



# 60 YEARS OF PEOPLE, PARKS AND PRIDE



department of  
**PARKS  
& REC**

2007 ANNUAL REPORT

## GREETINGS!

In 2007, the Columbus Parks and Recreation Department celebrated a very significant milestone – we turned 60! Over the last 60 years, our Department has enjoyed great support by citizens, local government and the private sector, resulting in one of the finest parks and recreation programs in the nation.

Columbus Parks and Recreation Department has become a major part of our community's quality of life and economic development strategy. We have demonstrated this in recent years through our partnership with the Columbus Area Visitors Center. Through our collaboration and shared vision, Columbus has become a major site for over 60 large sport tournaments annually, and has helped to generate over \$13 million in economic impact for Columbus and Bartholomew County. We have also developed a 19 mile People Trail system and currently maintain nearly 700 acres of quality parks, programs and special facilities that meet the needs of all ages and income levels.

We continue to be a leader in collaboration with many different government and not-for-profit agencies like the Foundation for Youth, Columbus Area Arts Council, Columbus Regional Hospital, youth sport associations and other groups. Our community has all the resources needed to accomplish anything we desire to do, so long as everyone is willing to share them.

To commemorate 60 years of parks and recreation in Columbus, the Columbus Park Foundation has established an endowment fund. The future of parks and recreation will depend on having cash reserves outside the tax base to capitalize on new park development opportunities and provide funds to maintain existing facilities and parks at the level of quality we enjoy today. We need your help to make this a reality.

The report that follows summarizes the great things that are going on with parks and recreation and previews plans for the future. We are excited about the possibilities that lie ahead during the next 60 years and beyond.

Sincerely,



Brian Russell, President  
Columbus Parks and Recreation Board



Chuck Wilt, Director  
Columbus Parks and Recreation Department

# MISSION

*Enriching Lives...Building Community*

## COLUMBUS PARK BOARD

|               |                       |                    |                  |
|---------------|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Brian Russell | <i>President</i>      | Jerry Littrell     | <i>Secretary</i> |
| Ryan Brand    | <i>Vice President</i> | Rachel Quisenberry | <i>Member</i>    |

## COLUMBUS PARK FOUNDATION BOARD

|               |                       |                           |
|---------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| John Elwood   | <i>President</i>      | Chapman T. Blackwell, III |
| Dave Hayward  | <i>Vice President</i> | Dr. Helen Kinsey          |
| Ken Free      | <i>Secretary</i>      | John Harmon               |
| Brian McBroom | <i>Treasurer</i>      | Joe Smith                 |
|               |                       | Chuck Wilt                |

## STAFF MEMBERS

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Chuck Wilt       | <i>Director</i>                                      |
| Mike Keogh       | <i>Director of Business Services</i>                 |
| Nancy Armuth     | <i>Director of Recreation</i>                        |
| Nick Rush        | <i>Director of Park Operations and City Arborist</i> |
| Steve Heck       | <i>Parks Maintenance Manager</i>                     |
| Kathy McPeck     | <i>Recreation Program Manager</i>                    |
| Laura Garrett    | <i>Project Planning Coordinator</i>                  |
| Katia Hatter     | <i>Marketing/Public Relations Coordinator</i>        |
| Cindy Felsten    | <i>Resource Development Coordinator</i>              |
| Mark Jones       | <i>Sports Programs/Athletic Facilities Manager</i>   |
| Patrick Senn     | <i>Sports Coordinator</i>                            |
| Michelle Prowant | <i>CGC Facility/Program Manager</i>                  |
| Don Gregg        | <i>Hamilton Center Manager</i>                       |
| Heather Hilliard | <i>Hamilton Center Assistant Manager</i>             |
| Jim Lemke        | <i>Aquatics Manager</i>                              |
| Cindy Brummett   | <i>Office Manager</i>                                |
| Carol Valentine  | <i>Head Secretary</i>                                |
| Tonia Medaris    | <i>Bookkeeper</i>                                    |
| Crystal Martinez | <i>Bookkeeper</i>                                    |
| Annie Baugh      | <i>Secretary</i>                                     |
| Verna Morrison   | <i>Park Operations Secretary</i>                     |
| Kym Gatten       | <i>Hamilton Center Secretary</i>                     |
| Angela Fox       | <i>CGC/FFY Receptionist/Head Secretary</i>           |

