

munster **PARKS** AND RECREATION

2023 YEAR IN REVIEW/ANNUAL REPORT

Town of Munster, Lake County, Indiana

2023 Board of Parks and Recreation

Robyn PaulsenPresident

Dan RepayVice President

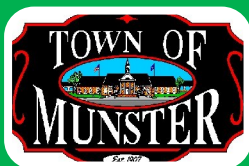
Scot PierceMember

Mike SowardsMember

Kristen SmithMember, School Board Liaison

Janice Uram, Recording Secretary

Town of Munster Parks and Recreation Department



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(219) 836-7275

www.munster.org

PARK BOARD & DEPARTMENT FULL-TIME STAFF

2023 brought about two new Park Board members for the department. We welcomed Scot Pierce and Kristen Smith (School Board Liaison) to 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 RecreationJill Higgins, CPRP
Maintainer IV - Centennial ParkBob Webb
Recreation Supervisor - Aquatics.....Abby Kresal, AFO
Recreation SupervisorMara DiCarlo
Marketing CoordinatorDonna Chant
Administrative SecretaryJanice Uram
Maintainer IIIRon Moss, CPO
Maintainer IIIChristina Edwards, CPO
Maintainer IIFernando Lopez
Maintainer IIMichael Talarico
Maintainer IIvacant
Recreation Intern - summer 2023Emily Rakich, Indiana University in Sports Marketing

The full time staff remained the same for the department in 2023 however a few items are of note. Christina Edwards was promoted to the Maintainer III vacancy. This left her previous Maintainer II position vacant which is expected to be filled in early 2024. Christina Edwards also achieved her Certified Pool Operator certification in 2023. Emily Rakich, a Sports Marketing major at Indiana University and Munster resident, was the intern for the 2023 summer season for the department.

The department also employed 138 part-time employees in 2023. These included pool lifeguards and staff, park maintenance assistants, recreation program leaders, referees, sports instructors, camp aides, social center supervisors, and similar types of positions.

Despite some bad luck in the department maintenance division in 2023, the full-time and seasonal staff was able to keep up with most maintenance related issues as needed. Between on-the-job injuries, funeral leave, FMLA leave and other earned paid benefit time off, the crew did a great job of stepping up to maintain the park system without much notice from the public about the reduced staff level. However, after two years of similar situations, there is a need to catch up on some of the deferred maintenance in the coming years. The lost time added up to being down almost 20% of the maintenance staff for the full year.

Numerous volunteers really make Munster Parks and Recreation a special department which builds a stronger community! Volunteers help out with recreation programs, special events, maintenance tasks and improvements each year. Munster is a better place because of the dedication to 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 Organization.



BOARD ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ◆ Contractually engaged a professional services agreement with CSK Architects for architectural/engineering services to design/spec/bid/observe construction/construction administration of the new Centennial Park Golf Pro Shop and Cart Storage buildings.
- ◆ Approved electrical upgrades to the Social Center including a backup generator.
- ◆ Expanded the pool concession patio by adding concrete and picnic tables to the former sand play area.
- ◆ Engaged for irrigation relocation as part of the future new golf buildings.
- ◆ Approved rebuilding the Community Park recreation storage garage just south of the Social Center.
- ◆ Contracted with Ridge Towing as the service provider for when necessary at Centennial Park as a final effort to recover unpaid parking fees.
- ◆ Approved an initial development concept for Community Estates Park for the future.
- ◆ Engaged with Tri-Electronics Inc. to upgrade the sound system at the Community Park pool.
- ◆ Awarded construction of the golf course buildings project to Hasse Construction Co. Inc.
- ◆ Approved a warranty deed for transfer of park land along Manor Ave. for future train parking along with a perpetual easement agreement with NICTD.
- ◆ Approved improvements to the Frank Hammond Park sports courts.
- ◆ Engaged with HWC Engineering to complete a parks and recreation five year master plan through guidelines from the Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources.
- ◆ Approved gel coating improvements to the slides at the Community Park pool.
- ◆ Adopted operational details for the 2024 pool season.
- ◆ Awarded a landscaping contract to the golf buildings project to Hubinger's Landscaping.
- ◆ Approved a salary and wage schedule for part-time and seasonal employees for 2024.
- ◆ Engaged with Mechanical Concepts for a preventative maintenance agreement for the pool buildings and parks maintenance garages at Fisher St. and Centennial Park.
- ◆ Recommended to the Town Council to change the operational hours at Centennial Park to 6am-10pm daily.
- ◆ Approved a once a month meeting schedule for 2024.
- ◆ Met in a timely fashion throughout the year to approve fees and vouchers.



