

# **munster** **PARKS** AND RECREATION

## 2022 YEAR IN REVIEW/ANNUAL REPORT

*Town of Munster, Lake County, Indiana*

### 2022 Board of Parks and Recreation

Mike Sowards ..... President

Robyn Paulsen ..... Vice President

Dave Cerven..... Member

Dan Repay..... Member

Ron Ostojic..... Member, School Board Liaison

Janice Uram, Recording Secretary

Ken Schoon ..... Town Council Liaison

Town of Munster Parks and Recreation Department

1005 Ridge Road, Munster IN 46321

(219) 836-7275

[www.munster.org](http://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**

2022 brought the end of Park Board terms for two Park Board members. A heartfelt thank you goes out to Dave Cerven (32 years) and Ron Ostojic (8 years) for their dedication and service to the Munster community through their involvement on the Town of Munster Park Board.

### **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 III ..... Ron Moss, CPO  
 Maintainer II ..... Christina Edwards  
 Maintainer II ..... Fernando Lopez  
 Maintainer II ..... Michael Talarico  
 Recreation Intern - summer 2022 ..... Clayton Bragiel, Univ. of Missouri in Sport Management



Park Board Dec. 2022 (left to right) Robyn Paulsen, Vice President; Mike Sowards, President; Dave Cerven, member; Dan Repay, member; (not pictured above Ron Ostojic, member, School Board Liaison)



Ron Ostojic, Park Board member

After a few changes to full time staff for the department in 2021, only one change occurred in 2022. In early 2021, a Recreation Supervisor position was vacant with the departure of Skyler Ramberger. Staff completed interviews for the position and was happy to bring in Mara DiCarlo as a full time Recreation Supervisor in May. Mara, a spring 2022 graduate of Valparaiso University with a degree in Communications, had previously served as an intern for the department in the summer of 2021. Her experience as an intern and having grown up in Munster gave a good perspective for her to come in and continue on-going recreation programs and events. Mara takes care of Keen-Agers, youth education, trips and some special events.

The department also employed 111 part-time employees in 2022. These included pool lifeguards and staff, park maintenance assistants, recreation program leaders, referees, sports instructors, camp aides, social center attendants and similar types of positions.

A rash of bad luck hit the department maintenance staff in 2022 with a few on-the-job injuries, funeral leave situations, and covid positive occurrences. The lost time added up to being down almost 20% of the maintenance staff for the full year. The crew did a great job of stepping up along with a number of dedicated part-time employees to maintain the park system without much notice from the public about the reduced staff level.

The Parks and Recreation department is very fortunate to be the recipient of numerous volunteers that help out with so many recreation programs, special events, maintenance tasks and improvements each year. Without these considerate, community oriented individuals, the program offerings would be much more limited. From National Honors Society and Project X students at Munster High School to Keen-Ager volunteers, Park Pride Day volunteers, Munster Garden Club members, Scout troops, and so many more, Munster is a better place because of your dedication to the community!

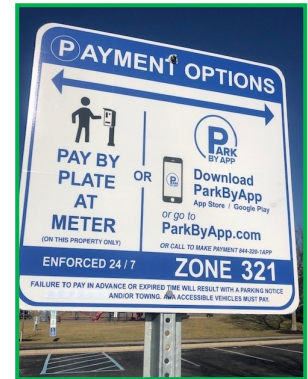
The department is a participating member of the Cooperative Special Recreation Initiative (CSRI), Indiana Park and Recreation Association (InPRA), Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA), Munster Chamber of Commerce, National Recreation and

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 Organization. Jill Higgins was a featured panelist at 2 virtual conferences through InPRA and LERN.