## ATHLETIC FACILITIES

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Travis Tindell | <i>Athletic Facilities Team Leader</i> |
| Jerry Cox      | <i>Athletic Facilities Laborer</i>     |
| Steve Hyden    | <i>Athletic Facilities Laborer</i>     |
| Derrick Lacey  | <i>Athletic Facilities Laborer</i>     |
| Tony Rutan     | <i>Athletic Facilities Laborer</i>     |

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## FOUNDATION FOR YOUTH

|                |                                 |
|----------------|---------------------------------|
| Gary Smith     | <i>Head Custodian</i>           |
| Lisa Butler    | <i>Assistant Head Custodian</i> |
| Stephanie Heck | <i>Custodian</i>                |
| Richard Newby  | <i>Custodian</i>                |
| Dan Rayburn    | <i>Custodian</i>                |
| Roger Taylor   | <i>Custodian</i>                |

## GOLF COURSES

|                 |                                |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| Steve Cohen     | <i>Director of Golf</i>        |
| Dave Barriger   | <i>Greens Superintendent</i>   |
| DeWight DeBoard | <i>Greenbelt Golf Mechanic</i> |

## PARK OPERATIONS

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Joe Wright     | <i>Mechanic</i>                              |
| Homer Bennett  | <i>Assistant Mechanic</i>                    |
| Mark Selig     | <i>Assistant Mechanic</i>                    |
| James Johnson  | <i>Donner Center Head Custodian</i>          |
| Gary Cheek     | <i>Donner Center Custodian</i>               |
| Tim Coomer     | <i>Park Operations Team Leader</i>           |
| Steve Watkins  | <i>Park Operations Assistant Team Leader</i> |
| Danny Brown    | <i>Laborer – Maintenance and Grounds</i>     |
| Moose Foster   | <i>Laborer – Maintenance and Grounds</i>     |
| Casey Ritz     | <i>Team Leader – Grounds</i>                 |
| Rick Gilbert   | <i>Assistant Team Leader – Grounds</i>       |
| Phil Harbaugh  | <i>Mowing Assistant Team Leader/Operator</i> |
| Walter Perry   | <i>Grounds Team/Laborer (Mower)</i>          |
| Dereck Sanders | <i>Grounds Team/Laborer (Mower)</i>          |
| Rick Crank     | <i>Grounds Team/Laborer (Cemetery)</i>       |

# PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

When William Donner donated the land now known as Donner Park, he envisioned a space where the people of Columbus could gather to enjoy the natural wonders around them. Sixty years later, Columbus Parks and Recreation Department is proud to carry on that philosophy, by working diligently to provide nearly 700 acres of park land and over 19 miles of People Trails for the citizens of Columbus to enjoy. In return, the members of our staff and community are continuing to use parks as a living example of how responsible environmental practices can benefit our community.

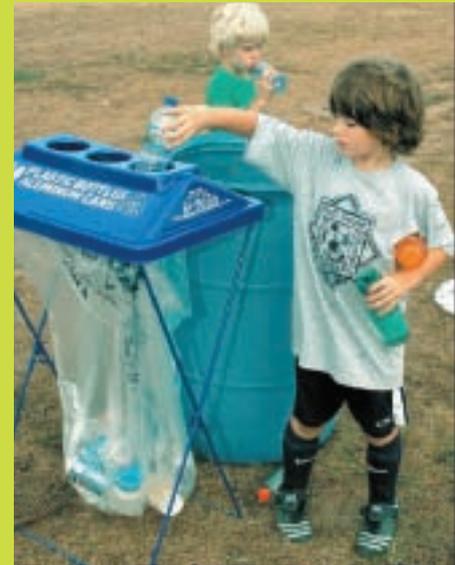
Sometimes it takes someone with a different perspective to tackle a problem. Such was the case with recycling at Blackwell Park, site of the Columbus Parks & Recreation Department's Youth Soccer program. One of our soccer participants, Graham Johnson, noticed the overflowing trash cans after soccer games at the park and felt that he could make a difference.

**And boy, did he!**

Graham, age 8, approached the Columbus Park Board in July with a request to place recycling bins at Blackwell Park. He also expressed his desire to educate coaches and players about 'reducing, reusing and recycling' their drink and snack containers, either by bringing a refillable water bottle from home or their own snacks instead of the individually bagged snacks and bottled drinks parents had been requested to bring by coaches for years. The Park Board wholeheartedly agreed with Graham and linked him up with the Bartholomew County Recycling Center. Graham worked with the Recycling Center and Parks & Rec to have portable recycling containers placed at the fields during games. He also visited our Youth Soccer Coach training meetings in August to encourage coaches to spread the word to players and parents about this initiative.

