

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

## 2020 YEAR IN REVIEW/ANNUAL REPORT

*Town of Munster, Lake County, Indiana*

### 2020 Board of Parks and Recreation

Dan Repay..... President

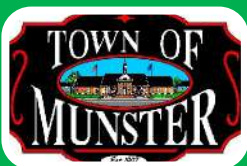
Dave Cerven..... Vice President

Mike Sowards..... Secretary

Robyn Paulsen..... Member

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

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*

## **DEPARTMENT FULL-TIME STAFF**

Director of Parks and Recreation ..... Mark Heintz, CPRP (*replaced Greg Vitale who left in May 2020*)

Superintendent of Park Operations ..... Kevin Dark

Superintendent of Recreation ..... Jill Higgins, CPRP

Maintainer IV - Centennial Park..... Bob Webb

Recreation Supervisor ..... Skyler Ramberger, CPO

Recreation Supervisor - Aquatics ..... Abby Kresal

Marketing Coordinator ..... Donna Chant

Administrative Secretary ..... Janice Uram

Maintainer III ..... Ron Moss, CPO

Maintainer II ..... Linda Dillon

Maintainer II ..... Michael Talarico

Maintainer II ..... open

Recreation Intern - summer 2020..... Madeline Adams

After some alterations to full-time staff positions for the Parks and Recreation department in 2019 due to retirements and such, 2020 brought about a few more changes. In February, Kevin Dark was promoted to the Superintendent of Park Operations position which was a newly created position combining the Superintendent of Parks and Superintendent of Centennial Park positions. His former Maintainer III position was filled by Ron Moss, a new employee, in March. In August, Bob Webb was promoted to Maintainer IV at Centennial Park, a position that reports to Kevin Dark. Those three positions were done as part of a reorganization plan which was approved a couple of years prior. The last piece of that plan was to hire the third Maintainer II position which is still currently unstaffed. We will look to do that in 2021 if the budget allows.

Additional staff changes in 2020, included the hiring of Abby Kresal as a Recreation Supervisor with specialty in aquatics in February. Mark Heintz was hired as the new Director of Parks and Recreation in September after his predecessor, Greg Vitale, left for a new job in May. A big thank you to all Town staff who managed to pitch in while no department head was working for about 1/3 of the year.

Jill Higgins, Superintendent of Recreation, received her Certified Park and Recreational Professional certification from the National Recreation and Park Association in February. Ron Moss, Maintainer III, achieved his Certified Pool Operator certification from the Pool and Hot Tub Alliance in July.

The department also employed 105 part-time or seasonal employees in 2020. These included pool lifeguards and staff, park maintenance assistants, recreation program leaders, referees, sports instructors, camp aides, social center attendants and such.

A HUGE thank you to the numerous volunteers that help put on so many recreation programs, activities and special events 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, and so many more we are thankful that you are so active in your community through the Town of Munster Parks and Recreation department.



2020 Staff Holiday Party at Social Center



## **BOARD ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- ◆ Extended a management agreement with Indigo Golf Partners for management of the Centennial Park golf and facilities.
- ◆ Extended a management agreement with Indigo Golf Partners for management of concessions at Community Park.
- ◆ Completed a memorandum of understanding with Munster Babe Ruth.
- ◆ Opened the Community Park pool, with certain restrictions, for use by the community during the international pandemic.
- ◆ Reinforced the hours of operation at Centennial Park to be from 6am-dusk same as all of the other parks in the Town of Munster.
- ◆ Continued operations of the department despite the pandemic challenges, stay-home orders, staff quarantining at times and a change in department head.
- ◆ Directed purchase of new vehicles and equipment based upon replacement schedule or emergency replacement.
- ◆ Met in a timely fashion throughout the year to approve fees and vouchers.
- ◆ Approved salary and wage schedule for part-time and seasonal employees.
- ◆ Extended agreement for landscape maintenance services for Centennial Park and Community Park.
- ◆ Approved a revised release and indemnity form.
- ◆ Partnered with School Town of Munster on playground updates at Eads and Elliott Schools for additional recreational opportunity for the community.
- ◆ Approved purchase of new equipment at Centennial Park clubhouse including a new dishwasher, hot top range and a fryer.
- ◆ Approved the hiring of Mark Heintz as Director of Parks and Recreation, department head for the Parks and Recreation department, starting September 1st.