Golf Pro Shop rendering



Golf Cart Storage Building rendering

FINANCIAL

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

2023 Parks and Recreation fund budget..... \$2,697,825.84

2023 Revenue \$4,189,688.94 including taxes; \$2,212,990.80 without taxes

2023 Expenses \$2,694,398.35 (99.87% of budget was expended)

'2370 fund' ~ 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.



2023 Revenue..... \$354,953.61 (includes transfers to clear out old balances)



PARKS AND FACILITIES

2023 park usage was heavy as people still looked to be outside for 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.

- ◆ The cricket pitch ribbon cutting was held in April 2023 to a crowd of nearly 100 people.



West Lakes Park sign 2023

- ◆ Frank H. Hammond Park added two new tot swings based upon public input. The tennis, volleyball and pickleball courts were repaired.

- ◆ Pickleball lines were striped on the existing tennis courts at Beech, Grove, West Lakes Parks to give more flexibility for these multi-purpose courts.

- ◆ Several improvements were made to the pool including gel coating the slides, expanding the concession patio, and upgrading the sound system.

- ◆ A new park sign was added to West Lakes Park after discovering that one had not previously been installed at that location.

- ◆ One of the basketball hoops was removed at Grove Park due to numerous issues which were brought to the staff and Park Board.

- ◆ An historical rail road mile marker along the Pennsy Greenway was reinstalled, restored and painted on a new concrete bump out near Centennial Park. An informational kiosk sign has been ordered to be installed at the site in 2024.

- ◆ A concrete pad was poured around the regional bike route kiosk map along the Pennsy Greenway near Centennial Park. A bike repair station was also added at that site from a NIRPC grant.

- ◆ Two trail counters, from a NIRPC grant, were installed. These are on the Pennsy Greenway, one near the State Line and one near Centennial Park, and are part of NIRPC's regional trail counting system.

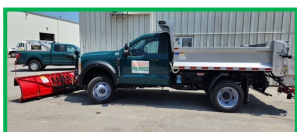
- ◆ An Eagle Scout installed a kiosk shelter at Bieker Woods.

- ◆ Repairs were made to the Monon Trailhead after a truck crashed into the site.

- ◆ A new concrete pad was poured around the shelter at Twin Creek Park.

- ◆ Red decomposed granite was installed in all of the low spots at Centennial Park.

- ◆ The old warming house building was replaced with a new recreational equipment storage garage at Community Park.



2023 Ford F-550 dump truck

- ◆ Electric upgrades were completed at the Social Center including adding a backup generator. New doors were also added to the main entrances on the east and west sides of the building.

- ◆ Per the vehicle replacement schedule, 4 new Z-Trak mowers, a new Ford F550 one-ton dump truck (unit #147), and a new John Deere 7500A fairway mower were purchased.

- ◆ Four memorial bricks and 4 tree memorial plaques were added to Centennial Park. Eleven memorial trees and 1 memorial bench were added to the rest of the park system as a benefit to the community.

- ◆ A fiber optic line was installed to Community Park to the Pool, Social Center and Triple Play Café to help with connectivity.

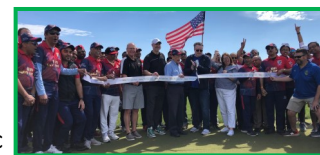
- ◆ The office and break room at the parks garage on Fisher St. was remodeled. The garage heating unit was also replaced.

- ◆ Boulders were placed along the alley at Sunnyside Park to deter vehicles in the park.

- ◆ Construction began on the new Golf Pro Shop and Cart storage buildings at Centennial Park.

- ◆ The furnace and A/C unit at the Kaske House was replaced.