The end result – the recycling bins are in heavy use during our Fall Soccer season, the trash load is down and we are better environmental stewards thanks to one of the youngest environmentalists in our community.

Columbus Parks and Recreation Department's goal is to provide recycling bins at all of our facilities. Please help us make that goal a reality by donating to the Columbus Park Foundation.



COMMUNITY IMPACT



In recent years, Columbus Parks and Recreation Department has been working to reintroduce native plant species into park areas and along People Trails. When you take a walk along State Road 46 on the People Trails or through the wildflower meadow at McCullough's Run, take some time to stop and smell the flowers.

Not only do they add beauty to the surrounding area, but as native plants, they have extensive root systems which help them to be more resistant to drought and dry conditions. This means less mowing, fertilizing and watering for the Department, lower maintenance costs and the environmental benefits that come from less mowing and chemicals. In addition, these native plants provide a valuable habitat for a variety of insects, birds and animals.



Students from the First United Methodist Church's Learning Tree Preschool admire "their" tree in Mill Race Park. Money generated from paper recycling at the school's Abitibi bin paid to purchase and plant this tree to celebrate Arbor Day 2007. In 2007, the Abitibi program raised over \$1,100 for the Columbus Park Foundation's "Trees to Trees" fund, an average of about \$100 per month. Abitibis benefitting this fund can be found at Learning Tree Preschool, as well as Donner and Lincoln Parks. Recycle your paper at our Abitibi bins and support the Columbus Park Foundation.

"Digging with the Pros". Park Operations also maintains the State Road 46 corridor entering the City, and landscape maintenance of downtown trees, alleyways and parking lots.



# MAKING AN ECONOMIC IMPACT

Award winning parks and facilities are just the beginning of the story when it comes to the economic impact of Columbus Parks & Recreation Department on the City of Columbus and Bartholomew County. Parks are becoming one of the most important draws to businesses, young professionals, families and seniors looking for an ideal place to relocate. Working closely with the Columbus Area Visitors Center, the Chamber of Commerce and other community groups, Columbus Parks and Recreation Department is looking toward the future for ways to continue to benefit our community.

Sports tourism is a growing business in Columbus and Bartholomew County. Columbus Parks & Recreation Department, in partnership with the City of Columbus and the Columbus Area Visitor's Center, has been working over the last four years to promote Columbus as the amateur sports destination in the Midwest.

One of the most successful events over the last several years has been the USSSA Girls' Fast Pitch Softball World Series, held the last week of July at Lincoln and Clifty Parks. Teams and spectators from across the United States and Canada descend on Columbus to battle it out for the championship and bragging rights as the best team in their age group. This tournament alone brought in over \$2 million in 2007. Add that to over 30 additional tournaments at Parks and Rec facilities in 2007 and the impact increases to over \$9 million, accounting for 81% of the total sports tourism revenue enjoyed by Bartholomew County this year.

Future tournaments will come to Columbus only if they can count on support from our community. We thank past sponsors for their support and encourage businesses in our community to support these worthwhile events. Your business will benefit from visits by sports visitors and by its support of these events that showcase our community.



COMMUNITY IMPACT



The Columbus People Trails have proven to be a major draw for both citizens and visitors in Columbus. Nearly 20 miles of People Trails encircle almost the entire city, with more on the way. They provide visitors with a unique way to explore the City, either on foot for a stroll or jog, or as an avenue for commuting to and from work. Whichever way they are used, they make a healthy impact on the people, economy and environment in our area.

The final portion of the Haw Creek Trail, completed in coordination with the Marr Road Project was installed in September. As a way to raise funds for the trail, members of the community donated 24 benches along this trail. The benches have been installed with a plaque signifying the various donors.

In 2004, the Parks Department received a Transportation Enhancement Grant from the State of Indiana for People Trail Connections. One of these connections is the three mile trail that will travel from the trail along SR 46 south parallel to SR 11 out to the Fairgrounds and Southside School. This trail will give pedestrians a safe connection from 200 South into the City. There has been a large increase in population in that area of the county due to development along 200 South. We will begin the Final Design and Engineering Phase of this trail working with HNTB Corporation in Indianapolis. They hope to complete this phase at the end of 2009 and begin construction of the trail in early 2010.

We need your help! Make this new People Trail a reality by supporting our upcoming capital campaign. You can also support the People Trails by participating in our Tour de Trails events, either the Run/Walk held in April or the Bicycle Challenge held in May. Bring your entire family and come out to enjoy our great trails while helping to support future development and maintenance of them.