## **BOARD ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- ◆ Directed to complete the purchase of updating the golf course irrigation controls for remote units throughout the course.
- ◆ Approved the Munster Pop Warner's request to use Cobblestone Park past dusk in the fall including the use of temporary lights.
- ◆ Directed the purchase of various equipment per the department vehicle and equipment replacement schedule.
- ◆ Approved an amendment to the Centennial Park Golf Management Agreement due to the 2021 closure of the banquet facility to reduce the base management fee the Town pays.
- ◆ Approved a recommendation from a joint Town Council/Park Board committee to engage with Asta Parking Inc. as a parking management company to charge fees to park at Centennial Park from April-October annually.
- ◆ Approved engaging with CSK Architects to provide architectural/engineering professional services for the phase 1 golf pro shop and golf cart storage facilities.
- ◆ Approved salary and wage schedule for part-time and seasonal employees to remain competitive in local market.
- ◆ Considered and approved multiple conditional preliminary approvals from Saxon Partners to change Evergreen Park as part of the future development of the former Lansing Country Club property.
- ◆ Adopted separate policies for advertising and activity participant code of conduct.
- ◆ Authorized a fertilization contract for 2022-2023 for selected parks.
- ◆ Adopted details for the 2023 pool season.
- ◆ Approved a once a month meeting schedule for 2023.
- ◆ Met in a timely fashion throughout the year to approve fees and vouchers.
- ◆ Directed soil borings to be completed at Centennial Park for the future golf buildings.
- ◆ Authorized the future capital improvements to the pool to replace the PA system, the hydrochloric liquid acid system and to expand the concessions patio by removing the sand play area.
- ◆ Developed and approved facility use agreements for use of the Centennial Park stage and outdoor wedding venues.
- ◆ Awarded a contract to install fiber optics communications from the Town's main fiber backbone along Calumet Avenue into Community Park.
- ◆ Honored outgoing Park Board member Dave Cerven and his 32 years of service to the Board by naming the first hole of the Centennial Park Golf Course in his honor.



Centennial Park Pay to Park sign



Stage at Centennial Park

## **FINANCIAL**

The Parks and Recreation fund is the main budget for day-to-day operations of the department. However, in 2022 the department also had use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to help makeup lost revenue during the pandemic.

2022 Parks and Recreation fund budget .....\$2,999,750.90 (also includes ARPA fund budget)

2022 Revenues .....\$2,006,472.41

2022 Expenses .....\$2,675,037.09 (included ARPA fund expenses) (89% of budget was expended)

770 fund ~ (retitled to '2370 fund' in 2022) is a non-reverting fund, separate from the above figures, 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.

2022 Revenues..... \$116,878.76

2022 Expenses..... \$113,595.23 (not including investments)

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





## **PARKS AND FACILITIES**

Park usage continued heavily in 2022 as people still looked to be outside for their recreational pursuits. Besides normal day-to-day maintenance of the park system, the below items were also completed.

- ◆ New landscaped area around the White Oak Park sign in cooperation with the Munster Garden Club.
- ◆ Cricket pitch at West Lakes Park was finally completed after some delays. A ribbon cutting will be done in 2023 with involvement from the local cricket players in the community.



White Oak Park sign 2022



Stewart Park parking lot 2022

- ◆ Repaved the Stewart Park parking lot and added an accessible route to the shelter and accessible parking spaces.
- ◆ Completed the replacement of the remote irrigation control units and associated software and hardware for the Centennial Park Golf Course.
- ◆ Based on the vehicle and equipment replacement schedule, a 2022 Ford Explorer was purchased to replace unit #55, a 2014 Jeep Patriot vehicle.

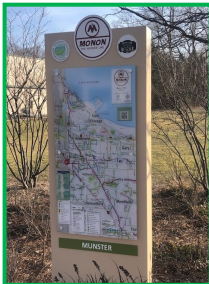


Cricket Pitch turf 2022

- ◆ Two memorial bricks and 2 tree memorial plaques were added to Centennial Park. For the rest of the park system, 6 other memorial trees were added to benefit the community.
- ◆ A 2022 John Deere Gator utility vehicle was purchased to replace the 2008 Yamaha utility vehicle for Community Park.
- ◆ Soil borings were done by Alt & Witzig Engineering, Inc. at Centennial Park to provide information for use in determining construction difficulties and foundation/slab design for the golf course pro shop, cart storage building, and open air shelter.



2022 John Deere Gator Utility Vehicle



Bike Route Kiosk Monon Trailhead

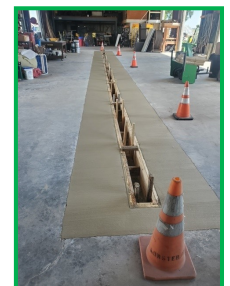
- ◆ While not a Town project, it's noteworthy to report that the Lake County Surveyor's Office in partnership with the Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission began work in 2022 on stabilizing the streambank of Hart Ditch in Munster which includes the area between Twin Creek and White Oak Parks. Expected completion is spring 2023.
- ◆ Improvements were made to the Community Park pool including the replacement of five 20' 'Funbrella' shades, six lifeguard stand umbrellas, the purchase of one new lifeguard stand, and the replacement of windows at the concession stand and admissions booth.
- ◆ A new concrete drainage trough was installed at the parks maintenance garage.

- ◆ Took ownership of a new Ford F-150 4x4 truck which replaced unit #212, a 2008 Ford F-250 pickup truck.



