

munster

PARKS

AND RECREATION

The logo for Munster Parks and Recreation. The word "munster" is in orange, "PARKS" is in green, and "AND RECREATION" is in green. The "P" in "PARKS" contains silhouettes of people playing baseball, a person with a trumpet, a person running, a person with a torch, a person swimming, and a person with a magnifying glass.

2025 YEAR IN REVIEW/ANNUAL REPORT

Town of Munster, Lake County, Indiana

2025 Board of Parks and Recreation

Scot PiercePresident

Jose GutierrezVice President

Robyn PaulsenMember

Dan RepayMember

Kristen SmithMember, School Board Liaison

Janice Uram, Recording Secretary

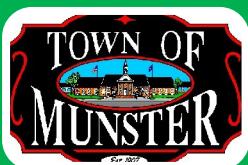
Chuck GardinerTown Council Liaison

Town of Munster Parks and Recreation Department

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(219) 836-7275

www.munster.org



This document has been prepared to meet IC 36-10-3-10 & 36-10-3-14

PARK BOARD & DEPARTMENT FULL-TIME STAFF

FULL-TIME STAFF

Director of Parks and Recreation Mark Heintz, CPRP

Superintendent of Park Operations Kevin Dark

Superintendent of Recreation Jill Higgins, CPRP

Maintainer IV - Centennial Park Bob Webb

Recreation Supervisor - Aquatics Abby Kresal, AFO

Recreation Supervisor Mara DiCarlo

Marketing Coordinator Donna Chant

Administrative Secretary Janice Uram

Maintainer IV Ron Moss, CPSI

Maintainer III Christina Edwards, CPO

Maintainer III Alex Himden

Maintainer II Fernando Lopez

Maintainer II Michael Talarico

Maintainer II Anthony Magnabosco

Maintainer II vacant (*not filled due to pending cuts mandated at the State level*)

Recreation Intern - summer 2025 Steven Hernandez, seeking Masters in Sports Administration from Grace College

The full time staff for 2025 is listed above. A Maintainer IV position was added which was filled from within by promoting Ron Moss to that new position. His previous Maintainer III position was filled by Alex Himden, who came over from the Public Works department. Mark Heintz and Jill Higgins renewed their CPRP certification and Ron Moss acquired his CPSI certification in 2025. Jill Higgins was also appointed to the LERN Council and was also a panelist for a summer camp webinar in 2025. Mark Heintz was appointed as a Northern District representative to the Indiana Park and Recreation Association Board in 2025 and 2026 and is a Board member of the Munster Chamber of Commerce through 2028.

The department also employed 135 part-time employees in 2025. These included pool lifeguards and staff, park maintenance, recreation program leaders, referees, sports instructors, camp aides, social center supervisors, and similar types of positions.

The maintenance division of the department spent a lot of time on regular maintenance such as daily trash pick-up, washroom cleaning, social center set up, grass mowing, snow plowing, gas plant monitoring/maintenance, and landfill operations that absorb a significant amount of time. With the pending cuts to the department a vacant Maintainer II position was not filled as a cost saving move.

Numerous volunteers really make Munster Parks and Recreation a special department which builds a stronger community! Volunteers help out with recreation programs, special events, trips, maintenance tasks, and improvements each year. Munster is a better place because of the dedication of these civic minded individuals including National Honors Society and Project X students at Munster High School, Keen-Ager volunteers, Earth Day volunteers, Park Pride Day volunteers, Munster Garden Club members, Scout troops, and so many more.

The department participates as a member of the Cooperative Special Recreation Initiative (CSRI), Indiana Park and Recreation Association (IPRA), Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA), Munster Chamber of Commerce, National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), NWI Parknership, South Shore Arts Partnership, South Shore Convention & Visitor's Authority



(SSCVA), Suburban Park and Recreation Association (SPRA), and the LERN (Learning Resource Network) Organization.