Community Park Pool



Elliott School Playground

## **FINANCIAL**

2020 Parks and Recreation budget .....\$2,668,268.00

2020 revenues .....\$2,236,209.60

2020 expenses .....\$2,127,492.65 (79.7% of approved budget due to limiting expenses because of pandemic)

770 fund ~ 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.

2020 Revenues..... \$38,046.73

*These revenues include sponsorships totaling \$24,310 ~ memorial trees \$4,360 ~ Senior Citizen donations \$3,249 & others.*

2020 Expenses ..... \$26,732.54

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

## **PARKS AND FACILITIES**

In 2020, during the transition of department leadership change, the pandemic supply challenges, higher outdoor park usage demands, implementing changes in Covid-19 guidelines, and social distancing in daily operations in offices, parks and vehicles, the department was still able to make some improvements. These items were done during a time when park usage was at an all time high as people revisit outdoor parks and facilities for their recreational pursuits.

- ◆ Resurfaced athletic (tennis, volleyball and basketball) courts at West Lakes Park.
- ◆ Improved parking accessibility at all park parking lots except for Stewart Park. (planned for 2021)
- ◆ Opened a new playground at Circle Park.
- ◆ Gaga ball pit added to Community Park.
- ◆ Rebuilt a retaining wall and added a drainage improvement to the Community Park playground.
- ◆ Replaced stolen basketball hoops at Grove.
- ◆ Partnered with School Town on new playgrounds at Eads and Elliott school that are available for community use outside of school hours - this included sidewalk connections and signage.
- ◆ Paved a number of golf cart paths at Centennial Park and a storage area of the maintenance yard.
- ◆ Received a new fleet of golf carts for Centennial Park which were previously leased.
- ◆ Purchased a new ball picker for golf range, bank mower, a multi-purpose 1575 and a 2020 Chevy Colorado for Centennial Park.
- ◆ Updated Centennial Park roundabout to reduce damage from truck turnaround.
- ◆ Replaced a pool diving board at the Community Park pool.
- ◆ Purchased a 2020 Chevy 2500 pickup truck and a Gator for the parks maintenance garage.
- ◆ Completed depth surveying of Maynard Lake and Clayhole Lake to help with future fish stocking and park planning.
- ◆ Renovated the ball fields at Frank H. Hammond Park.
- ◆ Replaced unsafe pieces of independent play equipment at Cobblestone Park and Grove Park.
- ◆ Added keypad readers and surveillance cameras to the Centennial Park shelter washroom and storage room doors.
- ◆ Began to purchase trail guideline signage along trails to encourage appropriate use of trails for enjoyment by all.
- ◆ Added seven memorial trees to the park system.



Community Park Gaga Ball Pit 2020



Centennial Park roundabout 2020



Circle Park playground 2020



2020 John Deere 1575



2020 J. Deere 7400A Terrain



2019 John Deere Gator



2020 Chevy Colorado



## **PARKS AND FACILITIES**

### **RENTAL FACILITIES**

In 2020, Munster Parks and Recreation had the below rentals by facility/use. Keep in mind that this does not include any rentals at Centennial Park which are coordinated through Indigo Golf Partners which manages that facility for the department. During the time from March-May, when there was a 'stay-home' executive order, facility use was next to nothing and definitely lowered the below numbers for 2020. Social Center rental revenues decreased by \$15,000 from 2019 due to the pandemic restrictions and crowd size limits. Reduced gathering numbers as the year went on also attributed to lower figures in 2020 than the previous year. Outdoor wedding ceremonies did increase by 50% from 2019 as more people went outside for activities. Altogether, there were 142 'rentals' broken down as follows.

