2016
REPORT
TO THE
COMMUNITY
CITY OF DES MOINES
PARKS AND RECREATION
Annual Report Cover

PHOTO CONTEST WINNER!

HOLLY WIST
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<td>LETTER</td>
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<td>MAYOR</td>
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<td>LIVABLE COMMUNITY</td>
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### Contact Information

**Social Media**

**Text Message Notifications**

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**Benjamin R. Page**

Director of Parks and Recreation

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**2016 Mayor and Council**

Park and Recreation Board Subcommittees

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**Friends of Des Moines Parks**

2016 Retirements

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**Collaboration with community stakeholders to create lasting neighborhoods and commercial centers to live, work and play.**

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**Expanded Leisure, Arts & Cultural Opportunities**

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**Provide adequate funding and resources for City services and delivering them in the most cost effective manner.**

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**Modernizing the city through enhancement of transportation networks, utilities and technology**

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**Providing excellent customer service through efficient city processes, exceptional communication, and continuous improvement**

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**Infrastructure & Buildings**

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Parks and Recreation Administration Office

1551 E. Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway

Des Moines, IA 50317

(515) 237-1386

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parks@dmgov.org

Facebook.com/desmoinesparks

Instagram.com/desmoinesparks

Twitter.com/desmoinesparks

Pinterest.com/desmoinesparks

Youtube.com/desmoinesparks

Text Message Notifications
Text any of the following keywords to 84483 to sign up for updates on:
DSMEvents, DSMPools, DSMSports, DSMTrails
A roadmap for making Des Moines a better place for all that will improve neighborhoods, public safety and quality of life.

**DES MOINES CITY GOVERNMENT MISSION**

The MISSION of DES MOINES CITY GOVERNMENT is to be FINANCIALLY STRONG and to provide EXCEPTIONAL MUNICIPAL SERVICES in a CUSTOMER FRIENDLY MANNER with an INVOLVED COMMUNITY—RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES.

**DES MOINES VISION 2030**

DES MOINES 2030 is a VIBRANT CAPITAL CITY - the PRIDE of IOWA with GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS, ALIVE DOWNTOWN, and THRIVING REGIONAL ECONOMY, and is a RECOGNIZED LEADER IN COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY. DES MOINES 2030 has ABUNDANT OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEISURE, and an EFFECTIVE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM CONNECTING THE REGION.

In 2030, residents and businesses take tremendous PRIDE IN THE DES MOINES COMMUNITY!

**5 GOALS**

**FINANCIALLY SOUND CITY**
Provide adequate funding and resources for City services and delivering them in the most cost effective manner

**SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY: OUR NEIGHBORHOODS, OUR DOWNTOWN**
Collaboration with community stakeholders to create lasting neighborhoods and commercial centers to live, work and play

**HIGH PERFORMING CITY ORGANIZATION**
Providing excellent customer service through efficient city processes, exceptional communication, and continuous improvement

**UPGRADED CITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND BUILDINGS**
Modernizing the city through enhancement of transportation networks, utilities and technology

**LIVABLE COMMUNITY: EXPANDED LEISURE, ARTS & CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES**
Maintaining and expanding opportunities that enhance quality of life for all generations
GuideDSM is the strategic plan introduced by the City Council as a roadmap for making Des Moines a better place for all that will improve neighborhoods, public safety and quality of life. As representatives of the City, every employee of Des Moines Parks and Recreation is responsible for contributing in bringing to life the vision, mission, and goals of the plan. Utilizing the framework outlined within GuideDSM, we reflect on the past year and the successes our team achieved in 2016.

Financially Strong City
Cities around the world, just like ours, face increasingly complex challenges, with the most pressing problem being lack of sufficient funding to meet local needs. The Parks and Recreation Department continues to innovate by forging new and inventive partnerships that protect existing funding and leverage new external sources for capital investments in our park and recreation system. A great example of this work is the public-private partnership that was undertaken to save and rehabilitate the Fifth Street Bridge.