Centennial Park Pro Shop 2025



BOARD ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ◆ Approved the 2024 Annual Report, new vehicle purchases (Ford Explorer & Ranger) and a Bunker Rake for the Golf Course.
- ◆ Opened the new Pro Shop and Cart Storage facilities at the Centennial Park Golf Course.
- ◆ Awarded the portable restroom services for 2025-2027 to Premier Portapotty.
- ◆ Awarded the fertilization services for 2025-2027 to Forever Green Lawn Care.
- ◆ Approved the purchase of new golf carts for the Golf Course.
- ◆ Approved the purchase of a surveillance system for the new golf buildings.
- ◆ Passed a lease agreement with the School Town of Munster for a part of Community Park.
- ◆ Passed resolutions for each season updating the program fees as advertised in each seasonal brochure.
- ◆ Engaged CSK Architects for professional services to design the West Lakes washroom building.
- ◆ Engaged HWC Engineering to redesign the Clubhouse area of Centennial Park.
- ◆ Engaged SEH Engineering for Clubhouse electrical redistribution design.
- ◆ Approved the design of the West Lakes Park washroom building.
- ◆ Approved the disposal of certain surplus equipment and also approved a surplus equipment request from School Town of Munster from the old Clubhouse.
- ◆ Approved the HVAC preventative maintenance agreement for the new golf buildings.
- ◆ Supported a beer garden request from Humane Indiana for their Paws in the Park event.
- ◆ Approved a request for proposals for management of the Centennial Park golf course.
- ◆ Approved a request for proposals for management of the concession stands.
- ◆ Awarded the bid for the West Lakes Park washroom building to Grimmer Construction.
- ◆ Approved several resolutions required to complete the 2025 park bond issue process.
- ◆ Conducted the necessary public hearings for the 2025 park bond issue.
- ◆ Amended the schedule of fees for the department based upon review and pending operational cost increases.
- ◆ Approved a general services agreement with HWC Engineering to continue with design of future park improvements.
- ◆ Awarded the landscape maintenance contractor for 2026-2028.
- ◆ Approved a new golf management contractor for the golf course beginning in 2026 pending certain requirements.
- ◆ Approved the purchase of new pond fountains and related electrical equipment as part of the electrical redistribution work.
- ◆ Approved the further research of a future mountain bike trail at Bieker Woods by local residents.
- ◆ Approved the meeting schedule for 2026. Met in a timely fashion throughout the year to approve fees and vouchers.



Golf Pro Shop Ribbon Cutting March 2025



Scot Pierce, Park Board President

FINANCIAL

The Parks and Recreation fund is the main budget for day-to-day operations of the department.

2025 Parks and Recreation fund budget..... \$3,352,212.00

2025 Revenue \$4,472,275.69 including taxes; \$842,139.62 without taxes

2025 Expenses \$3,119,558.64 (95.2% of budget was expended)

'2370 fund' ~ is a non-reverting fund, separate from the above figures where balances carry over year-to-year, that is set up to track specific donations, sponsorships and the like to ensure revenues are used as they have been specified for particular activities, events, programs or improvements.

2025 Revenue \$86,854.50

2025 Expenses \$94,176.10

These are the associated expenses for such activities, events, or facilities for which revenue was received.

Parking fund: Budget \$85,000.00

Expenses \$54,649.15

Gross Revenue.....\$136,747.85 (includes end of 2024 and fund interest)



PARKS AND FACILITIES

2025 park usage continued to be heavy as people looked to be outside in parks for a lot of their recreational pursuits. Besides normal day-to-day maintenance including trash pickup, washroom cleaning, Social Center set up, gas plant monitoring/maintenance, leachate pump operation/recording, the below items are also noted.



