



ParkPeopleNews

Creating Citizen Connections to Our Parks

Park People Fall 2015 Newsletter

President's Perspective

By Sue Spoerk

Fall is upon us, and that marks the time for change. You can witness the splendor of autumn in any of our 156 beautiful Milwaukee County Parks. My last column (see archive of newsletters on TPP website) reported that we have been studying non-profit Park Groups throughout the country and while we do a lot of things well, we are willing to change those areas where we could do better and I mentioned membership was an area we'd like to improve. We have identified successful Park Groups and found those with strong membership programs are tied to park "perks" essentially allowing the membership to pay for itself. We see models right here in Milwaukee County with the Friends of the Domes, Zoo and Botanical Gardens membership programs offering free admission. Since The Park People serves a vital role for the betterment of all Milwaukee County Parks we are exploring the option of offering Park Perks to our members.

We also took a good look at our current donor process. Many of our donations are earmarked for specific projects and the expertise of our Executive Director along with his connections to the Parks and deep institutional knowledge help move projects forward. It is a standard practice for foundations to charge a processing fee for administering donor funds; however, we try to avoid fees. Our Executive Director, Jim Goulee, has discretion to charge up to a 7% fee on donations and more often than not, waives the fee providing a 100% pass through to the betterment of the Parks. We recently saw front page Milwaukee Journal (Sunday, August 23rd) headlines that fees are not popular with donors. Having Park Perks to drive memberships would cover our staff and operating costs allowing 100% of earmarked donations to go to the Parks. And if our membership proceeds exceed our current operating costs, we'd like to hire a second staff person to support our organization.

A strong membership base and waiving administrative fees on donations help to serve the Park People mission to preserve, support and enhance Milwaukee County Parks while building an effective volunteer organization. We continue to dialogue with Parks Director Dargle and his team regarding how we can align our activities to drive value to Milwaukee County Parks. Director Dargle has experience in working with strong Park Friends groups from his time working with Fairfax (Virginia) County Parks Foundation which was one of the many successful park groups we studied. Any changes The Park People are contemplating are aimed at working smarter with the resources we have to serve our mission.

I invite any of you reading this newsletter if you aren't already a member of The Park People, keep an eye on our membership page to watch for our special member offerings coming in early 2016. Please know that your membership is valued and makes an important difference.



Beer, Prizes and Oak Leaf Trail Memories By Cheri Briscoe

About 60 Oak Leaf Discovery Tour participants attended the sunny and beautiful 4th Annual End of Summer party at Estabrook Beer Garden this year. A good time was had by all as participants shouted out the keywords and then were challenged to explain their connections to the respective parks. All keywords had a historical or cultural connection to the park they were in. Okay, so "Toto" for Rainbow park was a bit of a stretch.

Jim Goulee had everything well organized, and was helped by Friends of the Trails volunteers Kate Valerius, John Jordan and Cheri Briscoe. Kate even sang a terrific Prosit as participants lifted their free beers. Participants also took a spin on a fat wheel bike provided by Wheel & Sprocket and kids created bicycle artwork. The best part was hearing people's stories about their trail adventures. There were folks from Burlington, West Bend, Delafield and Sheboygan. They, too, love our trails.



A special thank you goes to the following sponsors:

- Wheel & Sprocket, Presenting Sponsor**
- South Shore Cyclery**
- Estabrook Beer Garden**
- Hubbard Park Beer Garden**
- The Landing at Hoyt Park Beer Garden**
- Johnson's Cycle & Fitness**
- Friends of Hank Aaron State Trail**
- Wisconsin Bike Fed**
- Beans & Barley**
- Outpost Natural Foods**
- Rainbow Jersey Bicycles**

Please support them and tell them **THANK YOU** for supporting our Milwaukee County Trail, Parks Maps and Passport event.

