



Park People News

Creating Citizen Connections to Our Parks

Summer 2012 Newsletter

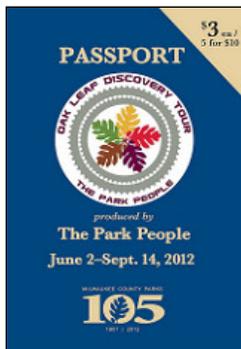
-In this issue-

Oak Leaf Discovery tour and 105 Days of Summer Recap
Story Tome in the Park
TPP Annual Membership Meeting
Concerts in the Parks
Milwaukee County Parks National Ranking

Oak Leaf Discovery Tour - A Park People Project with Adventure, Health, and Wellness for All

The Park People has embarked on another exciting project to foster greater awareness and appreciation of what we have right here in our big back yard, our wonderful system of parks and parkways, and the Oak Leaf Trail.

The **Oak Leaf Discovery Tour** is a summer long event to encourage individuals, groups and families to re-discover our vibrant system of parks and trails. Additional core concepts of the Tour are to promote our Milwaukee County Park Trail System as a local and non-local tourist destination and a valuable opportunity to achieve wellness through strenuous physical activity.



It all starts with your purchase of the **Oak Leaf Discovery Tour Passport**, an attractive little 3.5" x 4" inch passport with 14 pages of park locations where park "tourists" can stamp their passport. Passport tourists will have 105 days (well almost) to collect at least 8 passport stamps from the 14 identified stamping locations along the Oak Leaf Trail. When tourists register their passport they are included in a drawing for prizes that include great bikes, sporting equipment and gift certificates for various park venues, including golf. The drawing will be held at Estabrook Park on Sept. 15. See the rules and deadlines on our website, <http://parkpeoplesmke.org/summer/oak-leaf-discovery-tour>, and don't forget to patronize our generous sponsors.

We kicked off the Oak Leaf Discovery Tour at our **105 Days of Summer** event on June 2nd, a celebration of Milwaukee County Parks 105th anniversary.

The 105 Days of Summer Celebration was a glorious sunny success with participants from all walks of life stopping in to play and have fun. Family friendly entertainment, included: New Horizons community band, McMenamin Irish dancers, comments by Milwaukee County Parks Director Sue Black, County Executive Chris Abele and a history of the parks presentation by John Gurda, YMCA play activities, Klement's racing sausages, sled dogs, Improve Comedy with Pink Banana, KT and the Universal Love Band and the Children's Outing Association Drum Band.

This could not have happened without hundreds hours of volunteer time and cooperation from the Milwaukee County Parks Department's dedicated hard working

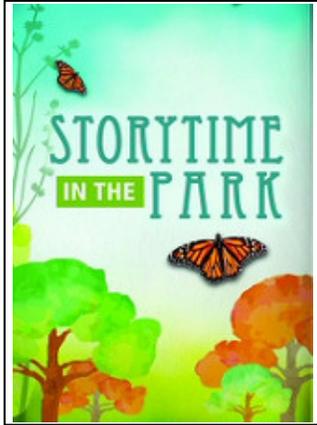
staff.

We urge Park People members and friends to buy passports, \$3 each or 5 for \$10, get out into your parks, breath in the good air, and explore. And better yet, buy some passports for friends and family too, as the net proceeds from the Tour will directly benefit our trails.

Get out, get active and enjoy our parks.



The Park People - Story Time in the Park



Join the Park People this summer for a safe, fun and interactive story time for kids. Performed by skilled story tellers in a park setting. Snacks provided!

August 11th 10am - Jacobus Park - *Nature stories with scavenger hunt to follow.*

Enjoy this interactive storytelling experience with family scavenger hunt around Jacobus park! Come hear engaging, magical storytelling and participant in an artistic activity throughout the park.

August 25th 10am - Lafollette Park - *Summer Story Drama Workshop with First Stage*

Come play with First Stage's Education Department as we read a beloved story and then get up on our feet to act out moments from the story, engage in theater games, and work together to tell our own story! This program is best suited for families with children ages 4-10 years old.

Registration will be available soon! Please keep watch on our website for details.

www.parkpeoplemke.org

Each session is limited to 35 children

Park People Annual Membership Meeting

The Park People held its annual membership meeting on June 27th at a picnic area in Brown Deer Park. The board has learned instead of meeting in a stuffy conference room, we work best when surrounded by the beauty of a park and we hold our monthly meetings at different park pavilions. In years past the board has presented a more formal report to our members but we thought this was a year to celebrate in a more informal picnic setting. There was much to celebrate since we have had many successes throughout the year. We have seen our membership grow (perhaps thanks to the valuable Park Perk Coupons), the addition of several new Friends Groups, we have more events offerings tied to our parks, we have forged stronger relationships with the community including the generosity of several corporations and we continue

our synergy with the Milwaukee Parks Department.