Briar Creek Park Playground



Gas-to-Energy Generator

- ◆ The gas-to-energy generator at Centennial Park was replaced. This generator creates energy from the methane at the landfill which is sold to NIPSCO. Annually the Town receives approximately \$180,000+ for this green energy.
- ◆ The following equipment was purchased in 2025: a bunker rake (golf maintenance), 40 golf carts (golf course), a Ford Ranger (park maintenance division), and a Ford Explorer (recreation division).
- ◆ Donations for two memorial bricks, six memorial trees, and one memorial bench were added to the park system as a benefit to the community.
- ◆ Accessibility improvements were made to the pedestrian bridge approaches at Centennial Park.
- ◆ New playgrounds were installed at Briar Creek Park and Cobblestones Park.
- ◆ A new washroom project at West Lakes Park was designed, bid and awarded.
- ◆ A ribbon cutting and opening of the new Golf Pro Shop and Cart storage buildings at Centennial Park occurred.
- ◆ The 'Bridges over Ditches' project to connect a pedestrian pathway from Munster to Highland over Hart Ditch and Cady-Marsh Ditch begin construction in 2025.
- ◆ The Centennial Park washrooms were updated with new flooring and lighting.
- ◆ The School Town of Munster is completed design on the new tennis court complex at Community Park which will be used by the School Town and be available for public use.
- ◆ There are frequent irrigation system leaks at Centennial Park during that season which requires multiple repairs each week.
- ◆ The Fisher Street bike trail repave was postponed until after the Bridges over Ditches and the County's project to maintain Schoon Ditch are completed. Both of those projects began in 2025.
- ◆ SEH completed the electrical redistribution plan to connect all electric items at the park currently supplied from the Clubhouse. The pond fountains and associated equipment was ordered in 2025.
- ◆ Filled the vacant Maintainer IV position via promotion.
- ◆ Explored various ideas on redevelopment of the existing tennis courts at Cobblestones Park.
- ◆ Explore opportunities to further meet the recreational demands of the community by reassessing current parks and recreational facilities to best meet those needs using the 2025-2029 master plan as a guide.
- ◆ Assembled a list of capital improvement projects for 2026 and 2027 which were included in the 2025 park bond issue.
- ◆ The landscaping stone around the 'Three Trees' sculpture at Centennial Park was updated.
- ◆ Two grants from the Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission funded ten trees at Bluebird Park, twelve new trees at Burlwood Park, and fifteen new trees at the Community Estates park property.



Cobblestones Park Playground



Three Trees Sculpture stone work



Tree Grant Trees



2025 Ford Ranger



Bridges Over Ditches Groundbreaking 2025



PARKS AND FACILITIES

RENTAL FACILITIES

In 2025, Munster Parks and Recreation had the rentals listed below by facility/use. Altogether, there were 287 'rentals' broken down as follows. Tours of rental facilities absorbed almost 100 hours of staff time over the course of the year.

Community Park Social Center	137	Park Shelters	89
Weddings (Heritage Park 8, Centennial 12)	20	Private Pool Rentals	22
Pool Birthday Parties.....	14	Pool Group Rentals	5

MUNSTER COMMUNITY POOL

- ◆ The Munster Pool had 21,858 visits in 2025 which was a 14% increase from the prior year.
- ◆ The pool was scheduled to be open from May 24 - August 10 but the opening was delayed due to May 29th due to cool temperatures.
- ◆ 853 season pool passes were sold in 2025 which was down 13% over the year before.
- ◆ Getting all patrons to wear proper swim attire is still the biggest challenge for staff but signage and other efforts have helped to make visitors aware of the policy.
- ◆ The biggest challenge for operating the facility is having an adequate number of pool staff. There are times when pool staff must be paid overtime to keep the facility open when other staff calls off or doesn't show up. Additional staff is needed to deal with patron issues on the deck which is not what the lifeguards are typically required to handle.
- ◆ There were 64 saves/rescues that lifeguards had to perform which was up three from the previous year.
- ◆ 2025 Pool finances:

Revenues:	\$271,838.74 (admission, sponsors, rentals, lessons) a 4% increase from 2024
Expenses:	\$271,460.60 (staff, supplies, signage, printing) a 1% increase from 2024
Variance:	\$ 378.14 (Park Board approved increases to 2025 fees to help cover expenses)



Christmas in July at the Pool 2025

CENTENNIAL PARK PARKING

2025 was the third full season and 4th season overall of pay-to-park fees along with enforcement. Asta Parking Inc. is the



parking management contractor for the Town and dealt with collection of fees and enforcement of violations. The net income generated from 2025 for hourly, daily, annual, and violation enforcement fees totaled \$78,070. Revenue from the parking system is used to help operate and maintain Centennial Park. The office receives calls daily about violations during the parking season. Efforts have been made to reduce call volume to the office and have them directed to the parking management contractor. All office staff deals with parking calls on a daily basis during the pay-to-park season.

