater and Bancroft Bay parks, new handicap ramp at Edgewater park fishing pier, landscaping at Edgewater maintenance building, new furnace and updates at Troy-Hammer Park, new heaters at Edgewater maintenance building, installed new water lines at Sondergard park, and installed playground equipment and placed safety fiber at Eberhardt Park.

Lake Improvement

The park department is also kept busy managing shoreline activities. This includes issuing permits for dock spaces, managing public boat ramps, public fishing piers, operating two winter aeration systems, debris removal, public swimming area (beach), chemical treatment of Fountain Lake, rip rapping and natural shoreline restoration management. Crews were also very busy during flooding of 2004.

Civic Theatre

The Albert Lea Community Theatre continues to be the Civic Theater's primary tenant. Attendant for ACT productions is once again starting to grow. Even though ACT was unable to secure a grant from SEMAC, it still was able to continue with its youth theatre program. This year productions were: "The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe", and "The Twelve Dancing Princesses." There were sixty participants in the two productions and over 170 kids auditioned. The theater also played host to Minnesota State, Mankato's production of "The Ugly Duckling." Joyce Matthies dance recitals, Jonathon Bryce magician, RARE Theatre's production of "Breakfast with Champions," the Blue Grass group, Monroe Crossing and the evangelical

meetings for Amazing Facts. The theatre was also host to: Martin Luther King Day festivities, The Minnesota Design team, Albert Lea Listens, Albert Lea Remembers, AAUW Tour of Homes. For the first year, a theater camp was offered for one week. Fifty kids ages 9-18 participated in this camp.

Swimming Pool

Another year passed at the Albert Lea Aquatic Center with a major force working against this facility being the weather. With only one week out of the season in the 90 degree range and a very unseasonably cool. The temperatures was only in the 40's during a week in August, the pool numbers were obviously down. Again the swim lessons sold out and forced us to add classes to accommodate those wishing to take lessons, but too often we were unable to conduct classes due to the cold weather. The staff worked well again this year, but some changes have already been slated next year for pool management and maintenance. The biggest change this year was the addition of the concession stand which was operated by the Albert Lea Figure Skating Club. There was often a line at the stand, and we were only obligated to offer space (rented out the spot) and brought in revenue with no cost to us. Again, the pool can be successful; however, without the cooperation of the weather, pool attendance and revenue from the concession stand will continue to be low.

City Arena

The City Arena offered many programs for the public including Learn to Skate, Open Hockey and Public Skating. In-house hockey had a total of 200 participants. The City Arena was host to wedding dances, a bridal show, dog races and a dog show with over 1500 dogs. The interior of the arena was painted and the upstairs lounge was remodeled. In December, the City purchased a 3 year old set of NHL hockey boards for \$45,000. They will be installed in the Mighty Ducks Arena in 2005.

Recreation Programs

The year included a nine week summer Playpark program with trips to the Como Zoo, Cascade Bay Waterpark, MN Science Museum, Vikings Training Camp, and Owatonna Roller Rink. Special events for the Playpark program include the Penny Carnival, Kiddie Parade, Air Jam, Anything Goes at the Beach, Bed Races, and two all park swims. The Playpark program served 5,107 children. Other summer programs offered with no changes were Cheerleading Camps, Tennis, Youth Baseball and Softball, Adult Sand Volleyball, Adult Softball. Preschool Sports Spectacular, Preschool Kinder Klub, and Craft Camps. An effort was made to provide a place to go after school and on non-school days, making two parks open after school, bowling at Holiday Lanes two times a week with an average of 65 kids/day.

Senior Citizens Center

The Senior Center for 2004 had a membership of 674 and over 35,000 people visited the center to play bingo, cards, attend aerobics, go on trips, blood pressure checks, work on projects, play pool, received flu shots, read the newspaper, visit with friends or attend a rental event. New additions to the center were: two computers with internet access for members use, Aerobics of the Mind classes, Yoga, Red Hat Society, and Innovision Eye Care once a month to adjust glasses. Community service projects hosted: A.A.R.P. Defensive Driving Program, A.A.R.P. Income Tax Aides, Life Line Screening, Blood Pressure Checks and Flu Shot Clinic. There were 24 motor coach day trips and one over night trip to Dubuque. The Center had 208 rentals in 2004 to different groups and individuals for everything from birthday parties to seminars.

The following is the attendance statistics of Parks and Recreation Activities:

REGISTERED

ACCUMULATIVE ATTENDANCE

	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>
Play-Parks	241	276	18,319	18,993
Trips and Special Events			1,072	1,362
Playpark classes	229	216	750	689
Ice Skating, Warming Houses			5,800	4,900
Swimming (Pool)			38,150	26,750
Swimming Lessons	482	512	4,820	5,120
Aerobics/Water Exercise	31	-0-	1,213	
Senior Citizens Center	638	674	30,000	35,000
Men's and Women's Softball 9 teams			2,160	2,448
Park League Baseball				
T-Ball 8 Teams	150	125	1,800	1,000
Mites 10 Teams	125	140	1,500	1,120
Squirts 4 Teams	60	55	720	440
PeeWees 4 Teams	60	60	720	480
Pre-School 4 Teams	75	80	900	640
Girls Softball				
Squirts 4 Teams	36	48	600	384
PeeWee 3 Teams	36	40	600	320
Volleyball (two seasons)				
Women's - 46 teams	400	322	4,800	3,864
Men's - 27 teams	184	189	2,200	2,268
Co-Rec - 15 teams	120	115	1,500	1,380
Summer Volleyball				
Women's-5 teams	72	40	860	480
Co-Rec - 8 teams	80	64	960	768
Halloween Carnival			758	1,213
Tennis	78	72	621	598
Cheerleading	83	84	672	679
<u>CIVIC THEATRE</u>				
ACT Attendance			4,913	4957
Minnesota Festival			4,894	-0-
Rentals (one act plays, recitals)			2,976	4,678
Park & Rec Youth Acting Classes	37	50		
<u>CITY ARENA</u>				
Number of hours used by High School for practice and games	324	302		
Number of Youth Hockey games and practices	649	613		

	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>
Hockey Association Tournaments				
4 Tournaments			4,200	3,800
Number of Private Rentals	64	100		
Adult Hockey Activities	430 hrs	400 hrs		
Figure Skating Club	354 hrs	343 hrs		
In-House Youth Hockey	261 hrs	291 hrs	.	
Learn To Skate	190	50 hrs		
Total Number of Hours of Ice Related Activities			2,877 hrs	3,200 hrs
Total Number of Days Ice Used New Arena			298	267
Total Number of Days Ice Used Main Arena			130	154
Total Number of Days Off Ice Usage – Main Arena			166	199
Total Number of Days Off Ice Usage – New Arena			69	98
Fall Hockey League games or practices-City Program			65	38

ATTENDANCE

	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>
Recreation Programs	31,125	28,434.00
City Arena	225,000	218,000
Swimming Pool	38,150	26,750
Softball Complex	3,500	2,448
Civic Theatre	17,143	9,635
Senior Citizens Center	<u>30,000</u>	<u>35,000</u>
TOTAL	344,918	320,267