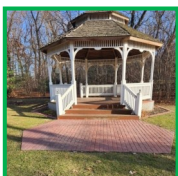
2022 Ford F-150 4x4 pickup

- ◆ Two regional bike route kiosk maps were installed thanks in part to grants coordinated by NIRPC. One at Centennial Park along the Pennsy and one at the Monon Trailhead which show routes.
- ◆ Ordered a replacement 2022 Lastec rough mower attachment to replace a unit for the golf course.



Parks garage storm trough

- ◆ A colored stamped concrete approach was installed in front of the Heritage Park gazebo to provide solid footing in the area in front of the facility.
- ◆ Ordered two new 2022 Kubota front mower/snow blower machines.



Heritage Park Gazebo concrete



2022 Lastec rough mower attachment



2022 Kubota mower/snow blower



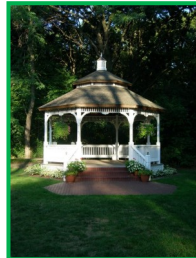
2022 Ford Explorer

## **PARKS AND FACILITIES**

### **RENTAL FACILITIES**

In 2022, Munster Parks and Recreation had the rentals listed below by facility/use. Due to the banquet facility closure, Centennial Park shelter rentals were reserved at the Parks and Recreation office in 2022. Altogether, there were 302 'rentals' broken down as follows:

Community Park Social Center .....	130
Park Shelters .....	105
Weddings (Heritage Park 6, Centennial 15) .....	21
Private Pool Rentals .....	18
Pool Birthday Parties .....	21
Pool Group Rentals .....	7



Heritage Park Gazebo



Community Park Social Center



Community Park Rotary Shelter

### **MUNSTER COMMUNITY POOL**

- ◆ The Munster Pool had 17,150 visits in 2022.
- ◆ Marko Holubec was hired as Pool Manager and was very helpful in his first year.
- ◆ Seasonal pool staff pay rates were increased for 2022 to be competitive and helped staff the pool.
- ◆ The pool was open from May 28 - August 7.
- ◆ Private and semi-private swim lessons continue to be the largest type of lessons requested and increased by 10%.
- ◆ The two largest challenges in operating the pool in 2022 continued to be not wearing proper swim attire and behavior issues. A lot of guests want to wear 'street clothes' in the water. Signage was updated and a letter for guests to sign acknowledging proper attire was added at the entrance. Police were called to the pool 4 times which was better than 2021.
- ◆ There were 104 saves/rescues that lifeguards had to perform. This decreased from 157 in 2021.
- ◆ Photo ID cards were provided for season pass holders and will continue each season.
- ◆ Monthly 'after hours' parties were held for season pass holders.
- ◆ Capital replacement projects included: five 20' shade umbrellas, six lifeguard stand umbrellas, and one guard stand.
- ◆ 2022 Pool finances:
 

Revenues:	\$254,470.77	(admission, sponsors, rentals, lessons)
Expenses:	\$226,052.43	(staff, supplies, signage, printing)
Variance:	\$28,418.34	(this will allow for increased staff to combat issues in future years)

### **CENTENNIAL PARK**

The Town has contracted with Centennial Park Golf Management LLC to manage the golf and banquet facility at Centennial Park. Centennial Park Golf Management LLC, is a wholly owned subsidiary of Indigo Sports, a Troon Company. Troon is a leader in golf management in the country. Caleb Warner was named as General Manager/Golf Pro in 2022. They also have two full time staff on the maintenance side of the golf course as well as a number of seasonal staff to operate and maintain the course. We continued to use the Clubhouse facility for limited Pro Shop access and to store golf carts but otherwise have closed that facility due to structural issues. Closing the banquet operations significantly hurt their bottom line. Charging to park at the site is also mentioned why golf rounds and driving range revenues were down in 2022 despite validating parking for those users. Operationally here are some financial highlights from the 2022 season.

Golf Rounds	13,783	-27% from 2021 (closure of the Clubhouse was associated with the course & kept golfers away)
Green Fees	\$187,521	-8.4% from 2021 (green fees decrease coincided with fewer golf rounds)
Cart Fees	\$60,894	-4.7% from 2021 (cart fees decrease coincided with fewer golf rounds)
Range Revenue	\$40,111	-46% from 2021 (pay to park hurt driving range revenues as many thought they had to pay or didn't want the hassle of validating parking at the Pro Shop)
Pro Shop Rev.	\$12,215	-45% from 2021 (limited access to Pro Shop and products was significant)
Food/Bev. Rev.	\$112,222	-84% from 2021 (closing of banquet facility was very impactful)

## **RECREATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES**

Most activities have returned to pre-pandemic expectations but there is still some hesitancy from some would-be participants due to the threat. Outdoor activities and events were very well attended as compared to indoor ones. The permanent closure of the Centennial Park Clubhouse also hurt our indoor participation numbers. As a department we continue to look at new ways to meet recreational need. The Holiday Arts and Craft Show returned after a three year hiatus due to the pandemic.