Brenton Wolfe didn't ease his way through his Eagle Scout Project. He designed a mile marker for the People Trail System, had the mile markers fabricated, and then installed over 36 markers every half mile along the trail.



# BUILDING OUR COMMUNITY

Ultimately, the goal of Columbus Parks & Recreation Department is to build community in Columbus and Bartholomew County through enriching the lives of those who live, work, and play here. During our 60th year, we are proud to highlight the following accomplishments.



The Mill Race Center project has been in development for the past 10 years. However, the fundraising is nearing completion and the programming phase has begun. Construction of the building is slated to begin towards the end of 2008. In June of 2007, William Rawn and Associates were selected to be the architect for this 30,000 square foot senior center that will be located in the northeast corner of Mill Race Park. This building will become one of the front doors for the

City of Columbus because of its location along Indianapolis Road, a major route into Columbus from the north. It will also be an amenity for the park and the community, just like Mill Race Park will be an asset for the center. This project will be completed as a partnership between the City of Columbus, the Parks and Recreation Department, and the Senior Center. This is a very exciting project and we look forward to its progression over the next year and a half.

## Community Groups

Mill Race Park continues to be a popular venue for community groups and individuals. This summer, the local Indian Association held their “Picnicking with Spices” celebration, with over 1,000 in attendance. The event raised money for the United Way and was so successful that the organization plans to make it an annual event.



COMMUNITY IMPACT



## Touch A Truck

This year's Touch A Truck event was attended by about 1,500 children, as well as their parents and grandparents. By showing the public the types of equipment used to maintain parks, we are providing education and appreciation for the parks system.

## Communities in Bloom

Park Operations was a key player in 2007 in helping to get the City of Columbus in tip-top shape for the Communities in Bloom judges in June. Hundreds of staff hours were spent designing, planting and maintaining flower beds, trees and other flora to beautify Columbus.



*photo courtesy of Mike Dickbernd, The Republic*





## Charitable Events

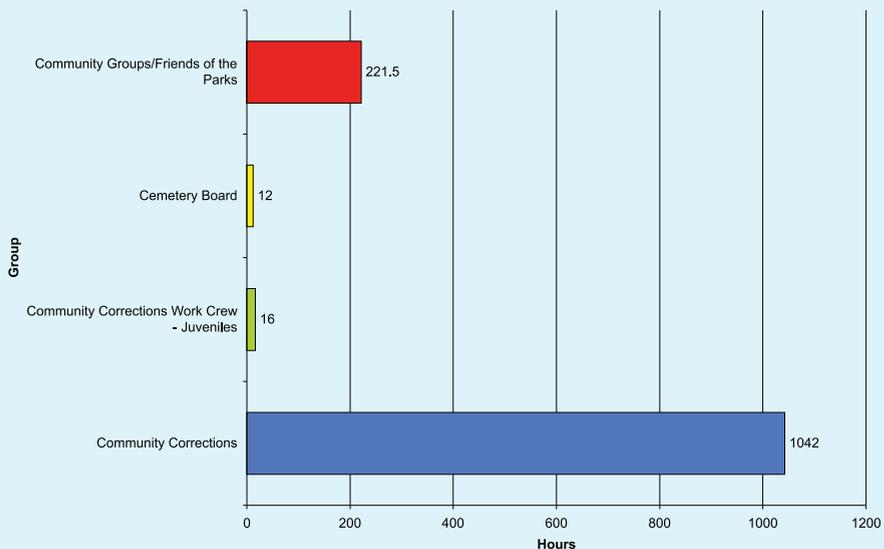
Hamilton Center was proud to sponsor several charitable events this year, including the Army/Air Force Hockey Tournament benefiting families of active duty military, a Broomball tournament benefiting Riley Children's Hospital and the Police/Firefighter Broomball Tourney benefiting the Columbus Cheer Fund.

## Public Skating

Public sessions are an important service to the community, and provide an opportunity for indoor recreation and healthy exercise for the citizens of Columbus. In 2007, public skating session attendance increased to over 10,000 skaters over the course of the year. The staff at Hamilton Center is working to offer additional themed skating events and DJ services for select weekend evening public skating sessions during the fall and winter months.