CENTENNIAL PARK GOLF

The Town has contracted with Centennial Park Golf Management LLC to manage the Golf Course facility at Centennial Park and concessions at Community Park. Centennial Park Golf Management LLC, is a wholly owned subsidiary of Indigo Sports, a Troon Company. They have three full-time staff at the golf course, a General Manager, Superintendent, and a Mechanic. A number of seasonal staff is also hired by them to operate and maintain the facilities. The new Pro Shop and Cart Storage building were used starting in 2025 which helped increase participation. There was a change in General Manager during the 2025 season by the management company. Below are some financial highlights from the 2025 season. Golf staff will present an annual report at a later date. While revenue growth was good in 2025, expenses also increased significantly with operations rising by 50% and repairs and maintenance by 20% over the previous year.

	2022	2023	2024	2025	% change from 2024
Golf Rounds	13,783	15,769	17,345	20,051	+15.6%
Green Fees	\$187,521	\$161,488	\$195,013	\$198,407	+1.7%
Cart Fees	\$60,894	\$57,571	\$78,620	\$79,463	+1.1%
Range Revenue	\$40,111	\$35,824	\$58,095	\$60,476	+4.1%
Pro Shop Rev.	\$12,215	\$14,200	\$17,778	\$46,798	+163%



RECREATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Recreation programming is overseen by the Supt. of Recreation and the two Recreation Supervisors. The recreation staff continually looks for ways to increase programs at existing Town owned facilities while also looking to partner with local establishments or other organizations with available space or talents for increased activities.

PROGRAMMING

- ◆ The Youth Soccer League was again successful with 893 players, 146 coaches and 14 referees. In all, there were 78 teams across four age divisions in 2 seasons. Both leagues were sponsored by Land O' Frost. A new screen-printing company was used for jerseys to ensure they were received in time, Magic Sports.
- ◆ Summer Camp was just as popular as the year before. Entertainment like an animatronic velociraptor was brought in, special lunches were available on Fridays (pizza was always the favorite!), ice cream treats were available on Monday and pool days were had. NEW THIS YEAR: a partnership was created with the School Town of Munster bus barn to transport campers to Munster Pool due to the length of walk. New field trips included: Zao Island, Museum of Ice Cream, Up Your Alley and Escapology. 12 staff returned and 9 were hired new. Communication was made to parents via email and the Facebook group: "2025 Munster Parks Summer Camp". Enrollment was 95% full within 30 minutes of making it public – last year it was 95% full within 3 hours.
- ◆ Spring Break camp ran with 17 enrolled. Recreation Staff ran this camp with Munster High School volunteers.
- ◆ The tennis director returned this year along with 12 staff. During the summer season, 178 students participated in tennis lessons. The most popular classes were Adult Drill and Play and the 10am youth lessons in 2025.
- ◆ Parks continued their regular partnership with Susan's School of Dance and Patti's All American. We rekindled our partnership with South Shore Arts after a break for a few seasons. A new partnership was also formed with Purdue Extension in 2025.
- ◆ Pint-size camps ran with 48 enrolled. Over the 5 week course, the 'Animal Pajama Party' and the 'Science Camp' weeks were the most popular.
- ◆ 2025 Keen-Ager memberships were similar to 2024 with 235 members.
- ◆ Six special BINGOS were offered. A local business sponsored each lunch to our average attendance of 70 Keen-Agers.
- ◆ Swim Lessons are always a huge program. The winter season had 121. The summer had 232.
- ◆ The Keen-Ager Holiday Party returned to Cloister in the Woods in 2025. 85 Keen-Agers joined for a plated meal, live music, a raffle and a favor. All raffle items were donated by the Holiday Arts & Crafts Fair Vendors.
- ◆ Lunch and shows for the Keen-Ager group were popular. Shows included: Colleen Moore, Juliette Gordon Low, Beryl Markham, Pan Am Stewardess Betty, Billie Burke, and Emily Dickinson. 117 participants enjoyed the lunch and shows.
- ◆ Dog Park memberships added up 261.
- ◆ Big bus trips were hit or miss; however, some favorites were: Tour Thrift, Morton Arboretum, Miss Fannie's Biscuits at Blue Gate Theatre, and Cruisin' on the Magnificent IL River.
- ◆ We renewed the partnerships with Collette and Mayflower Tours. We have booked multiple overnight trips. In 2025 we sent travelers to New York, Yellowstone, New England, and Sedona.
- ◆ Other popular programming included: The Region Theatre Company Camp, Hispanic Heritage Dance, and Wado-Ki Karate.



