



# Plainfield Park District Annual Report 2020







# Annual Report 2020

## Letter from the Executive Director

### Dear Plainfield Park District Friends and Families:

As we prepare this annual report for you, the feelings of uncertainty we felt in 2020 are slowly being replaced with the growing sense of hope. Restrictions are starting to ease. Kids are returning to school and we look forward to the day we can return to safe, unrestricted Park District operations. Throughout 2020, we faced challenges that those of us in the parks and recreation world had not previously seen and never could have predicted.

Despite the challenges, our dedicated Park District staff were more than capable of adapting in order to continue delivering recreational services to our residents which included a pivot early on to online, e-programming and family-friendly activities delivered through our website and social media. When the weather turned warmer, that meant special events that allowed us to gather safely like our popular drive-in movies.

The Park District team also developed new programs to help our community like Scout's Club 202 which provided a safe place for children to continue their remote learning when they couldn't do it from home. When it was safe to do so, Scout's After-School Refuel debuted, giving kids a chance to get out of the house and burn off some energy in person at PARC.

With indoor activities limited, our outdoor amenities saw a surge in use in summer 2020, with record numbers discovering the joys of launching a canoe or inner tube at one of our DuPage River launches. Our parks, playgrounds, and trails also became popular amenities for families throughout the summer as we all rediscovered the simple pleasure of spending time outdoors.

The District continued its facility improvements projects too as the Challenge Course and playground at Bott Park became popular destinations. Playground renovations at Commons, Woodside, Brookside, and Clearwater Springs Parks were also completed.

For residents who were cooped up for much of the early spring, Scout's Summer Fun Map encouraged them to get out and explore the District's popular destinations as well as find some hidden gems. And throughout the year we continued to strengthen safety protocols and increased cleaning measures to keep patrons healthy and safe.

In 2021, we continue our mission to serve all of our residents equally and equitably. The Plainfield Park District is here for you and as always, we welcome you to come and pay a visit to a park, playground, program, or special event this year.

Committed to providing you recreation enjoyment –  
Leadership Team

## Our Mission

The Plainfield Park District seeks to enhance lives through equitable and accessible exceptional recreation opportunities for all.

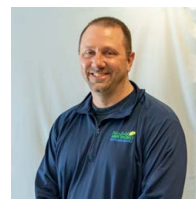
## Our Vision

We aspire to be innovative, diverse, and inclusive in administration, recreation and preservation.

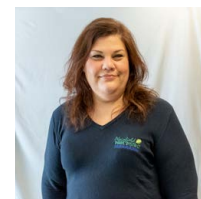
## Our Values

Our values center on Community, Fiscal Responsibility, Stewardship of Natural Resources Health & Wellness and Diversity, Equitability and Inclusiveness

### LEADERSHIP TEAM



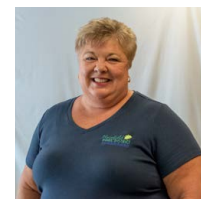
**Carlo Capalbo**  
Executive Director



**Maureen Nugent**  
Deputy Director



**Jennifer Rooks-Lopez**  
Director of Parks and Planning



**Wendi Calabrese**  
Director of Administrative Services



**Andy Dunfee**  
Director of Recreation and Facilities



## Board of Commissioners



**Mimi Poling**  
President



**Bill Thoman**  
Vice President



**Rob Ayres**  
Commissioner



**Jason Rausch**  
Commissioner



**Syed Abedi**  
Commissioner



**Heath Wright**  
Commissioner



**Pamela Covington**  
Commissioner



## The Cost of a Pandemic

CARES Act funding helped the Park District during the Covid Pandemic.

### Distinguished Budget & Financial Reporting Awards

The Park District received awards from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) for its 2020 budget and for its 2019 Financial Report.

Both awards represent a significant achievement by the Park District and its ongoing commitment by its board of commissioners and staff to meet the highest principles of governmental budgeting.

For its budget award, the District's budget "must meet program criteria and excel as a policy document, financial plan, operations guide, and communication tool," according to GFOA criteria.

For its financial report award, the District was recognized for producing a document that ensures "that users of their financial statements have the information they need to" assess the financial health of the District.