## Volunteer Service Hours

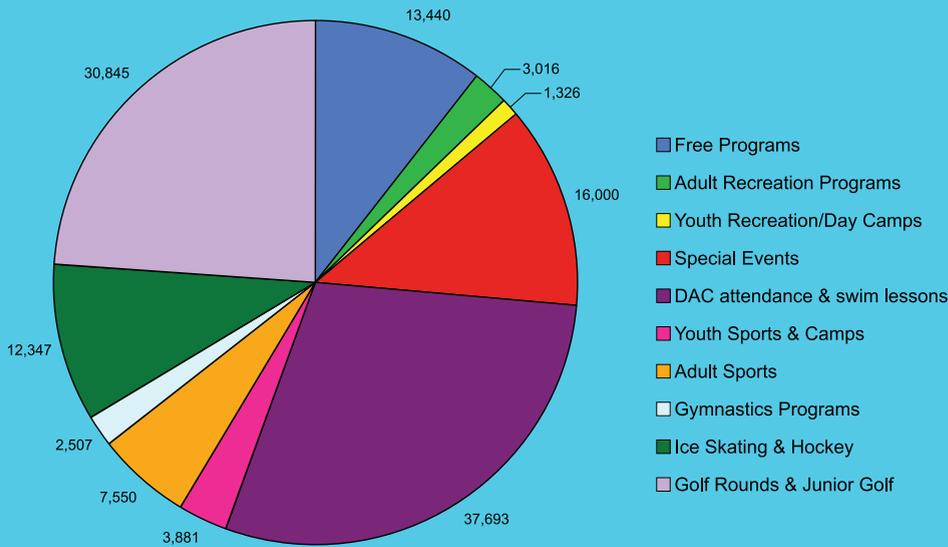


## Thank You Volunteers!

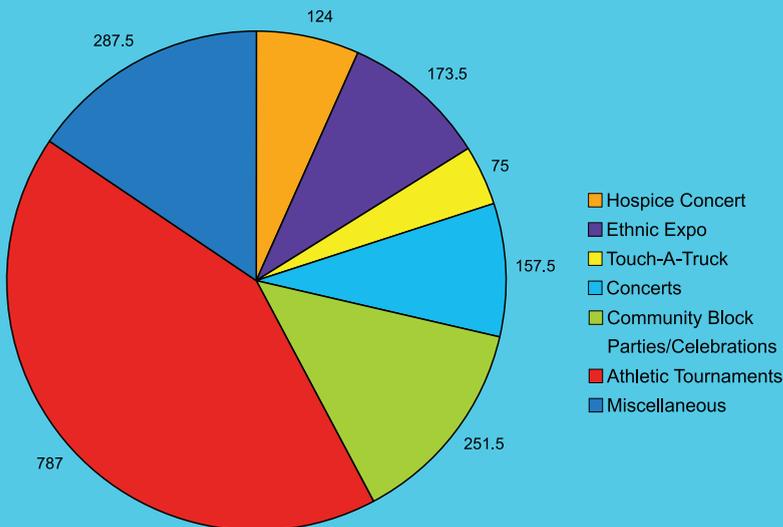
Columbus Parks and Recreation Department is grateful to the many volunteers who help us maintain the beauty of our parks and trails. Without their help, we would be unable to enjoy the quality amenities we do today.

Are you interested in becoming a volunteer? Call us at (812) 376-2680 and get involved with our parks!

## Columbus Parks and Recreation Department 2007 Program Participation



## Park Operations Service Hours in the Community



## Protecting our Parks

Since 2003, the Columbus Parks and Recreation Department has spent **over \$158,000** to repair or replace park amenities damaged by vandals. To date in 2007, the Department has spent nearly \$15,000 on repairs. Recently, vandalism at Greenbelt Golf Course resulted in an additional \$8,000 in damage.

In response, Parks and Recreation staff is working with Columbus Police Department to capture and prosecute vandals. In addition, the Columbus Park Foundation has set up an account to reward citizens who come forward with information about acts of vandalism.

We need your help! Take ownership of the parks and People Trails around you. If you see suspicious activity in your area or while visiting a park, please call the Columbus Police Department. Your actions may save damage to parks and money that can be used to improve our parks rather than repair them.

# SUPPORTING HEALTHY LIVING

The Department staff works every day to insure that all of our citizens have the opportunity to exercise and play in high quality parks and playgrounds and participate in healthy recreational activities. Following are a few ways we enrich lives and build community through support of healthy activities.