Sustainable Community: Our Neighborhoods, Our Downtown
Sustainable communities tend to focus on environmental, economic, health and wellness and social equity factors. When combined, the community can realize true sustainability. From restoring our historic, native landscapes in our parks to creating recreational offerings that promote healthy lifestyles such as our yoga program to providing the many volunteer opportunities, our team is focused on keeping our City sustainable by bringing them together for the common good.

High Performing City Organization
Key performance indicators of success for the department included breaking our own record with over 36,000 volunteer hours in 2016. Our continued pursuit of excellence drives us to seek recognition on a national level through the National Recreation and Park Association Gold Medal Award program for high performing parks and recreation agencies. Expanding our collaboration with other tax-supported agencies such as the Des Moines Independent School System allows us to add additional youth programs by sharing facilities.

Upgraded City Infrastructure and Buildings
In 2016, the park system benefited from a number of great capital improvement projects from these as large as the complete rebuild of the Pioneer Park road system to new outdoor exercise equipment at Martin Luther King Jr. Park. Capital Investments in our parks continues to prove to be great assets, often drawing additional public sector donations, much like the very generous overhaul of Redhead Park by Rebuilding Together.

Livable Community: Expanded Leisure, Arts & Cultural Opportunities
Of all of the adopted City Council goals, this is where we are the most impactful. From providing 76 parks, seven cemeteries, 81 miles of trails, two community centers, three public golf courses, 25 aquatic facilities and 89 recreational programs, our team is passionate and committed to our mission of “Helping Des Moines, Live Well, Play Hard and Protect the Earth.”

Our team of 58 full-time and over 200 seasonal employees are fortunate to receive the support from our Mayor, City Council, City Manager, appointed Park and Recreation Board and of course the citizens of Des Moines. We look forward to 2017 and the opportunity to serve each and every one at the highest level possible.

Respectfully,

Benjamin R. Page
Director of Parks and Recreation
City of Des Moines
2016 MAYOR AND COUNCIL

T.M. FRANKLIN COWNIE  
Mayor

BILL GRAY  
Ward I

LINDA WESTERGAARD  
Ward II

CHRISTINE HENSLEY  
Ward III

JOE GATTO  
Ward IV

CHRISTOPHER COLEMAN  
At Large

SKIP MOORE  
At Large
SUSAN R. NOLAND
Chair

Heather Anderson  Paula J. Feltner
Connie Boesen    Chelsea Lepley
Kimberley Boggus Loyd W. Ogle
Jeffrey C. Clubb Sammy F. Pugh
George Davis     Vincent J. Scavo
Victoria Facto   Andrea Woodard
Cynde Fanter
### 2016 Subcommittees and Their Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citizen Cemetery Advisory Committee</th>
<th>Citizen Golf Advisory Committee</th>
<th>Rose Garden</th>
<th>Trails and Greenways</th>
<th>Urban Conservation Advisory Committee</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Beeman</td>
<td>Gary Bianchi</td>
<td>Sarah Hill</td>
<td>Linda Appelgate</td>
<td>Andrea Woodard, Chair, Park Board Representative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ben Bell Jr.</td>
<td>Russ Bitterman</td>
<td>Leslie Hunter</td>
<td>Jeff Cook</td>
<td>Susan Noland, Vice-Chair, Park Board Representative</td>
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<td>Archie Cook</td>
<td>Rod Bullard</td>
<td>Miles Mills</td>
<td>Vicki Facto</td>
<td>Doug Adamson</td>
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<td>George Davis</td>
<td>Rex Coble, Vice Chair</td>
<td>Delores Pagliai</td>
<td>Alan Foster</td>
<td>Chuck Becker</td>
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<td>Max Knauer</td>
<td>Paula Feltner</td>
<td>Ed Pagliai</td>
<td>Carol George</td>
<td>Leslie Berkes</td>
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<td>Carlton Peterson</td>
<td>Susan Hanke</td>
<td>Shane Percival</td>
<td>Katie Jones</td>
<td>Jane Clark</td>
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<td>Mike Rowley</td>
<td>Richard Hodges</td>
<td>Matt Rosen</td>
<td>Tim Lane</td>
<td>Beth Jaeger</td>
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<td>Adam Leach</td>
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<td>Teresa Jensen</td>
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<td>Sam Pugh</td>
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<td>Ginger Soelberg</td>
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<td>Marty Talarico</td>
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<td>Marian Riggs</td>
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<td>Stephen Vilmain, Chairman</td>
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<td>Peter Knapp</td>
<td>Tom Rosburg</td>
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<td>John Bouslog</td>
<td>Deb Schiel-Larson</td>
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<td>Aaron Sewell</td>
<td>Jennifer Welch</td>
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2016 Retirements

