A NOTE FROM THE PARK BOARD

Dear Crystal Lake Park District Resident,

It is a priority of the Park Board of Commissioners to keep the community informed about the happenings of the Crystal Lake Park District. The Annual Report was created three years ago was to provide a snapshot of items the Board feels are important for the community to be aware of from the past year and the year ahead. Items include projects that have been recently completed, upcoming projects, budget information, park and facility items and any other topics considered of overall general interest.

We encourage you to contact any member of the Board or staff to share any questions or thoughts. Feedback is a critical factor in our efforts to enhance what the Crystal Lake Park District provides to the residents of the community. Thank you for taking the time to review the Annual Report!

Sincerely,
Michele Hartwig
Park Board President

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT

The Crystal Lake Park District holds intergovernmental agreements with School Districts 47 & 155. Additionally, the district has a strong working commitment with the other taxing entities such as the Crystal Lake Public Library, McHenry County Conservation District, Village of Lakewood and the City of Crystal Lake.

Highlights

NEW Beyond the Bell after school program at Husmann and West Elementary School.
Continuation of the Extended Time Before and After School Care program at all 9 elementary schools.
Continuation of the very popular Girls and Boys After School Basketball Program at all 9 elementary schools.
High school sports teams utilize artificial turf fields at Lippold Park when school fields are not playable due to weather.
School Districts 47 & 155 host special events at numerous CLPD parks and facilities.

Benefits

The cost savings of using a rent free facility is passed on to both school district program participants and park district program participants.
This agreement eliminates duplication of some services and expands other services in their respective specialty areas.
Both partners have the ability to reach residents who may not otherwise be aware of services and programs.

STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

The Park Board and staff of the Crystal Lake Park District began a strategic planning process in September of 2016.

The process to develop strategic initiatives included gathering information and feedback through community input meetings, Park Board input and input from an Executive Steering Committee comprised of Crystal Lake Park District staff. Also, SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analyses were used to gather information to provide focus on moving forward.

To date, 69 of the 162 initiatives are currently being developed, implemented or have been completed.

To learn more about the details of the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan, please visit our website at crystallakeparks.org.
ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF PARK DISTRICTS

VISITOR SPENDING - Many agency amenities spur tourism to their respective area, generating economic activity including increased sales at local restaurants/bars and hotels. Beaches, parks, trails and secluded, relaxing places - are important to people when choosing a vacation destination.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS - Parks and recreation promotes improved physical and mental health, which helps lower medical and insurance costs for those people taking advantage of facilities and activities. Three of five respondents in a 2017 NRPA Park Pulse poll, people indicated they would take up walking or jogging in local parks & trails if advised by their doctors to be more physically active.

CONSERVATION AND RESILIENCY - Through effective land management methods and green infrastructure investments, parks and recreation make communities more resilient to natural disasters, reducing disaster recovery and insurance costs.

PROPERTY VALUES - Economic research has demonstrated consistently that homes and properties located near parklands have higher values than those farther away. Eighty-five percent of respondents to the 2017 NRPA Americans: Engagement with Parks Survey seek high-quality park and recreation amenities when they are choosing a place to live.

Source: National Recreation and Park Association
FACILITIES

NATURE CENTER
The Nature Center has concluded Phase I of developing new displays, hands-on activities and program areas. The Nature Center held an open house on June 10 which was attended by more than 300 participants who snacked on s’mores while exploring our new exhibits. On August 17, more than 500 people converged on the Nature Center to watch the historical eclipse. A long-time partnership with the Blackhawk Area Council, Boy Scouts of America resulted in the hosting of the annual Scout Camporee at Veteran Acres which had 500 attendees in October. The Nature Center conducted 183 nature-themed programs with a total of 3,723 enrolled participants.

FAMILY GOLF CENTER
The Family Golf Center continues to provide golfers of all ages and abilities the perfect location to improve all aspects of their game, or choose from two family-friendly 18 hole miniature golf courses. The Golf Center finished the 2017-18 fiscal year with revenue generation of $154,402 which is a $14,569 increase over the 2016-17 fiscal year. The largest area of revenue increase ($12,894) came from mini-golf sales.

COLONEL PALMER HOUSE
The Colonel Palmer House continues to provide a mix of interpretive and historical programs. Numbers rose from previous years for the annual free Summer Sunday series in June, July and August with over 600 participants in total. Always a sell-out, the Crystal Lake Historical Society hosted their annual Dearly Departed production in October which brought over 200 attendees. The tremendously popular Holiday Victorian Tea as well as several private tea parties provided delicious historic entertainment for participants. In April, the Nature Center and Colonel Palmer House jointly hosted the annual Scouting Around Program with over 300 boys, girls and adults. Over the last four years, the park district has undertaken a phased renovation project to the exterior masonry of the house.

