

**PARKS AND RECREATION**  
*Jay Hutchison, Director*

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 in 2006 who gave 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		

Highlights in 2006, not mentioned below, include: working with the Albert Lea Kiwanis Clubs to purchase and install new playground equipment at Frank Hall Park; the hiring of two new staff members: Jenny Davis, Recreation Program Supervisor, and Joanne Hagen, Administrative Assistant, and the distribution of a Department Survey. The results from the survey have been compiled and the results will be evaluated in 2007. The Department also worked closely with the Sesquicentennial Committee to provide assistance and facilities during the year long event and with the Bayside Ski Club and their successful Regional Ski Tournament at Edgewater Park.

**Forestry Department and Tree Program**

2006 was the thirteenth consecutive year the City of Albert Lea qualified for the designation, "Tree City USA". The City Park Department is responsible for the care of 15,000+ boulevard and park trees. This includes planting, watering, trimming, removal and long term care of most city trees. In 2006, staff assisted Albert Lea High School student volunteers in removing invasive buckthorn trees at Bancroft Bay Park. The City Park Department enforces city code concerning dead, hazard, diseased and damage trees. Approximately 100 trees were removed from city property and around 62 trees were planted. Large tree removals are contracted out. The Parks 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, mowing lakeshore, City Hall, and the transfer station. Some very high maintenance areas such as baseball, soccer and softball fields are mowed twice each week. During seasonally warm weather the maintenance includes: mowing, trimming, weed control, bike trail maintenance, road right-of-way mowing and maintenance, landscaping, city flower/landscape beds, downtown flower basket care and maintenance, city-wide garbage removal, turf irrigation, special events setup and cleanup July 4<sup>th</sup>, Big Island Rendezvous, downtown concerts, band festivals, Art-in-the-Park, Doc Evans Jazz Festival, Midwest Water Ski Championships, etc.), Building repair and maintenance includes nine recreation/warming park buildings, seven maintenance/storage buildings, nine shelter houses, and six public restrooms. Additional maintenance includes sports courts, skate park, swimming pool repairs, maintaining soccer, baseball and softball fields and community gardens. During the fall and winter

months crews are busy with baseball/softball field renovations, leaf removal, fall seeding, fall fertilizing, holiday decorations and tree lighting, civic theatre repairs, grounds equipment repair and maintenance, snow and ice removal and ice rinks. Some of the projects that were completed in 2006 are as follows: installation of new playground equipment at Frank Hall Park, installed stamped concrete, picnic tables and renovated overlook at Fountain Lake Park, new sod and reconstruction of the infield at Hayek Field, finished landscaping at City Hall, renovated Hayek Park hockey rink, installed new limestone signs at Central and Eastgate Parks, added on to Lakeview Park rain garden, landscaped and seeded Frank Hall boat landing, installed new gate, fence and landscaped next to the domes at Frank Hall Park, installed new gate at Bancroft Bay Park, planted trees and shrubs around domes to hide domes, installed fence and gate around fuel tanks at the city beach, started new sand volleyball courts, continued remodeling interior of Morin Park building, started Virginia Place Park playground installation, started Lakeview Park basketball court, installed new drinking fountain at Edgewater Park, installed new graphic rain garden sign and bike trail signs, installed new lights and insulated Edgewater Park maintenance building, new roofs install at beach bathhouse, and Snyder Field bathrooms.

### **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, shoreline trees and vegetation, operating two winter aeration systems, debris removal, public swimming beach, chemical treatment of Fountain Lake, rip rapping and natural shoreline restoration. Staff also assisted the Shell Rock Watershed Board staff on Abbott Street shoreline grant. The Parks Department also assists property owners with their shoreline management questions and concerns.

### **Civic Theatre**

The Albert Lea Civic Theatre increased its revenue by 61% in 2006. There were 29 events at the Theatre this year compared to 17 in 2005. Some of the events were part of the Sesquicentennial and were not charged rent. These included: The Melodrama, "Ten Nights in a Barroom," and "An Evening with Marion Ross." The Library also used the Theatre for six events. There was no charge for these either.

In the 2006 budget gave the Theatre had \$9,000.00 to use for events; \$5,250.00 of this was used for: "The Buddy Holly Revue," "The Original Bill Haley's Comet's," and "An Evening with Patsy Cline." The \$5,250.00 was returned to the City, plus an additional \$2,795.00. Each one of these events was sold out. Each one of these events made money.

The Theatre was able to host events, like the debate between House Representatives Robin Brown and Matt Benda, The Austin Medical Center, The Southeastern Minnesota Dentists Assn., The Eagles State Convention and the American Legion's District Convention.

The Albert Lea Community Theatre continues to be the main tenant for the Civic Theatre. Their season consists of four plays for a total of thirty performances. The youth Theatre was a cooperative venture between ACT and the Park & Rec. Department. Twenty five youths were involved with the production. They not only acted in the show, but built the sets, and handled all of the technical aspects of the show.