## Partnering for Healthy Kids

Columbus Gymnastics Center is proud to partner with Foundation for Youth and the Jolie Crider Reach Out Fund to offer gymnastics instruction for Boys and Girls' Club participants. In addition, the two organizations partnered over the course of 2007 to offer shared programs, including the 'Flip and Dip' Open Gym during Spring Break, where participants spend one hour in the gym and one hour swimming in FFY's indoor pool. During the USSSA 3 on 3 Basketball Tournament in April, the gym and the FFY game room were open for tournament participants and spectators to enjoy.

## Playground for All Abilities

Freedom Field, the largest accessible playground in the State of Indiana and the fifth largest accessible playground in the U.S., opened its slides to the public on November 1, 2006. One year later, the playground continues to be a success for the hundreds of children that use it each day. This year finishing touches have been added to the playground. We installed three artistic wind vanes with the logos of Freedom Field on them. Bike racks, new picnic tables, a new bench, and trash receptacles have also been installed. To add some shade to the playground, two Honey Locust trees from the downtown parking garage site were moved and placed at the southwest corner of the playground. Before the end of 2007, we also hope to have new signage installed along with lights and surveillance cameras. Freedom Field is a great example of how passionate community members can work with the Parks Department to make their dreams come true!



## Free Playground Program

The summer Free Playground Program served 1,300 children in 2007. Children at Ninth Street and Pence Street parks participated in BCSC's free lunch program and received snack packs with healthy food items to take home.



## Public Swimming

In 2007, Donner Aquatic Center provided swimming opportunities for over 37,000 citizens. As part of the legacy from William Donner, the staff is proud to offer swimming recreation for all members of the community, including free admission opportunities every day the pool is open during the summer season.

## Golden Guards

As a client of Ellis and Associates, Donner Aquatic Center staff is dedicated to providing the safest possible swimming environment for their patrons. In 2007, two lifeguards, McKenzie Davis and Autumn Reinbold, were named Golden Guards by Ellis and Associates, the highest honor a lifeguard can receive from that organization.

## Partnerships in Aquatics

The aquatics team partnered with the Girl Scouts of America in 2007 to offer the Swim Merit Badge Program. On Saturdays this spring at East High School pool, Girl Scouts were taught basic strokes and water safety. Five troops (40 Girl Scouts) participated in this program.



### **Indoor Recreation**

With childhood obesity on the rise, the Columbus Gymnastics Center is prepared to offer children a great place for exercise and recreation, regardless of the weather outside. Since the installation of the indoor playground in late 2006, Open Gym attendance is up 25% and rising.

### **Bringing Sports to the Community**

The Columbus Parks and Recreation Department's athletics staff works closely with over 30 different user groups throughout the year to host programs and tournaments at our facilities including: Chapman T. Blackwell III Park, Jolie Crider Skate Park, Lincoln Park Softball Complex and Batting Cages, Clifty Park, Donner Aquatics Center, Hamilton Center Ice Arena, Foundation for Youth and Columbus Gymnastics Center.



### **Golf for All Ages**

Columbus Parks and Recreation Department offers two affordable and convenient golf locations in Columbus for all levels of golfers to use. Greenbelt Golf Course boasts a quality nine hole course used widely by leagues of all ages and skill levels. Bordered by People Trails and located in the middle of Columbus, it provides the perfect location for golfers looking to fit in a few holes after work. Organize a company team and encourage fellow employees to reduce stress and get some exercise while getting to know each other.

Rocky Ford Par-3 Golf Course, located in a residential area off of Rocky Ford Road and Taylor Road, has proven to be the 18 hole course of choice for beginning golfers and family outings, just to name a few. Visit Par-3 Golf Course on any sunny, mild day during the year and you'll find golfers of all ages practicing their skills. Par-3 also is the host facility for our popular Junior Golf program.

Our Golf Professional, Steve Cohen, has over 30 years of experience teaching novice to professional golfers how to improve their game. Lessons are available for all skill levels by appointment.



## Future Projects

Columbus Parks and Recreation Department is working with community groups on several future projects, including:

- The newly developed Dog Park Association, that will lead the effort to develop a dog park in Columbus.
- Vision 2020 Committee to develop indoor and outdoor sports facilities in downtown Columbus, to further enhance sports tourism in our community.
- Expansion of the People Trails to other areas of our community.

For more information on how your efforts can make these projects a reality, contact us at (812) 376-2680.



# IN MEMORY OF JOHN McCAULEY



The Columbus People Trails would not be possible without the love and effort of our friend, John McCauley. John worked tirelessly to see the trails developed from an idea to a reality, and then went to individuals to raise money for their construction. We will miss our dear friend and are forever grateful to him for his efforts in our community.



department of  
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