Community Park Social Center .....	89
Park Shelters .....	33
Heritage Park Weddings .....	12
Private Pool Rentals .....	6
Birthday Parties.....	2



Community Park Social Center



Community Park Rotary Shelter



Heritage Park Gazebo

### **MUNSTER COMMUNITY POOL**

- ◆ One of the few pools in the region that opened during the pandemic with many strict rules and protocols.
- ◆ Munster Pool brought in 6,658 guests.
- ◆ With a 53-day pool season, only Munster/Highland Residents were allowed into the facility to keep attendance manageable to meet social distancing and thorough cleaning requirements per the CDC.
- ◆ Private swim lessons were limited due to pandemic restrictions, however 33 lessons were conducted in July.
- ◆ Partnered with Bowman Displays for social distancing signage throughout the facility. Banners, posters, floor and hand rail stickers were posted to remind and ensure all guidelines were being followed by guests.
- ◆ Munster Swim Club was allowed access to the pool prior to opening since the Munster High School facilities were closed. \$14,800 was collected for lap lane rental use.
- ◆ The Park Board chose to open the pool for 2020 knowing it would require high staffing requirements to accomplish the strict CDC guidelines for limiting the spread of the virus. Taking into account all revenues and expenses, the pool operations were subsidized at a cost of \$62,100.56 for 2020 or \$1,172 per day that the pool was open.

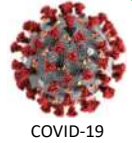
Revenue:	\$76,747.00	(admission, sponsors, rentals, lessons)
Expense:	\$138,847.56	(staff, supplies, signage, printing)
Variance:	(\$62,100.56)	

### **CENTENNIAL PARK**

The golf course had the best year ever even though the facility was shut down for about six weeks due to Governor's Executive Orders in regards to Covid-19 health threat. However, the food/beverage operations had a large decrease from the previous year as many events were canceled, postponed or scaled back due to coronavirus. In 2020, the Centennial Park golf management group changed names from Billy Casper Golf to Indigo Golf Partners. As of the final day of 2020, Indigo Golf Partners was purchased by Troon which will be the parent golf company. Indigo Golf Partners will continue to manage the facility. Following are the highlights of the 2020 season at Centennial Park.

Golf Rounds	\$23,671	+19% from 2019 ( <i>most rounds ever</i> )
Green Fees	\$197,663	+53% from 2019 ( <i>golf is a good social distant activity</i> )
Cart Fees	\$35,695	-44% ( <i>attribute decrease due to increased walkers because of pandemic concerns</i> )
Range Revenue	\$77,784	+30% from 2019 ( <i>outdoor recreational activity that is affordable, good for beginners &amp; socially distant</i> )
Pro Shop Rev.	\$19,810	-1.5% from 2019 ( <i>inside sales were limited and discouraged due to pandemic concerns</i> )
Food/Bev. Rev.	\$360,869	-60% from 2019 ( <i>many events had to be canceled or scaled back due to Executive Orders</i> )

## **RECREATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES**



COVID-19

The Town of Munster and the entire world were affected by a pandemic caused by COVID-19 in 2020. At various points in 2020 the Town, County, State, Nation and World learned to deal with the pandemic in different ways. Classes were canceled, playgrounds were closed, courts were off-limits, users were asked to social distance and recreation became different as people sought leisure through other uses of the parks. Efforts were refocused to find non-traditional forms of recreational programming as users sought to discover recreational pursuits that are more individual or small group oriented.

Office staff worked from home for parts of March and April as well as later in the year during department quarantining times from contact tracing. Quarantining staff also caused the cancellation of the 'Bow Wow and Meow Pet Fair'. A number of activities had to be canceled as orders from the Governor and the County Health department were issued to limit the spread of the virus. Refunds from canceled activities, events and rental cancellations totaled \$70,923.56. Despite the various challenges, staff tried to offer as many programs and activities as possible to offer a sense of normalcy during the pandemic and to keep recreation as the way to combat stresses of the pandemic.