The full sized maps have been popular. In fact, they are great gifts and stocking stuffers for the holidays. Maps sell for \$5. We are looking for people or businesses who might want to buy 25 or more at the bulk price of \$2 each. Buy some for your local library to give away, or for a Boy or Girl Scout Troop or a classroom project. Buy them on line www.parkpeoplemke.org. (an additional \$1 fee for postage will be added to online orders)

****Map Error:** Rainbow Jersey Bicycle address and map locator is listed incorrectly on the Trail Supporters Section on the map. The correct address is 4600 N. Wilson Dr., Shorewood. The correct locator is H:6. Please note the correction on your map.

Director's Dispatch

By Milwaukee County Parks Director, John Dargle

With over 15,000 acres and 156 parks, the Milwaukee County park system is well used and highly regarded. You all know parks are an essential element of life to residents of Milwaukee County. As wonderful as our parks are, we must constantly strive to make sure they meet the changing needs of our diversifying and rapidly urbanizing community.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "This time is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it." Yes, this is a very good time for the Milwaukee County Parks and we do know what to do with it. I am thrilled to be a part of a nationally-recognized organization and look forward to forging ahead with you toward continued success. It appears to me that Milwaukee County is now at a pivotal point to rebound from the national economic downturn and grow into a larger world-class county, attracting even more new businesses, residents, and visitors alike. Providing



cutting edge parks, recreation, and culture in a lean and green business manner, is essential to that successful growth. I wholeheartedly believe this, and this is what motivates me to do more every day.

Our discussion this year focuses on the financial sustainability of our parks system. The primary question the county faces is how do we sustain a first class park system which helps make Milwaukee County a great place to live, work, play, and visit? There are a number of significant activities that we are doing that target this question.

First, in November 2014, the Parks Department completed a 2015-2020 Strategic Plan. Two of its primary objectives are diversifying and stabilizing funding sources, and improving cost recovery. This plan provides direction for the entire department over the next five years and presents stakeholder-centered strategic goals and objectives which determine a strong course of investment in the park system.

Second, in 1991 Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) completed "A Park and Open Space Plan for Milwaukee County" as a guide to the acquisition and development of needed outdoor park and open space sites and facilities in Milwaukee County, with supporting standards reflecting the needs and values of the county citizenry. Presently, we are working to update this 1991 plan, extending the guide to the year 2050. The new 2050 plan is intended to provide a long-range vision of parks, park facilities, and open space for Milwaukee County.

Third, a nationally-recognized consultant team is currently engaged to complete a comprehensive park and recreation master plan that includes a 10-year phased Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and an analysis of our core programs and services. The ten year Parks System Master Plan provides recommendations for the provision of facilities, programs and services; maintenance and operations; and administration and management of the Milwaukee County Parks system.

Finally, as a commitment to advancing our mission and vision, we are also working on being accredited through the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) as stated in our 2015-2020 Strategic Plan. It is critical to understand, and it cannot be overstated, that accreditation engages every operational unit and every employee in the organization, including County support departments. It is a quality assurance, and a quality improvement process, demonstrating our commitment to our community, our patrons, our employees, and our volunteers. Once accreditation is achieved, we will be among an elite group of the top park and recreation agencies in the United States.

In conclusion, the county government must decide on how best to ensure a sustainable park system. Any long term sustainability model must have at its core a clear understanding of how public funds will be spent on the park system. We must engage the community on the importance of stabilizing tax funding, reoccurring capital funding, revenue generation, partnerships that offset costs, and clarifying core service sustainability. We recommend to continue the dialogue using as a starting point the Parks System Master Plan options and any strategies proposed in the Parks Department's 2015-2020 Strategic Plan. The discussion should also include whether the County Parks and Open Space Plan's current requirements provide adequate solutions to meet existing and projected needs for our park system.

We are here for you. The Milwaukee County parks system is available to all people and we want to be sure that there is something for everyone. Should you have any questions, please call on us. Better yet, come over to the park and visit in person. It is after all, a great day to be in the parks.