Executive Director, Jim Goulee provided a "year in review" to the members. The Board had a special presentation for Jim recognizing his many contributions to The Park People. The board realizes we are lucky to have someone who works as hard as Jim does and is passionate about our mission to preserve and protect our parks. Dan Cody, Board



President also addressed the members, acknowledging we are ultimately responsible to our membership and we hold ourselves accountable to them and rely heavily on their support. There were several charter members in attendance who shared their stories reminding the current board we are just passing through but together we all want to do what is right for our park system to leave something behind for the next generation.

Concerts in the Parks

It's no secret that Milwaukeeans truly enjoy their summers and one of the favorite ways we do that is by enjoying great music in an outdoor setting. Of course Summerfest is the first place people think of when envisioning outdoor concerts, but after it runs its course where does one turn for more music in the great wide open? Did you know that there are over 50 concerts in our parks featuring mostly local talent throughout the summer? Yes, many of you are



familiar the long established concert series such as **Jazz in the Parks** in Cathedral Square Park and **Chill on the Hill** in Humboldt Park, but there are many more that may be of interest to you including a new series at Washington Park, **Wednesdays at the Shell**.

To get a full listing of concerts being in the parks this summer click on the following link:

[Concerts in the Parks Summer 2012](#)

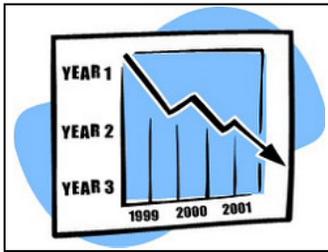
Milwaukee County Parks Rate Low in National Ranking

(reprint of a letter to the editor by Dan Cody, TPP board president)

Milwaukee's parks once again rank low in the annual rankings of metropolitan park systems by the Trust for Public Land (Milwaukee drops in park ranking, [May 23rd](#)).

Our Milwaukee County Park system being ranked 16th out of 40 cities was primarily buoyed by the massive acreage of our parks system and resulting proximity many residents have to their parks. That's the good news.

The bad news is that our spending per resident and amenities per resident are near the bottom of the other 40 major park systems in the U.S. Unfortunately, despite years of reports showing similar disturbing trends, little appears to be happening to ensure the long term viability of our park system that celebrates its 105th birthday this year.



Something - besides the predictable finger pointing by politicians that coincides with another disappointing annual report - needs to be done in the next 5-10 years to secure the future of our parks in Milwaukee or the rich tradition of stewardship residents have taken pride in for over a century will end.

In the early 1980's, the Milwaukee County Parks Commission turned over governance of our parks to Milwaukee County Government, making ours one of the major park systems the Country managed by a municipality.

This change in governance of our parks directly coincides with the point at which the parks in Milwaukee started their slow deterioration. Thirty years of competition with state mandated County services, apathy by elected officials and a decrease in funding has resulted in shuttered buildings and over \$200 million in deferred maintenance.

While spending by Milwaukee County Government has nearly tripled since it took over our parks in 1982, the budget for the Parks Department has actually decreased when you factor in inflation. Every County Board and every County Executive over the last 30 years shares some culpability in that fact. With our elected officials unwilling to appropriate dollars for our parks, other funding sources have been proposed.

A dedicated sales tax for our parks is desirable as a secure and dedicated funding source, but the political reality is that Democrats punted on the idea in 2009-2010 and Republicans are reluctant to support a tax increase now that they're in control in Madison.

So with neither side willing to take on the referendum that Milwaukee County residents approved nearly four years ago, a different option needs to be considered if we're to continue to have a vibrant park system in Milwaukee for the next 105 years.

Thankfully we don't need to blaze a new path in how to manage and fund our parks here in Milwaukee. We simply need to look at how the rest of the major metropolitan areas in America manage and fund it's park systems, which means getting our park system out from underneath Milwaukee County Government.

I believe we need to take a serious look at returning our Milwaukee park system to the successful "Park Commission" model - preferred by park pioneers like Charles Whitnall - which served us well for 75 years and ending the experiment of County governance of our parks.

If our parks were flourishing under County Government it might be a different story, but the opposite is true and year after year of data remind us the current County governance experiment for our parks is failing.

It's time we free our parks from Milwaukee County control so they don't have to compete for funding with state mandated services, residents can be more closely involved in their success and we can finally start addressing the problems our parks face instead of kicking the can down the road until the next election.

There will be significant push back from those invested heavily in keeping control of

our parks under the County Government, but their self-interest is outweighed by the generational responsibility we have to our park system in Milwaukee.