BARLINA HOUSE PRESCHOOL
Attendance numbers continue to trend upwards with an 24.6% increase from 2017-18. Due to increased enrollment, Barlina Preschool added more morning classes this school year.

PARK FACILITY, EVENT AND FIELD RENTALS
With a full range of building rental options, the Park District can accommodate many groups at 12 unique locations. Facility rentals reached $65,635 in revenue, a 46% increase over last fiscal year, while picnic shelter rentals generated $16,810 in revenue, a 33% increase. Affiliate groups continued to be great community partners as they rent our sports fields and facilities to provide quality cooperative programs that benefit our residents.

MAIN & WEST BEACHES
Due to a rainy beach season last year, revenue for beach admissions decreased and swim lessons dropped 47% from $15,187 in 2016-17 to $8,045 in 2017-18. However, swim lesson instruction expenses were subsequently down over 60% to keep profitability in line.

The annual fireworks display continues to be a very popular event with admissions of $14,778, a 12% increase over the previous year.

After much discussion and debate, the Park Board has made the difficult decision to close Park Place effective December 31, 2018. When Park Place was initially purchased, the intention was to house a senior center and teen center at this location while also hosting an occasional banquet. Attempts to provide these centers at this location proved to be difficult.

While Park Place has developed as a local banquet venue, revenue has not met budget expectations. As a result, the Park Board did not feel a banquet operation should be subsidized. Ideas for other uses were discussed, but the cost to redevelop the space for other venue considerations was not optimal for the Park District’s financial future.
The Recreation Services Division continues to evaluate and monitor program offerings to determine needs as well as eliminate programs that are no longer of interest to the community. As new programs of interest are discovered, they are researched and offered if appropriate.

This chart represents the number of participants in each of the recreation programs areas offered.

**Families Served by Summer Day Camp or Extended Time Care**

550

**SUMMER DAY CAMP**
Camp attendees rose from 1,347 to 2,261 (68% increase)

**Inclusion Participants**
CLPD averaged 38 monthly special needs participants who were provided aides for inclusion in programs.

**Senior Visits**
3668

Drop-ins for senior programming at Grand Oaks Active Senior Center

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**Parks**

**Keeping Your Playgrounds Safe!**

The Crystal Lake Park District takes your safety seriously. Charles Madjak, Parks Services, is a certified playground safety inspector through the National Recreation and Parks Association Certified Playground Safety Inspection program. Recertification is required every three years. Madjak inspects each of the Park District’s 25 playgrounds once a month and once per week during high use months.

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**List of Potential Safety Concerns**

- Broken equipment such as loose bolts, missing end caps, cracks
- Uneven surfaces under fall zones
- Loose anchoring
- Hazardous or dangerous debris
- Insect damage
- Displaced or loose surfacing
- Vandalism
- Wood splitting; rot
- Rusted or corroded metals

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**Above and Beyond**

The Parks Services Department provides many services that are critical in Park District operations. Those include maintaining and cleaning 17 facilities and 42 parks, garbage removal and general maintenance for mini-golf, skate park, batting cages, two splashpads, boat rental, beach docks, shore maintenance, lifeguard stands and vehicles (trucks, snow plows, lawn mower etc.)

A few of the other services provided by the Parks Department includes:

- Handles prescribed burns to help native species regain footholds in natural areas
- Conducts lake sampling and water clarity testing to maintain a healthy Crystal Lake
- Plows, roto tills and manages 121 garden plots for residents throughout the growing season
- Operates the wagon rides in the fall season as well as for special event programming
**2017-18 COMPLETED PROJECTS**

**Fetzner Park Riparian Restoration**

The purpose of this project is to improve the riparian areas at Fetzner Park which result in an improvement of the water quality in the Woodscrew Watershed. The stream was improved by returning it to a more natural condition. This included the removal of invasive trees and underbrush, stabilization of the shoreline and planting native grasses, shrubs and trees. Additionally, two detention basins in the park were planted with native vegetation. The project area will be maintained by a contractor for the next three years as part of a grant requirement. Sixty percent of the project cost ($110,130) was funded by a Section 319 grant from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency.

**Shamrock Hills**

In 2016, the park district received a generous donation of 22 acres, including a home and storage barn, from Peter and Molly Heraty. The Heraty’s affectionately referred to their property, located at the NE corner of Hillside and Walkup Roads, as Shamrock Hills. Although the land is now public property and technically open to the public, there are very few traditional park amenities (such as restrooms and parking areas) at this time. The ponds are open for fishing (with proper license) and the trails are available for hiking. Plans are in the early stages to develop the land for passive park uses, such as outdoor nature education and recreation. Fishing and canoeing classes have already been held in Shamrock Hills. Several employee offices have been established in the home.