### **PROGRAMMING**

- ◆ Enrollment doubled this year for Continuing Education programs like 'EKG Technician', 'Pharmacy Technician' and 'Phlebotomy Technician' with total enrollment of 21.
- ◆ Partnering with Munster Little League, the 'Home Run Derby' was successful with over 80 youth/adult players participating. Winners were given Dick's Sporting Goods Gift Cards.
- ◆ 'Scavenger Hunts' at local parks were popular with each averaging 40 kids. Snacks and drinks were given to all attendees. Prizes were given to the top few winners completing the requirements.
- ◆ 'Geocaching' was introduced new this year. 24 people enrolled and used an app to discover all the secret spots in Munster. 5 families submitted for the prized t-shirt.
- ◆ 'Pint-Size Camps' ran with 28 children. Down from previous years due to location and pandemic, 'Slime Sensation' was the biggest hit.
- ◆ Two 'Disc Golf Tournaments' at River's Edge Disc Golf Course ran with 25 people. In-Kind Sponsors: Justin Teller and Red Roc Disc Golf.
- ◆ Two 'Lady Empowerment Walks' filled before going public with 24, so another was added. Total enrollment for Fall 2020 = 37.
- ◆ In Fall 2020, we introduced a 'Craft in a Box' series. Each month, a designated craft was offered. Throughout the season, 24 families created a custom project in which supplies were given and crafts were made in the safety and comfort of their own home.
- ◆ Prior to the 'Fishing Derby', an 'Intro to Fishing' class was offered with 16 participants to learn the basics.
- ◆ The first time 'Wiffleball League' was a success with 6 teams of 5 players each. 'R-bar' sponsored this league.
- ◆ In November, 'Tumblebear Gymnastics' made the decision to close their business. Up to that point, classes were always well-attended for a number of years. This unique 'gymnastics on the go' type of program will be tough to replace.
- ◆ 2020 'Dog Park' memberships added up to \$12,733.35 in revenue from 200 members.



Lady Empowerment Walk



### **RECREATION GRANT**

- ◆ The 'Tennis Lessons' program was awarded a \$2,960 United States Tennis Association grant to purchase tennis supplies. A ball machine, match balls, two ball carts and ball recyclers were purchased from this grant.



Tennis Lessons

## **RECREATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES**

### **SPECIAL EVENTS**

- ◆ 'Daddy Daughter Date Night' and the 'Bridal Fair' were the last events before Covid-19 hit locally. 'Daddy Daughter Date Night' increased to 225, up 31 people from 2019 with 10 in-kind sponsors. 'Bridal Fair' vendors increased by three vendors over 2019 to 56 for 2020, 23 of which were new vendors.
- ◆ 'Egg Hunts' were postponed until the summer thinking they could occur as normal at that time of year. While the attendance was not similar to years past for this event due to hesitation from some in the community, 72 still participated in the youth events. The 'Flashlight Teen Hunt' was cancelled due to strong storms.
- ◆ People's Bank sponsored a five concert 'Heritage Park Concert Series', with a combined 1,500+



Concert Series at Town Hall

in attendance. All concerts were moved to Munster Town Hall to allow for better social distancing and was well-received by the guests.



The Grape Escape 2020

- ◆ 'Grape Escape' was held despite the pandemic. With certain restrictions in place, all wore masks on the grounds and attendance never surpassed 300-person capacity at one time.

- ◆ 'Movie Nights' were popular. Social distancing circles were painted on the ground to help guide people to follow the CDC guidelines. For Toy Story 4, over 800 were in attendance.
- ◆ NEW IN 2020: 'Spirited Bike Parade' ran with 37 people enrolled. Numerous in-kind donations were made from local businesses for decorated bikes and costumes. All rode their bike twice around Centennial Park.
- ◆ NEW IN 2020: 'Trunk or Treat' was very popular with 33 vendors and 1,500+ in attendance. Cars were lined up down Ridge Road all the way to Wicker Park for the drive-thru option.
- ◆ NEW IN 2020: 'The Fishing Derby' had over 70 participants. Awards were given those



Fishing Derby 2020

that caught the most fish. The overall best fisherman caught 20 fish. It was a catch and release competition.

