

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
Tom Sorenson	Davis Gilbertson	Jan Mattson
Kevin Dulitz	Jay Dopplehammer	Brian Paul
Al (Minnow) Brooks, City Council Liaison		

In 2005, the Department experienced a change of location with the office moving to the City Arena. We worked with the Albert Lea Rotary Club to purchase and install new playground equipment at Eastgate Park and partnered with the Bayside Ski Club and other City Departments to renovate a stretch of shoreline at Edgewater Park. As always, we appreciate the cooperation and help from these local groups and other City Staff in providing recreation opportunities for the community.

Forestry Department and Tree Program

2005 was the 12th consecutive year the City of Albert Lea qualified for the designation, "Tree City USA". The city park department is responsible for the care of more than 15,000 boulevard and park trees. This includes planting, watering, trimming, removal and long term care of most city trees. The city park department enforces city code concerning dead trees, hazardous trees and diseased trees. Approximately 100 trees were removed from city property and approximately 50 trees were planted. Large tree removals are contracted out to private businesses. The park's department staff also assists citizens with tree and landscape questions and care.

Park Department

The park department is kept busy throughout the year maintaining 44 park areas, city hall and the transfer station. Some very high maintenance areas such as baseball, soccer and softball field are mowed twice each week. During seasonally warm weather the maintenance includes mowing, trimming, city code enforcement of long grass and noxious weeds, weed control, bike trail maintenance, road right of way mowing and maintenance, landscaping, downtown flower basket care and maintenance, city wide garbage removal, special events setup and cleanup (July 4th, Big Island Rendezvous, downtown concerts, band festivals, Art In the Park, Jazz Festivals, etc.) painting park buildings and sport courts, maintaining soccer, baseball and softball fields and community gardens. During the fall and winter months, crews are busy with tree planting, leaf removal, fall seeding, fall fertilizing, holiday decorations and tree lighting, civic theatre repairs, building repair and maintenance, grounds equipment repair and maintenance, snow and ice removal and ice rinks.

Some of the projects that were completed in 2005 are as follows: Parks and Recreation office renovation at the City Arena, installation of new playground equipment at Eastgate Park, restoration of the beach bathhouse, reconstruction of the infield at Hayek Field, concrete work and landscaping at the City Pool, pool motor/pump replacement and repairs, construction of maintenance building at new east water tower, installed new railing on Fountain Lake gazebo, and landscape renovation at City Hall.

Lake Improvement

The Parks and Recreation Department was also kept busy managing shoreline activities. This includes issuing permits for dock spaces, managing public boat ramps, public fishing piers, operating winter aeration systems, debris removal, maintaining the public swimming beach, chemical treatment of Fountain Lake, rip rapping and natural shoreline restoration and working with the engineering and the street department to complete the work

on the ski club area. The parks department also assists property owners with their shoreline questions and concerns.

Civic Theatre

The Albert Lea Civic Theatre was in use over 220 days in 2005. There were 64 performances with a total attendance of 9,975. While the number of performances are the same as 2004, the number of participants increased by 31% and the audience increased by 4%. Income was up by 1.4%. The Albert Lea Community Theatre is the primary tenant of the Civic Theatre. Their shows were, Smokey Joe's Café, Proof, Cabaret, Luv and Honk. The youth theatre camp was held in August with over 40 kids taking part. In an effort to expand the audiences coming to the theatre, we presented nationally known comedian, Diane Ford, country legend Jeanne Seely. The theatre was host to "Christmas in the City". The main event for the theatre this year was MACFEST. This is a festival of plays put on by members of the Minnesota Association of Community Theatre's. Albert Lea was selected over Bloomington and Red Wing to host this event. Fourteen plays were presented over a three day period.

Swimming Pool

The Aquatic Center experienced a very good year with attendance up due to a warm, sunny summer. The Center opened on June 4th and closed for the season on August 28th. Due to the wonderful weather, the pool was open just about everyday. Swimming lessons continued to have full attendance and evening classes were still very popular. The Figure Skating Association operated the concession stand again the year, and with wonderful weather and attendance, had a much better year.

City Arena

The City Arena offered many events and programs this year: Open Hockey, Public skating, Off the Wall Soccer, and In-House Hockey were the largest programs with more than 200 kids participating in each program. The Arena hosted the Freeborn County Kennel Club show, Flyball Dog Races, the Ducks Unlimited Banquet, and the kick off event for the Watershed Lakes Committee. A used set of hockey boards was installed in the Mighty Ducks Arena. New lighting was installed in the arena through the Shared Savings Program with Alliant Energy. The arena is also the new home for the Parks and Recreation Office.