### **PROGRAMMING**

- ◆ Abracadabra was a new program with a great turnout. Popcorn and water were shared with the 79 people in attendance.
- ◆ Summer Camp was held at Frank Hammond School and capped at 85 campers per week. Entertainment was brought in, special lunches were served on Fridays and pool visits were often. Camp was successful despite some camper and staff absences due to covid positivity.
- ◆ Began a partnership with the Lake County Corndogs baseball team. Players taught classes once a week and complimentary tickets were given to participants.
- ◆ The Youth Soccer League had a successful return with 864 players, 150 coaches, 20 referees for the 64 teams across four age divisions over the spring and fall seasons which was sponsored by Land O'Frost.
- ◆ Lady Empowerment Walks continues as a programming option with 65 participants.
- ◆ Day Off School Camp was held in January at the Social Center and had 20 participants.
- ◆ Super Smash Bros was our second e-sports tournament which had 22 participants.
- ◆ Pint-Size Camps ran with 121 children. It's a Bugs Life was the biggest hit, followed by Clay Art and Preschool Picasso's.
- ◆ Intro to Skateboarding was offered and popular with 39 participants. Taught by Driftwood Collective, they showed safety basics and skateboarding techniques and offered a leveling up program allowing participants to move up based upon skating abilities.
- ◆ Nerf Wars was the ultimate party. The event was run by the 2022 intern and included obstacles, competitions and pizza for the 50 participants.
- ◆ Keen-Ager memberships totaled 208 for the year with 12-16 monthly newsletter sponsors. Keen-Ager BINGO parties averaged 50 participants monthly and were sponsored by various local businesses. The Keen-Ager Holiday Party with musical entertainment, lunch and prizes had 71 participants, the most attending for a number of years.
- ◆ Tennis programs increased in registration by 9% in 2022.
- ◆ Outdoor private and semi-private swim lessons increased by 10% from 2022. Extra swim instructors were added to accommodate the boost in registration.
- ◆ Dog Park memberships added up to \$16,698.72 in revenue from 272 member dogs.
- ◆ Some new classes were successful including Cuban Salsa Dance (38 participants), Line Dancing (25), Succulent 101 taught by Munster Garden Club (10), Ackerman Garden Tour and Program (10), and Cardio Drumming (25).
- ◆ Out to Lunch trips/tours filled up each month using the park van. Trips included the Chicago Crime & Mob Tour, Chicago River Architecture Tour, Shops at North Bridge, Downtown Saugatuck, and Shipshewana Flea Market. These trips will take a hiatus in 2023 while we get back to offering large bus trips.
- ◆ Slither, Ribbit and Learn had 90+ participants including families, troop groups and friends who attended a presentation from the Frog Lady in which animal behaviors were discussed.



Summer Camp, Disney Week



Keen-Ager Holiday Party



Pumpkins, Witches & Hayrides



## **RECREATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES**

### **SPECIAL EVENTS**

- ◆ Daddy Daughter Date Night returned to Wilbur Wright Middle School with 150 participants.
- ◆ Egg Hunts were back at Community Park on the Softball Fields. Over 200 participated. The Flashlight teen hunt had 45 participants. Sponsors included: Albanese, Gizmo's, Jak's Warehouse, Kube Sports Complex, Mascot Hall of Fame, McDonald's, Railcats, SkyZone, Sport Clips, and Zig E's Funland.
- ◆ People's Bank continued to sponsor the free Summer Concert Series at Munster Town Hall with a combined 2,000+ in attendance. A number of positive comments were received having the concerts at Town Hall which allowed for social distancing, close parking and indoor washroom facilities.



Colors of the World Culture Fest



Bark in the Park

- ◆ Munster Civic Foundation donated funds to host a new CIVIC Monday Concert Series of six concerts at Centennial Park along with a free concert from the NWI Symphony.
- ◆ A new event, Colors of the World Culture Fest, was held on a very rainy day but still was successful with over 20 ethnic groups participating with two stages for entertainment and various vendors.
- ◆ Canine Cannonball was held in August after the pool season was closed for the year with 30 pooches swimming at the pool.
- ◆ Bark in the Park was another popular event highlighted by Lure coursing, demonstrations from the Munster Police Department, and other pet vendors.