### CARES Act Funding

The District received \$129,000 in CARES Act funding in 2020 to help defray the added costs associated with operating during the COVID-19 pandemic.

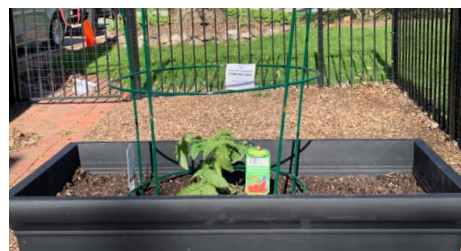
### Fund Balance

A fund balance policy is established to provide financial stability, cash flow for operations, and the assurance that the District will be able to respond to emergencies with fiscal strength. The District's fund balance policy assured the District would be able to continue to operate during times such as the COVID-19 pandemic.



### Nosh Plot Babies

The Park District received a \$1,000 grant to start an employee garden in 2020. After the start of the pandemic derailed plans to begin planting in the spring, Park District Staff found a way to keep the garden—called the "nosh plot"—going by delivering individual growing supplies to employees to tend their own tomato plants at home, eventually calling the crops the "nosh plot babies."



## How Do We Measure Up?

The Plainfield Park District staff works hard to provide the most recreation opportunities and park space at the lowest cost possible for our residents through advanced planning, stringent budgeting, and an ongoing eye toward process improvements. Take a look to see how far your tax dollars go compared to neighboring park districts:



## Property Taxes and the Park District

On an average \$250,000 value home, every \$1 paid in property tax, just 3 cents of that goes to the Plainfield Park District which we use to maintain park space and facilities, fund recreation programs, and put on special events throughout the year.







# Annual Report 2020 RECREATION

## Recreation in 2020: A Year of Adapting to the New Normal

The Park District Recreation Department faced many challenges posed by COVID-19 in 2020. For a staff that is accustomed to bringing groups of residents together for sports leagues, special events, dance classes, camp, and swim lessons, it meant rethinking how they do things, and finding new ways to deliver recreation programming.

The year started out on a positive note, as the Park District celebrated the 1-year anniversary of the grand opening of the Prairie Activity & Recreation Center (PARC) with a free open house for the public and \$1 entrance for Prairie Fit.

Before the pandemic forced the closure of facilities in March, 568 young athletes were ready to start another season of youth basketball league in January along with 179 dance students perfecting routines they were preparing to perform at our spring dance recital in May.

Following the Governor's stay at home order, the recreation team rose to the challenge, creating new

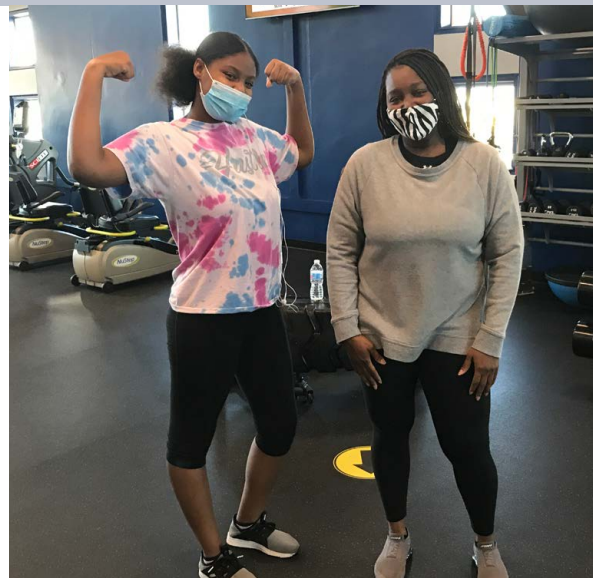
**...the recreation team rose to the challenge, creating new online offerings for residents...**

online offerings for residents including an E-sports league, Virtual 5K race that residents could run or walk in their neighborhoods, as well as virtual dance classes, bingo, and art classes over Zoom. Even classes on how to use Zoom.

When the stay at home order was given in mid-March, NTEC staff adapted quickly. With horses to care for and stable chores that couldn't be delayed, staffers handled grooming and tacking, and attendance numbers were adjusted for when lessons and programs could begin again.

The team worked behind the scenes throughout the spring and early summer too, preparing PARC and Prairie Fit for their reopening to the public on July 7.