Pint Size Camp



Keen-Ager Holiday Party 2025



Pumpkins, Witches & Hayrides 2025

RECREATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

SPECIAL EVENTS

- ◆ Daddy Daughter Date Night sold out in under 3 weeks with 202 participants. Everyone ate a catered meal, danced the night away and special winners walked away with a raffle prize donated by local kid-friendly businesses. An after-dinner option was offered and sold out at 51. New favors, cubed suckers and cake pops, were both a big hit.
- ◆ A Mother-Son Dance was introduced in 2025 with 84 participants. Pizza, snacks, games, raffle, and dancing were enjoyed.
- ◆ The 3rd Annual Home Improvement Fair ran in 2025 with 23 vendors. A 23% increase over the prior year.
- ◆ We typically hold two Cash for Clutter events each year. The spring one ran with while the fall one was canceled due to inclement weather. In total we had 193 sellers registered for the two events.
- ◆ The Community Egg Hunts had decent weather and a good turnout of 166 participants.
- ◆ Lucky Charms Flashlight Hunt was a successful event with 26 kids. Special coins were turned in for prizes.



Decades Fest 2025



Munster Car Show 2025

- ◆ The Munster Car Show took place on May 3rd with 159 vehicles on pavement, 45 in the grass, 20 vendors, 6 food vendors, and 8 sponsors. Cooler temperatures did not hamper the longstanding event that typically sells out in advance.
- ◆ People's Bank again sponsored the Summer Concert Series at Munster Town Hall with a combined 2,000 in attendance. Three of the five concerts were moved inside to South Side Christian Church due to weather.

- ◆ The Munster Civic Foundation donated \$39,000 to fund Centennial Park concerts. This included 5 Tuesday Nights (including the NWI Symphony), 2 Friday Nights, and Decades Fest. Combined attendance approached 2,000 people.
- ◆ For the 3rd year in a row, Kid's Fest was rescheduled due to inclement weather. More than 1,000 were in attendance and 269 wristbands were sold. The wristbands included seven special activities, while there were over twenty free stations. A touch-a-truck and toddler zone were added in 2025 for the first time.
- ◆ Touch-A-Truck was held on a bright and sunny day! Over 25 vehicles were showcased. More than 500 people attended making it the most well-attended Touch-A-Truck ever. Arts/crafts vendors were added in 2025 to help grow the event.



Kids Fest 2025



Cruisin' with the Crew

- ◆ Movies are always well-attended events, when the weather cooperates. All three summer movies shown had an average attendance of 460. A glow vendor was on-site and 2 food vendors were secured for each movie.
- ◆ Region Eats Food Festival was held on June 28th at Centennial Park. 20 food vendors were secured, 18 arts/crafts/business vendors and live music made the event enjoyable.
- ◆ Bark in the Park was on May 31st in 2025 with 20 vendors, 4 food vendors and 3 sponsors. Munster Police and other businesses performed demonstrations, a superlative contest, and a photo booth for the dogs were part of the fun.
- ◆ Decades Fest was a new two-day music event in 2025. Several bands played music from different eras on Friday & Saturday. Storms hurt event attendance and activities on Saturday.
- ◆ The Bieker Woods Night Walk was canceled in 2025 due to predicted inclement weather. The event is annually run with Munster Girl Scouts and no make-up date was available for all involved. A rain date will be scheduled in advance to have greater flexibility in 2026.
- ◆ The Holiday Arts and Crafts Fair was extremely well attended. 122 vendors displayed; 25% of which were new. There is also a waitlist of 40 more vendors. By the end of the event, 54 vendors had already submitted their application and payment for the 2026 show.