- ◆ Walk in the Woods was held at Heritage Park. More than 1,000 guests walked the woods during the 2-hour event. Over 150 families and businesses helped to carve pumpkins which also had twenty volunteers help with the event.
- ◆ Trunk or Treat combined with the Bieker Woods Night Walk had over 3,500 guests.
- ◆ The Holiday Arts and Crafts Fair, last held in 2019, returned after a three-year hiatus. Despite not being at full capacity on vendors, 120 vendors showcased their products with all eager to return in 2023.



Canine Cannonball



Civic Monday Concerts

- ◆ The Car Show had another great year with a total of 226 vehicles, 5 food vendors and over 2,000 in attendance, the event exceeded our expectations.
- ◆ A 15-mile 'Pennsy Bike Ride' event was offered by partnering with Schererville Parks and Recreation. 2022 was the 2nd annual recreational night-time ride which had almost 200 riders.
- ◆ Pumpkins, Witches and Hayrides attendance surpassed expectations. The event continues to grow with over 2,000 in attendance.

- ◆ Pool Pride Day, an opportunity for community giving, was introduced. Nearly 20 volunteers helped to prepare the pool to open by washing chairs and tables and were thanked with some dinner.
- ◆ Region Eats had a turnout of 2,500+. This first year event was highlighted by different food vendors and also included entertainment.
- ◆ Winter Fest was held at Town Hall the week after 'Light the Night'. 200+ visitors enjoyed photo opportunities, games, treats and vendors in front of Town Hall.

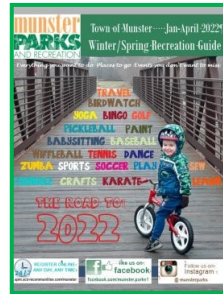


Munster Car Show

- ◆ The department supported the July 3rd Independence Day festivities at Centennial Park, National Night Out in August at Community Park and the 'Light the Night' holiday tree lighting at Town Hall in December.

## **DEPARTMENT SOCIAL MEDIA AND MARKETING**

The department shares information in many different ways to help get the word out to the community. The newest information on recreational activities, programs and facilities offered by the Town is shared through different platforms to ensure the community is informed. Three 'Recreation Guides' and use of the monthly 'News You Can Use' utility bill newsletter are traditional ways of advertising as is the marquees 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.



2022 Winter/Spring



2022 Summer



2022 Fall



# Instagram

The 'Munster Parks' Instagram page is up to 1,836 followers, a 17% increase from 2021. In 2022, 186 posts were made on that platform.

Facebook 'followers' increased by 17% to 8,464 in 2022.

Sharing increased by over 7% for a total of 3,236. The largest shared event was for 'Holiday Arts and Crafts Fair' with 272 shares. Staff will boost Facebook ads with funding from time to time. 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 for those who like that platform.



'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. Email contacts increased by 28%.

Other marketing efforts are teaming up with local businesses and organizations for sponsoring activities while also offering advertising opportunities at certain park facilities. In 2022, \$60,600 was received for various program and events sponsors. The Munster Civic Foundation also expended \$26,000 for the Civic Monday Concerts Series and NWI Symphony events. Advertising opportunities brought in an additional \$32,244. 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 and special events for the department which helps the department save money and advertise.

## **GOALS FOR 2023**

The following is the framework of goals as a plan for the Parks and Recreation department for 2023!

- ◆ Repave the Community Park pool parking lot.
- ◆ Complete 2022 bond issue projects.
- ◆ Replace the hydrochloric acid tank system, the PA system and expand the concessions patio in the old sand play area at the pool.
- ◆ Update the Centennial Park stage sound system.
- ◆ Create a memorandum of understanding with Munster Girls Softball and Munster Little League to document responsibilities for park use on permitted facilities.
- ◆ Make decision on landfill generator rebuild versus replacement with potential Inflation Reduction Act grant.
- ◆ Continue to make park improvements from remaining balances of bonds prior to 2022.
- ◆ Coordinate plans and begin construction of a new Pro Shop building and cart storage facility for the golf course.
- ◆ Determine fate of current Centennial Park Clubhouse and any next steps with that facility.
- ◆ Make electrical upgrades to the Community Park Social Center.
- ◆ Update network communications to Community Park via new fiber optics line and associated hardware to the pool, Social Center and Triple Play Café.