Rec staff implemented a safe environment for Prairie Fit members to return to in-person fitness which included a new online reservation process to help accommodate as many members as safely as possible under the new restricted attendance capacities.



## Recreation by the numbers

Drive-in  
Movies

280

Participants

Autumn Family  
Fun Fest

94

Participants

Scout's  
Club 202

200

Enrolled

Great Adventures  
Preschool

52

Enrolled

Equestrian  
Registrations

208

Enrolled

Santa Story  
Time & Video  
Message

90

Participants

Outdoor  
Athletic Class

180

Participants

Haunted  
Hay Rides

327

Participants

Journey to the  
North Pole

259

Participants

Camp  
Participants

188

Registrations

Outdoor  
Fitness

270

Participants

Senior Holiday  
Luncheon

60

Lunches Delivered





## What's New & Upcoming

Gregory B. Bott park features a new 40-yard dash challenge course, and new playground spaces for kids ages 2-5 & 5-12



Gregory B. Bott park

### Improving Parks & Facilities

As part of its 5-year master plan, and with a goal to "Improve and maintain a quality system of parks and facilities that excite the community," Planning staff oversaw an ambitious itinerary in summer 2020 to upgrade playgrounds and infrastructure at 4 of its parks.

Those parks receiving a refresh in 2020 included:

- Commons
- Clearwater Springs
- Brookside
- Woodside (bids were released in late 2020, contract has been awarded but construction will begin in 2021)

To help defray the cost for taxpayers, the District applied for and received a \$35,095.53 grant from Game Time, a playground equipment manufacturer, that was used to purchase new play equipment for Woodside Park.

The revamped Gregory B. Bott Park officially opened in summer 2020 featuring a new 40-yard dash challenge course, new playground play spaces designed for kids ages 2-5 and 5-12 as well as a new, cushioned artificial turf play surface.



### Natural Area Management: Mather Woods Tree maintenance

Phase 1 of the Mather Woods Tree enhancement plan began in Spring 2020. The focus of phase 1 was to remove any dead or damaged trees/branches within the woods that overhang or could impact the existing trails.

Phase 2, which will begin in 2021, will focus on dead and diseased trees within the woods but away from pathways. Mather Woods like other woodland areas in the state has experienced significant damage due to the Emerald Ash borer.

### Rediscovering the Outdoors

Despite its grand opening celebration being canceled, the challenge course at Bott Park opened to the public over the summer, giving residents a much-needed new outdoor amenity, and a fun new workout.

Next door to it, families also flocked to the newly updated Bott Park playground which included new cushioned turf surface, and interactive play features for kids of all ages.

During a summer where residents were looking to gather together safely outside, the newly installed picnic shelter at Village Green provided an oasis for extended families and friends to get together for celebrations outdoors.

### Planning Ahead

The Plainfield Park District was awarded a \$400,000 park improvement Open Space Land Acquisition (OSLAD) grant from the State of Illinois that will be used to fund a planned renovation of the 75-acre Eaton Preserve which includes a picnic shelter, playground, and natural area.

#### Other improvements planned in 2021 include:

- Four playgrounds: Old Renwick, Aspen Meadows, Norman Greenway, Wexford Parks
- Repairs to pedestrian bridge at Van Horn Woods





## A New Way of Doing Things

While 2020 was a challenging year, it also spurred some new ideas and brought some real ingenuity to the way that the Park District and its staff serves our residents.

We found new ways to come together over the summer, hosting a series of drive in movies at Bott Park and giving families a retro-style experience of watching together under the stars.

Some of our residents completed their first 5k race in 2020 too with our inaugural "New Normal" virtual race in May. Many said that the low-stakes format which gave participants a chance to run, walk, or treadmill to their goal, was the perfect way to try their first race and gave them the confidence to try another.

When the remainder of the school year was canceled, our staff at Great Adventures Preschool hosted a drive through final day of school party, giving students and their parents a chance to say goodbye to their teachers for the summer. For students headed to Kindergarten, it was also a chance to celebrate one last time before they moved on to new schools in the fall.

Dedicated to the health of our residents, and undeterred by indoor gathering restrictions, Recreation staff moved fitness classes outdoors

this summer to Eaton Preserve where students gathered in the early morning for their workouts. Proving their dedication to a daily dose of movement, classes continued under the pavilion until early December.