- ◆ A driving range ball machine was purchased for the golf course at Centennial Park.



Cricket Pitch ribbon cutting 2023



Railroad mile marker along Pennsy



Community Park storage garage



Sunnyside Park boulders 2023



2023 Deere 7500A fairway mower

PARKS AND FACILITIES

RENTAL FACILITIES

In 2023, Munster Parks and Recreation had the rentals listed below by facility/use. Altogether, there were 314 'rentals' broken down as follows.

Community Park Social Center	155	Park Shelters	105
Weddings (Heritage Park 8, Centennial 8)	16	Private Pool Rentals	20
Pool Birthday Parties.....	10	Pool Group Rentals	8



Community Park Social Center



Heritage Park Gazebo

MUNSTER COMMUNITY POOL

- ◆ The Munster Pool had 16,646 visits in 2023 which was slightly lower than the prior year.
- ◆ Increased seasonal pool staff pay rates from 2022 were continued in 2023.
- ◆ The pool was open from May 27 - August 6.
- ◆ 838 season pool passes were sold in 2023.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ There were 76 saves/rescues that lifeguards had to perform. This decreased from 104 in 2022 and 157 in 2021.
- ◆ The new fiber optics line helped to greatly reduce issues at the admissions booth in 2023.
- ◆ Capital improvement projects included: expanded the concession patio, replaced the liquid acid tank with a tablet system, gel coated the slides, updated the sound system, replaced the loose tiles in the pool floor, replaced a gas line to the pump house, added a fiber optics line, and installed a heat/air conditioner unit in the admissions building.
- ◆ 2023 Pool finances:

Revenues:	\$232,279.42	(admission, sponsors, rentals, lessons)
Expenses:	\$227,685.92	(staff, supplies, signage, printing)
Variance:	\$4,593.50	

CENTENNIAL PARK PARKING



2023 was the first full season 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. Income generated from 2023 for hourly, daily, annual, and violation enforcement fees totaled \$162,023 which will be used to help operate and maintain Centennial Park. The office received calls daily about violations. Efforts have been made to reduce call volume to the office and have them directed to the parking management contractor.

CENTENNIAL PARK GOLF

The Town has contracted with Centennial Park Golf Management LLC to manage the Golf Course/Clubhouse 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. Troon is a leader in golf management in the country. They have three full-time staff at the golf course and a number of seasonal staff to operate and maintain the facilities.

The Clubhouse facility was closed due to structural issues but is continued to be used for Pro Shop access and to store golf carts. Closing the banquet operations significantly hurt the bottom line over the last two years. Charging to park at the site is also mentioned why golf rounds and driving range revenues were down in 2023 despite validating parking for those users. Below are some financial highlights from the 2023 season. Golf staff will make a full presentation at the February Park Board meeting as a year-in-review.

	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>% change from 2022</u>
Golf Rounds	13,783	15,769	+14.4%
Green Fees	\$187,521	\$161,488	-13.9%
Cart Fees	\$60,894	\$57,571	-5.5%
Range Revenue	\$40,111	\$35,824	-10.7%
Pro Shop Rev.	\$12,215	\$14,200	+16.3%



RECREATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Indoor recreation programming has become more challenging with the closing of the Centennial Park clubhouse and school facility use being limited by availability. The recreation staff has been creatively looking for ways to increase programs at existing Town owned facilities while also looking to partner with local establishments for increased activities.