**Sterling Meadows Park**

The playground was replaced as part of the ongoing playground capital replacement program.

**Administration Building Projects**

The failing original HVAC system at the Administration building was replaced and the lobby area was remodeled to make more efficient use of the space and provide additional offices.

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**2018-19 FUTURE PROJECTS**

**Boncosky Softball Complex Synthetic Turf Replacement**

In 2005, the Crystal Lake Park District undertook an ambitious and forward thinking project to replace the worn infields of the Boncosky softball fields with artificial turf. Although artificial turf had been around a long time, newer products were entering the market at that time that were safe, durable and long lasting. With good maintenance and routine repairs, the turf has lasted nearly twice as long as was originally projected.

Scheduled to begin on August 20, the synthetic turf will be replaced with a newer, improved version of the original product installed, adding a few more safety and low maintenance features to the fields. The project is being scheduled so that two of the four fields will remain playable at all times. Park District staff is working diligently to accommodate all of the regular softball leagues and tournament play during the replacement project.

**Sterling Meadows Park**

The playground was replaced as part of the ongoing playground capital replacement program.

**Main Beach**

The major Phase I restoration project has been completed at Main Beach, resulting in a new playground, boat house, marina, shade structures, baggo courts and sand play areas. The old playground (20+ years old) and boat house (50+ years old) had outlived their useful lives and are now replaced with contemporary, safe and accessible facilities for all ages to enjoy.

As the Crystal Lake Park District nears its 100th birthday in 2021, the continued improvement of “the park where it all began” is an important priority for our community.
The Crystal Lake Park Foundation is in the process of being re-established. The Crystal Lake Park Foundation works to raise funds to support program participants’ scholarships, program enhancements and projects throughout the park system.

If you are interested in becoming involved, please contact Jason Herbster, Executive Director of the Crystal Lake Park District at jherbster@crystallakeparks.org.

The Nature Center is a great opportunity to secure volunteer hours while learning valuable environmental facts. This past year, the Nature Center has lead more than 1,587 service hours including five Eagle Scout Service Projects, three Girl Scout Silver Awards and various school group activities.

If your group needs service hours, contact John Fiorina, Manager of Natural Resources at jfiorina@crystallakeparks.org.

The Crystal Lake Park District Police Department is a year-round law enforcement agency providing the safety and security of park patrons and park property. With increased presence, calls for service have continued to fall including; less criminal damage to property, fewer reports of suspicious subjects/activity, fewer park ordinance violations and fewer reports of theft/burglary to vehicles.

Park Police work cooperatively with other area law enforcement agencies and continue to train in state certification standards in such areas as juvenile law, use of force, procedural justice, law updates, constitutional rights, mental health, CPR/AED, Narcan, civil rights and cultural competency among many more.

Sterne’s Fen Restoration – Phase 2
McHenry County Wetland Restoration Fund Grant

$118,810 (total project cost $138,810)
To be implemented fall 2018, this project is a continuation of the first phase of fen restoration that was accomplished in 2017 (also with a grant.) The purpose of the project is restore surface and groundwater hydrology to portions of the wetland complex with the Illinois Nature Preserve at Sterne’s Woods and Fen.

The Crystal Lake Park District Police Department strives to stay on top of current trends and also be in tune with the communication preferences of our residents.

This has resulted in an ever expanding digital presence, continued print presence and finding new and unique ways to interact with our customers both virtually and face to face.

67,800 BROCHURES PUBLISHED
6,121 FACEBOOK LIKES UP 42%
91K WEBSITE USERS
417 INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS UP 182%
3,388 INTERACTIVE BROCHURE USERS
237 TWITTER FOLLOWERS UP 59%
To enhance the lives of our residents by providing programs, services, facilities and open spaces that safely promote health, recreation and community in an environmentally and fiscally responsible manner.

The Park District has been recognized as a Distinguished Accredited Agency by the Illinois Association of Park Districts and Illinois Park & Recreation Association for excellence in park and recreation management.

For a seventh consecutive year, the Finance Department’s comprehensive annual financial report earned the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada.

Sam Thompson, Recreation Supervisor, received the American Camp Association’s National Service Award in February. The National Service Award was designed to recognize continued and increasing service beyond the field/affiliate office level.

Kim Buscemi, Manager of Recreation Programs, received the NISRA Innovation Award based on her work above and beyond as the chair of design and logistics for the annual NISRA Fashion Show.

Jess Day, Nature Center Outdoor Education Supervisor, recently attained the Certified Parks and Recreation Professional Certification.