Even though they couldn't gather in person, Recreation staff still found a way for active adult program participants to have a holiday luncheon, delivering over 60 meals along with some other fun holiday goodies. When they can safely return to drop in programs, our active adults will find new socially distanced card tables too so that afternoon card games can resume.

We also found new ways to celebrate the holidays with our Friends of the Plainfield Park District Foundation's Santa's Magic Snow Globe event which gave families an opportunity to still visit with Santa but in a safe, socially distanced way.

And Breakfast with Santa became a story time event with Old St. Nick beaming in to residents' homes as they snacked and listened to a Christmas tale.

## Dog Days

We celebrated our furry friends with our Dog Days of Summer photo contest in August which saw a few newly adopted dogs smile for the camera.



## Affirming our Commitment to Diversity

In June, the Plainfield Park District Board of Commissioners approved a resolution affirming its commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion following unrest around the country over the summer.

It led to the creation of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion task force and the development of a new road map that will help foster a more proactive approach in the future to solve issues related to injustice, racism, and oppression.



## Serving Our Residents

With the uncertainty caused by the pandemic to our events and program schedule, the Park District offered deferred payments for our residents, giving them peace of mind that they wouldn't be charged until we knew for sure that an event would run.

The Park District held two food drives for non-profit organization Bags of Hope which provides food to Plainfield School District families struggling with food insecurity.

The Parks and Planning department organized a tree give-away for residents in April to celebrate Arbor Day and Earth Day. Over 200 tree saplings were given away during the District's first of its kind drive through event.

To celebrate our members, the fitness staff at Prairie Fit began hosting VIP Days at PARC with free snacks, raffles, and some give-aways.



## Mapping our Summer of Fun

Knowing that families would have to find more things to do outdoors in 2020, Scout unveiled his Summer Fun Map. The map served as a guide for all of the fun things to do over the summer from walking trails to playing a few rounds of disc golf.

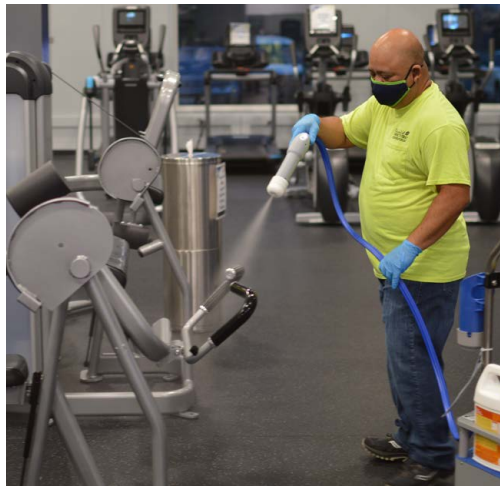


## Focus on Resident Safety

When PARC reopened in July, Park District staff had already put in the work and taken the extra steps behind the scenes to ensure the safety of everyone who visited. That included new safety signage, directional markers, hand sanitizing stations, plexiglass barriers for staff, and a fitness center with equipment spaced out so guests can maintain physical distance during their workouts.

The District also invested in a Clorox 360 machine which allows for faster, more thorough sanitizing of workout surfaces.

PARC maintenance staff also added more cleanings of the facility to their weekly schedule to ensure the health and safety of our guests and staff.



## Commissioner Ludemann Bids Farewell

Commissioner Mary Kay Ludemann bid farewell to the Plainfield Park District Board of Commissioners in October after over a decade of service. She was first elected to the board in 2009 and also served as its president during her tenure while also serving on the Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD) Board of Trustees, IAPD's Program Committee, and Illinois Park and Recreation Association Joint Editorial Committee.

Plainfield resident Pam Covington was appointed to serve out the remainder of Ms. Ludemann's term. She previously served on the District's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion task force.



## The Show Goes On

Plainfield Park District staffers put on their thinking caps in 2020 to find new ways to host our residents' favorite annual seasonal outdoor events, including Autumn Family Fun Fest, Haunted Hayrides, Journey to the North Pole, and our Christmas Tree lighting at Village Green which went virtual in 2020. Staff modified hayracks with partitions, installed hand sanitizing stations, and spaced out activities so that families could still celebrate seasonal events safely.