- ◆ NEW IN 2020: 'Walk in the Woods' took the place of 'Bieker Woods Night Walk' this year as the Girl Scouts opted out because of concerns due to the pandemic. This event surpassed expectations with 1,125 in attendance for a 2 hour event. Over 50 resident families and businesses helped carve pumpkins. Thanks to Community Healthcare System for sponsoring and making the event possible along with Great Lakes Landscaping.



Trunk or Treat 2020

- ◆ NEW IN 2020: The 'Holiday Boutique goes Virtual' was strictly a Facebook event. 32 vendors posted their business information, pictures and had the option to live video themselves. It was well-received, however we're hoping to stick with just the Holiday Arts & Crafts fair in the future. That event was canceled in 2020 as the High School did not allow the event to be held due to the pandemic.
- ◆ NEW IN 2020: 'Canes and Cocoa' took the place of 'Rock Along with Santa' this year as more of a social-distanced opportunity. 52 children participated in the hunt. Hot cocoa was offered inside following the hunt at the park.
- ◆ The following events were canceled due to the pandemic in 2020: 'Car Show', 'Bieker Woods Night Walk', 'Pumpkins, Witches & Hayrides', 'Munster Ale Fest'.



A Walk in the Woods 2020



## **DEPARTMENT SOCIAL MEDIA AND MARKETING**

Every community is always changing. 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' were issued in 2020 which is a traditional way of advertising as is the electronic marquee at Community Park. In more recent years, the department has become more aggressive with social media, by sharing activities and events as more and more people are finding information via those platforms.



2020 Winter/Spring



2020 Summer



2020 Fall



# Instagram

The 'Munster Parks' Instagram page is up to 1,504 followers, a 30% increase from 2019. In 2020, 319 posts were made, which was an increase of 30% from the year prior.

'Facebook friends' increased by 17% to 5,783 in 2020. Sharing decreased by over 10%

for a total of 2,457. The largest shared event was for 'The Walk in the Woods' with 93 shares. \$1,855 was invested to boost 24 Facebook ads. As more people are finding their information on social media, concentrated social media ads were found to be a great tool for marketing besides the regularly anticipated Recreation Guides.



Five 'Virtual Contests' and the addition of 'Elf on the Shelf' were a hit with the community and used as a way to increase followers and attention to the department social media pages on Facebook and Instagram.

Some marketing efforts are teaming up with local businesses for sponsoring activities and events while also offering advertising opportunities at certain park facilities. In 2020, \$24,310 was received for various program and event sponsors while \$24,535 was brought in via advertising. Additionally, some sponsors give in-kind donations to share at activities/events. Bowman Displays continued their commitment to provide complimentary banners to advertise activities and special events for the department in a demonstration of their support of the community while saving the department money.

## **GOALS FOR 2021**

The following is the framework of goals as a plan for the Parks and Recreation department for 2021!

- ◆ Patch and reseal the Stewart Park parking lot.
- ◆ Complete 2020 bond issue projects.
- ◆ Review and update park use rules.
- ◆ Investigate a 'Pay to Park' plan for Centennial Park.
- ◆ Remodel of The View Restaurant at Centennial Park Clubhouse into a dedicated rental facility.
- ◆ Fill the vacant Maintainer II position for parks maintenance.
- ◆ Increase social media friends/followers by 20% and sharing by 10% from 2020.
- ◆ Partner with another municipality on a community bike ride.
- ◆ Create a memorandum of understanding with Munster Girls Softball and Munster Little League to document responsibilities for park use on permitted facilities.
- ◆ Secure a rebate from NIPSCO for the LED lighting retrofit project in parks that was recently completed.
- ◆ Continue to make purchases of park improvements from remaining balances of bonds prior to 2020.
- ◆ Replace a damaged disc golf basket at River's Edge disc golf course.