Civic Concerts 2025



- ◆ The department continued to support the Weed Wrangle at Heritage Park, K9 Fundraiser at Centennial Park, Independence Day Celebration at Centennial Park, National Night Out at the Pool, Cruisin' the Ridge Car Cruise, and the Monarch/Earth Day Festival at Heritage Park.



DEPARTMENT SOCIAL MEDIA AND MARKETING

The department shares information in many different ways to help get the word out to the community. Information on recreational activities, programs, and facilities offered by the Town is shared through different platforms. Over 10,000 'Recreation Guides' are printed and mailed out to Town residents three times each year. We've added clickable links for the program registration codes and the ads to make them more interactive. Use of the monthly 'News You Can Use' utility bill newsletter is another traditional ways of advertising besides the marqueses at Centennial Park and Community Park. In more recent years, the department has become more aggressive with digital advertising using social media and direct emails, to share activities and events as more people are finding information via those platforms.



2025 Winter/Spring



2025 Summer



2025 Fall



facebook The department's new Facebook page was created in 2024. The new page added 1,400+ 'followers' in 2025 to 2,900+. The Summer Camp group page was also recreated and added 139 followers in 2025. Posts were shared 2,097 times (+55%) in 2025. Pumpkins, Witches, and Hayrides had the highest amount of shares with 348. Staff will boost Facebook ads with funding from time to time (14 events were boosted in 2025). As more people are finding their information on social media, concentrated social media ads have been found to be a great tool for marketing besides the regularly anticipated Recreation Guides. Posts can now be scheduled for both Facebook and Instagram to keep sharing of information consistent across both platforms.



Email marketing is frequently used to get direct contact to customers. The 'Active Network' registration software used by the department is a tool that is relied upon to share activity information with participants. The email list grew 5.9% in 2025 and is

ACTIVE network up to 9,906 contacts. The department will also utilize the 'Smart 911/RAVE' text message system for event notices which increased by 7.6% to 4,407 subscribers.



Other marketing efforts are teaming up with local businesses and organizations for sponsoring activities while also offering advertising opportunities at certain park facilities. In 2025, \$62,100 was received for various program and events sponsors. The largest sponsor was Munster Civic Foundation giving \$32,000 to sponsor the Centennial Park Concerts and the NWI Symphony. Advertising opportunities brought in an additional \$22,970. Additionally, some sponsors gave in-kind donations to share at activities and/or events. Bowman Displays continued their commitment to the Munster community by providing complimentary banners to advertise activities for the department which helps the department save money and advertise.

peachjar New in 2025, special events are also marketed as a partner on PeachJar, an email generated flyer through School Town of Munster contact system. Through that site, monthly posts are made and targeted to any particular schools which allows for follow up on delivery and impressions.

GOALS FOR 2026

The following is the framework of goals as a plan for the Parks and Recreation department for 2026.

- ◆ Continue with the next steps to demolish the Centennial Park Clubhouse and plan the redevelopment of that area.
- ◆ Complete the washroom and storage building at West Lakes Park.
- ◆ Complete the 'Bridges over Ditches' project connecting a pathway from Munster to Highland.
- ◆ Repave the Fisher Street bike trail.
- ◆ Complete 2025 bond issue vehicle replacement purchases.
- ◆ Determine next steps and construction of the current tennis court area at Cobblestones Park.
- ◆ Replace the Heritage Park gazebo and improve accessibility to the facility.
- ◆ Replace the Monon Trailhead sign.
- ◆ Add an arch at the Pennsy Trail and Main St. to match the one at the State Line.