Recreation Programs

The Department continues to offer year-round programming, activities, and special events for the community. In April, we ran a very successful indoor Easter Egg Hunt at the Senior Center for children ages one to ten. The firemen helped staff the event, and we want to give them a big thank you. Adult volleyball continues to be popular, but adult softball numbers continue to drop. We did not hold the Halloween Carnival this year due to other community organizations holding similar type events, but we did have a Halloween Rock-on-Ice at the City Arena which drew approximately 250 participants. A change in 2005 in the Recreation area was the departure of Preston Piper and the hiring of Jennifer Davis as Recreation Coordinator.

Senior Citizens Center

For 2005, the Senior Center had a membership of 750 with over 36,000 people visiting the Center to play bingo, cards, attend aerobics, go on trips, blood pressure checks, work on projects, play pool, receive flu shots, read the newspaper, visit with friends or attend a rental event. Our two computers with internet access get lots of use. Other programs at the Center are: Aerobics of the Mind classes, Yoga, and Red Hat Society. Community service projects hosted at the Senior Center were: A.A.R.P. Defensive Driving Program, A.A.R.P. Income Tax Aids, Life Line Screening, Blood Pressure Checks and Flu Shot Clinic. There were 20 motor coach day trips. The Center had 216 rentals in 2005 to different groups and individuals for everything from birthday parties to seminars.

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

	<u>REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS</u>		<u>ACCUMULATIVE ATTENDANCE</u>	
	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>
Play Parks	276	300	18,993	21,600
Trips and Special Events			1,362	1,175
Play Park Classes	216	210	689	630
Ice Skating, Warming Houses			4,900	3,400
Swimming (Pool)			26,750	27,350
Swimming Lessons	512	475	5,120	4,750
Aerobics/Water Exercise	-0-	30	-0-	
Senior Citizens Center	674	750	36,000	36,950
Men's Softball (9 teams)			2,448	2,448
Park League Baseball				
T-Ball (6 Teams)	125	99	1,000	792
Mites (6 Teams)	140	100	1,120	800
Squirts (4 Teams)	55	57	440	456
PeeWees (3 Teams)	60	30	480	240
Pre-School (6 Teams)	80	99	640	792
Girls Softball				
Squirts (4 Teams)	48	50	384	396
PeeWee (3 Teams)	40	30	320	210
Volleyball (two seasons)				
Women's (34 Teams)	322	238	3,864	2,856
Men's (26 Teams)	189	182	2,268	2,184
Co-Rec (12 Teams)	115	84	1,380	1,008
Summer Volleyball				
Women's (7 Teams)	40	49	480	588
Co-Rec (9 Teams)	64	64	768	768
Halloween Carnival			1,213	0
Tennis	72	70	598	585
Cheerleading	84	110	679	835
<u>CIVIC THEATRE</u>				
ACT Attendance & Rentals			4,957	9,975
Minnesota Festival			0	0
Rentals (one act plays, recitals)			4,678	0
Park & Rec Youth Acting Classes	50	40		
<u>CITY ARENA</u>				
Number of hours used by high school for practice and games	302	292		
Number of Youth Hockey games and practices	613	621		
Hockey Association Tournaments (4 Tournaments)			3,800	2,900
Number of Private Rentals	100	93		
Adult Hockey Activities			400 hrs	70 hrs
Figure Skating Club			343 hrs	210 hrs
In-House Youth Hockey			291 hrs	201 hrs
Learn To Skate			50 hrs	48 hrs

	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>
Total Number of Hours of Ice Related Activities			3,200	2,600
Total Number of Days Ice Used New Arena			267	235
Total Number of Days Ice Used Main Arena			154	190
Total Number of Days Off Ice Usage – Main Arena			199	162
Total Number of Days Off Ice Usage – New Arena			98	127
Fall Hockey League games or practices-City Program			38	0

ATTENDANCE

	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>
Recreation Programs	28,434	28,225
City Arena	218,000	200,000
Swimming Pool	26,750	27,350
Softball Complex	2,448	2,448
Civic Theatre	9,635	9,975
Senior Citizens Center	<u>35,000</u>	<u>36,950</u>
TOTAL	320,267	304,948