PROGRAMMING

- ◆ The Youth Soccer League was again successful with 965 players, 155 coaches and 15 referees. In all, there were 68 teams across four age divisions in 2 seasons. Both leagues were sponsored by Land O' Frost. Enrollment increased 11% over the previous year.
- ◆ 2023 Summer Camp reached 100 campers per week – this is 15 more/week than 2022. We reverted back to pre-pandemic activities with attending field trips once per week. In addition to that, entertainment was brought in, special lunches were available on Fridays, ice cream treats were available on Monday, and pool days were included. Communication was made to parents via email, however it was also posted to our Facebook group page: "2023 Munster Parks Summer Camp" which has 712 members. Enrollment was 90% full within 3 business days of making it public.
- ◆ Enrollment for tennis lessons and programs increased by 10% in 2023.
- ◆ Parks rekindled their partnership with South Shore Arts and Fitness Pointe. Other new partnerships included: Fun4All, Greenway Bikehouse, Calumet Gymnastics Club and Drama Kids of NWI.
- ◆ Intro to Cricket was a new program that had 9 kids signed up and was played at West Lakes Cricket Pitch.
- ◆ Pint-size camps ran with 88 enrolled. 'Pop! Pow! Boom' and 'Creative Campers' held the most enrollment over the seven themed camps.
- ◆ Keen-Ager memberships increased 22% to 264 members. On average, monthly Keen-Ager newsletter sponsorship is up 10%. Daily pinochle play is up; therefore Monday was added as an additional play opportunity.
- ◆ Eight special BINGOS were offered. A local business sponsors each lunch to our average attendance of 70 per event.
- ◆ Keen-Ager Holiday Party guests increased by 18 from 2022. Entertainment was provided by 'Bowman and Rose'. Over 90 Holiday Arts and Crafts Vendors donated items for a raffle. Each Keen-Ager walked away with a raffle prize and bag of chocolates.
- ◆ Lunch and shows for the Keen-Ager group were a hit. Shows included: 'The Unsinkable Molly Brown', 'Carol Channing: Hello Dolly & More', 'Ghost of Mary Surratt' and 'Lucille Ball'.
- ◆ Learn to Play Mahjong was a new program. Class always held a low enrollment to individually teach the student's step-by-step play. Class fills each season. Due to its popularity, it was added to daily Keen-Ager activities for open play.
- ◆ Dog Park memberships increased to 265 in 2023.
- ◆ Birding classes continue to be popular. 27 bird seekers participated throughout the year.
- ◆ Big bus trips made a return since pre-COVID. Trips were hit or miss; however, some favorites were 'Drury Lane's: A Chorus Line', 'Illumination' and 'Cinderella'. Two other popular trips were 'Lovely Lake Geneva Ice Cream Social Cruise' and 'Exploring Calumet Geology'.
- ◆ Through Premier World Discovery and Mayflower Tours, we have the opportunity to offer overnight travel to places all over the world. We booked 12 trips which is up 15%.
- ◆ Other popular programming included: 'A Look into the Spanish Language', 'Spring Break Camp', 'The Benefits of Funeral Pre-Planning', 'Slam Dunk Basketball' and 'Cardio Drumming'.



Summer Camp



Keen-Ager Holiday Party



Pumpkins, Witches & Hayrides

RECREATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

SPECIAL EVENTS

- ◆ Daddy Daughter Date Night sold out before the early-bird deadline passed. 177 fathers & daughters ate a catered meal and danced the night away. An after-dinner option was offered and maxed out at 30. Munster Donut sponsored our donut wall favor with 120 frosted donuts.
- ◆ The Home Improvement Fair was a new special event. 15 businesses participated with sponsorship from Home Depot.
- ◆ The Leprechaun Flashlight Hunt is always a fun event in the cold! 31 children competed to find the leprechaun's gold coins at Community Park. Gold coins were redeemed for prizes.
- ◆ Cash for Clutter enrollment increased 21% with spring always being the most popular show. This year, we had 204 sellers.
- ◆ The Flashlight Egg Hunt was moved into the Social Center due to weather. 25 kids and 6 volunteers participated. The following day was quite soggy, however the Community Egg Hunts were held with 158 participants, 15 volunteers, 8 donations, and 2 sponsors.