Featured Friends Group

Saint Francis All Abilities Playground

Swings, slides and monkey bars are all an intricate part of childhood. Children of all abilities should be able to play together; however, more often than not, when one has cognitive or physical disabilities, navigating a public playground can be arduous in and of itself. The goal of the St. Francis All Abilities Playground is to break open those barriers and build an all-accessible playground for all children to do what they do best...be children. The barriers between special needs and mainstreamed children can be broken if given the opportunity to play together and gain understanding of limitations; with understanding change will ensue. The playground has been earmarked by the Milwaukee County Parks to be housed in Greene Park located in the bedroom community of St. Francis. Greene Park has an existing pavilion that will be used in conjunction with the All Abilities Playground for forums and speakers to discuss, network, and support parents, grandparents, and caregivers of special needs children.

We are a group of volunteer parents, some of whom have special needs children, who have come together with a cause. The impetus of the playground is a mother with a shaken baby survivor and his classmates. The commonality of these children is that they are mainstreamed in school for gym where they all can play together. Even that brought limitations; those confined to a wheelchair could not swing, and those with other physical disabilities could not maneuver through wood chips or sand. Children on the autism spectrum often retreat from socialization; the design of the park offers specific brain break stations for this specific purpose.

We are working very hard at raising the funds for this park's construction. The all-in price is \$425,000.00. The funds will come from grants, private donations, and fundraisers. Please join in supporting this greatly needed project. Thank you!

*note, the Park People is the Fiscal Sponsor of the SFAAPG, in other words, they are a project of the Park People

The Park Market Offering Precious Gift Options

Finding the right personal gift can prove challenging. You want a gift that shows you care about the individual, the special occasion and the impact the individual makes in life. This holiday season, why not consider a gift from The Park Market.

The Park Market helps beautify our parks while also providing individuals with a unique way to honor special

people and events in our lives. By gifting a tree, bench or brick, an enduring commemoration of an event in one's life is possible.

The Tree Donation Program enables an individual to select an ornamental, evergreen or shade tree to be planted or to 'adopt a

tree' in a park and location* of the individual's choice. The selected tree is marked with a commemorative tag. The Park Market Bench Program places a bench in your favorite park*. Three different bench styles are available to choose from. Similarly, the personalized brick program at O'Donnell Park allows the purchaser to choose one of three brick options, each with your personal message. The Park People also works with donors who envision a larger scale commemoration achieved through a park enhancement.

All net funds generated from the Park Market Programs assist the Park People in our mission to protect, preserve and enhance our precious treasure, the parks.

The Park People would be honored to commemorate your special event. For more information, visit the Park Market on the web. http://www.parkpeoplemke.org/park_market

*Subject to confirmation of location by Milwaukee County Landscape department; alternative location may be recommended based on assessment of location vs needs of tree

The Park People Welcomes a New Board Member

Robert (Bob) Mohr is a Financial Representative with Northwestern Mutual. At Northwestern he works with individuals and small businesses providing insurance and investment planning solutions. He earned multiple bachelor's degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1999 and did Master's work at both the College of William & Mary and Rockford College. When not working, Bob volunteers with a number of



organizations in and around the area and is a avid international traveler. He lives with his partner, Laura, in Bayview. His favorite park is Humboldt Park as he is a fan of live music.

The Park People - Something to Smile About



AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support The Park People every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, 0.5% of the purchase price from your eligible AmazonSmile purchase supports The Park People. Tens of millions of products on AmazonSmile are eligible for donations. You will see eligible products marked "Eligible for AmazonSmile donation" on their product detail pages. You can use the same account on Amazon.com and AmazonSmile. On your first visit to AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com), you need

to select Park People of Milwaukee County, Inc (note, please do not confuse with The Park People which is Denver) to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. Amazon will remember your selection, and then every eligible purchase you make at smile.amazon.com will result in a donation to The Park People and yes, you can change your charity at any time.

The Park People Thanks it's Many Volunteers - We Couldn't do it Without You!

We especially want to offer thanks to the following volunteers for their great assistance in helping furthering the mission of The Park People: Joan Balzer, for her assistance with membership mailing, and Kate Valerius and John Jordan for their assistance with the OLD T year end summer event, and all of the hearty people who have assisted in our Weed-Out Program this year!