## **Swimming Pool**

The Aquatic Center had a great year despite some added expenditure involving new filters and boilers. Attendance was very good and the weather added to the high number of patrons. This year we offered two different sessions of water-related activities for children to sign up for. One was canceled due to low enrollment, but the other was successful and children seemed to enjoy the water-related activities. Swimming lessons continue to be a big draw and the coming year we will look to add some new sessions and times to keep up with the high demand. Water aerobics is another activity that has many faithful followers. Outside groups renting the pool facilities were also popular this summer, with a few groups coming on a regular basis. The Figure Skating Association was once again in charge of concession stand operation and did a great job. They added some new items to their menu this year that seemed to please everyone. They are all set to operate the concession stand again for 2007.

## **City Arena**

The City Arena offered many programs again this year. A new program offered was lacrosse with about 40 participants and the program consisted of informational clinics with skills and drills. The arena continued off the wall soccer and in-house hockey. The arena hosted the girls youth hockey under 14 and under 16 year old State hockey tournament with 16 teams coming to Albert Lea from around the State. The Arena was also home for the North Iowa Outlaws tryouts and training camp. There were more than 150 17-19 year olds from all over the United States for a week long tryout. The Arena was also home to the Freeborn County Dog Show, Ducks Unlimited banquet, Fly Ball Tourney (dog races), and George Cardin Circus. The Arena staff installed permanent flooring in the main Arena and other updating throughout the building. In September, the Arena received a much needed new parking lot and lighting.

## **Recreation Programs**

The Department continues to offer year-round programming, activities, trips and special events for the community. In March we offered a very popular indoor soccer league for children. In April we paired with the Albert Lea Tribune in offering an Easter Egg Hunt. This partnership seemed beneficial to both organizations. This summer we had numerous activities for children to participate in. We started off the summer with all nine play parks open, but eventually closed two because of low enrollment. Despite some low numbers the play park program was very successful. The Department added Friday special event days that the children and staff found very worthwhile. Various trips were also planned throughout the summer. As far as adult sports, volleyball saw an increase in teams for both co-ed and women's. They will be happy to see the addition of new sand volleyball courts for this 2007 season. Adult Men's softball, while numbers were not extremely high, welcomed the addition of 4 new teams. During the fall and winter season we have started to schedule holiday related craft activities for children. The numbers are not high, but kids and parents seem to be pleased that we are offering this type of programming after school and on non-school days. During the Christmas holiday the Department brought back "Breakfast with Santa" which brought in over 70 participants. This number isn't as high as in years past, but we believe that it will continue to grow in popularity each coming year. New this year we also added a "Candy Cane Hunt." There were over 20 participants that came with their families. Children were able to "hunt" for candy canes and later came inside for treats and crafts.

## Senior Citizens Center

We have a current membership of 756 and we had 36,500 walk through the doors to play bingo, cards, attend aerobics, go on trips, blood pressure checks, work on projects, play pool, flu shots, yoga classes, read the newspaper or were here for 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 are: A.A.R.P. Defensive Driving Program, A.A.R.P. Income Tax Aides, Blood Pressure Checks and Flu Shot Clinic. There were 20 motor coach day trips taken. The Center had 215 rentals in 2006 to different groups and individuals for everything from birthday parties to seminars.

### RECREATION

### ATTENDANCE

	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>
Play-Parks	300	573
Trips and Special Events		465
Play park classes	210	589
Ice Skating, Warming Houses		0
Swimming (Pool)		22,598
Swimming Lessons	475	520
Aerobics/Water Exercise	30	32
Senior Citizens Center	750	756
Men's Softball		130
Park League Baseball:		
T-Ball	99	96
Squirts	57	83
Powerball (boys)	30	53
Powerball (girls)	99	19
Volleyball (two seasons):		
Women's - 34 teams	238	332
Men's - 25 teams	182	176
Co-Rec. - 20 teams	84	188
Summer Volleyball:		
Women's-7 teams	49	61
Co-Rec. - 12 teams	64	102
Halloween Carnival		0
Tennis	70	55
Cheerleading	110	69

### CIVIC THEATRE

Total Attendance	9,975	10,266
ACT Attendance	4,376	3,960
Park & Rec. Youth Acting Classes	32	25

### CITY ARENA

Number of hours used by High School for practice and games	292	332
Number of Youth Hockey games and practices	621	693
Hockey Association Tournaments		
5 Tournaments	2,900	3200
Number of Private Rentals	93	300 Hrs.
Adult Hockey Activities	70 Hrs.	54 Hrs.
Figure Skating Club	210 Hrs.	220 Hrs.

In-House Youth Hockey	201 Hrs.	180 Hrs.
Learn To Skate	48 Hrs.	42 Hrs.
Total Number of Hours of Ice Related Activities	2,600 Hrs.	3,016 Hrs.
Total Number of Days Ice Used New Arena	235	305
Total Number of Days Ice Used Main Arena	190	170
Total Number of Days Off Ice Usage – Main Arena	162	195
Total Number of Days Off Ice Usage – New Arena	127	0
Fall Hockey League games or practices-City Program	-0-	12

### **ATTENDANCE**

	<b><u>2005</u></b>	<b><u>2006</u></b>
Recreation Programs	1,772	2,991
City Arena	200,000	205,000
Swimming Pool	27,350	22,598
Softball Complex	2,448	130
Civic Theatre	9,975	10,266
Senior Citizens Center	<u>36,000</u>	<u>36,500</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>303,998</b>	<b>277,485</b>