Munster Car Show



Pennsy Bike Ride

- ◆ The Munster Car Show is a great way to begin each summer season. With 142 cars, 20 vendors and 11 sponsors, this event had perfect weather. To celebrate the 25th anniversary of this event, we offered a mini go-kart track for kids.
- ◆ People's Bank again sponsored the Summer Concert Series at Munster Town Hall with a combined 2,500 in attendance at the five concerts.
- ◆ Munster Civic Foundation donated \$34,000 to continue 'Civic Mondays' with 13 on-stage concerts (including the NWI Symphony). Attendance averaged 150/week. Food vendors were added to each concert and the Golf Course made their beverage cart available.
- ◆ Kid's Fest was rescheduled from June to July due to forecasted storms. Despite the date change, it was by far the highest attended outdoor event held in 2023. There were 6 wrist banded activities, 15 free activities, 17 vendors, 24 volunteers, 576 wristbands sold and over 2,000 in attendance.
- ◆ Touch-A-Truck was run by our summer intern. Over 20 trucks showcased their features along with the crowd favorite ... a Helicopter from the Lake County Sheriff.
- ◆ New this year, the public chose the summer movies via Facebook votes. Among the 4 movies shown, the most successful was "Minions: The Rise of Gru" with over 500 in attendance. A new company was hired to stream the movie and a glow accessory vendor was accepted to sell at each movie.



Canine Cannonball



Civic Monday Concerts

- ◆ Since the Canine Cannonball is so popular, a second event was held. Fetch Portraits were on hand to showcase their photography skills.
- ◆ Bark in the Park was well-received with 29 vendors, 4 food vendors and 3 sponsors. Munster Police and other businesses performed demonstrations, a superlative contest was held, and even a photo booth for the dogs was offered.
- ◆ Bieker Woods Night Walk was a success with 1,070 in attendance. Munster Girl Scouts sold glow items and Munster Boy Scouts sold popcorn. Positive reviews were shared to staff and social media.
- ◆ Park staff worked cooperatively for months with the Munster Civic Foundation, Chamber and Education Foundation to run a successful Light the Night/Winter Fest however due to inclement weather most activities were cancelled and only a meet-and-greet with Santa was held indoors.
- ◆ The Holiday Arts & Crafts Fair continues to have great attendance with 123 vendors, a 5% increase over the previous year, of which 36 were new vendors to the show.



Munster Car Show

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. Three 'Recreation Guides' and use of the monthly 'News You Can Use' utility



bill newsletters are traditional ways of advertising as are 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.

Facebook 'followers' increased by more than 2,000 in 2023 to more than 10,000 total! Posts were shared more than 2,300



times in 2023. Kid's Fest had the highest amount of shares with 344. 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. Unfortunately, the Facebook page was hacked and control was lost in December.

Staff is seeking to regain control but a new page may need to be started.

The 'Munster Parks' Instagram page is up to 1,990 followers, an 8% increase from 2022. In 2023, 81 posts were made on 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 with participants.

The email list grew by 68% in 2023 and is up to 8,891 contacts. The department will also utilize the 'Smart 911/RAVE' text message system which has 3,825 subscribers and is used for event notices.



Other marketing efforts are teaming up with local businesses and organizations for sponsoring activities while also offering advertising opportunities at certain park facilities. In 2023, \$63,750 was received for various program and events sponsors. The largest sponsor was Munster Civic Foundation giving \$34,000 to sponsor the Civic Monday Concerts Series and NWI Symphony events. Advertising opportunities brought in an additional \$33,466. 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.

GOALS FOR 2024

The following is the framework of goals as a plan for the Parks and Recreation department for 2024!

- ◆ Complete the Centennial Park Golf buildings project with a new Pro Shop, Cart Storage Building, and Shelter.
- ◆ Determine the fate of current Centennial Park Clubhouse and any next steps with that facility.
- ◆ Adopt the updated Parks and Recreation five-year master plan with approval from Indiana DNR.
- ◆ Repave the Frank Hammond track when Fran-Lin Parkway is paved.
- ◆ Fill the vacant Maintainer II position for the maintenance division.
- ◆ Replace playgrounds at Briar Creek Park and Cobblestones Park.
- ◆ Replace the park sign at Grove Park and resurface the tennis courts at Beech Park.
- ◆ Begin initial development of Community Estates Park.
- ◆ Complete 2023 bond issue vehicle replacement purchases.
- ◆ Replace the landfill generator with potential for IRA tax credits.
- ◆ Tuckpoint and replace windows and remaining doors at the Social Center.
- ◆ Replace the batting cage nets at Community Park for the baseball and softball fields.
- ◆ Seal the pathway at Burlwood Park.
- ◆ Continue to make park improvements from remaining balances of bonds prior to 2023.