> GARY CROSS
Start: 3/19/1990
End: 12/31/2016
Tenure: 26 years, 9 months, 12 days

> JEAN MURRAY
Start: 2/10/08
End: 3/24/2016
Tenure: 7 years, 11 months, 23 days

In Memoriam

> RANDY PECK
26 years of Service

The mission of the Friends of Des Moines Parks is to preserve, protect, improve, and promote the use of Des Moines’ parks, greenways, and recreational programs for the benefit of all neighborhoods and citizens. To learn more about this group or to join, visit their website friendsofdmparks.org.
An average home in Des Moines with $107,400 assessed value pays $129 towards Parks and Recreation. For $129 a year, residents have access to these Parks and Recreation and Municipal Facilities:
An average home in Des Moines with $107,400 assessed value pays $129 towards Parks and Recreation. For $129 a year, residents have access to these Parks and Recreation and Municipal Facilities:

- **9 ENCLOSED & 43 OPEN AIR SHELTERS**
- **76 PARKS**
- **65 PLAYGROUNDS**
- **18 FULL BASKETBALL COURTS, 7 HALF COURTS**
- **53 TENNIS COURTS, 4 PICKLEBALL COURTS**
- **12 SOCCER FIELDS**
- **3 DOG PARKS**
- **6 MILES OF PAVED TRAIL & 18 MILES OF SOFT TRAIL**
- **7cemeteries**
- **650+ PLANT & TREE SPECIES**
- **89 PROGRAMS & EVENTS**
- **8 BASEBALL FIELDS**
- **12 SOCCER FIELDS**
Financially Sound City

Provide adequate funding and resources for City services and delivering them in the most cost effective manner.
WHERE DOES YOUR PROPERTY TAX DOLLAR GO?

“Early every morning in the summer, I ride my bike over to the ballpark and then get on the trail to Gray’s Lake. I ride around the lake, nod or say hello to other bikers and walkers — the Governor is often there getting his morning constitutional — and head home, happily braced for another day. Then I walk over to my office at Principal Park, where often I work during the morning and then slip out to the field to watch batting practice in the afternoon. And then, 71 times a year, I stay to watch the Iowa Cubs play a Triple-A baseball game.

On other evenings, my wife and I often head out to buy a dish of ice cream and then drive to a city park — we pick a different one each evening — to sit and eat and simply enjoy the surroundings. On weekends, we often take a grandchild or two over to frolic at Columbus Park.

We’re major consumers, if that’s the right word, of the city’s parks and trails. And I have been all my life. Seventy-five years ago my father taught me to skate on the frozen lagoon at Greenwood Park (near where my grandkids now enjoy the wonderful new Kelly Family splashpark). We’d go sledding on the hills of the Waveland Golf Course, and I learned to hit a tennis ball on the Waveland courts.

The bike trails, Gray’s Lake, the baseball field and the city parks, the lagoon, the golf course, the tennis courts — all part of the Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department. Many things make Des Moines a great place to live and work and play — but the Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department is at the top of that list.”
CITY OF DES MOINES TOTAL BUDGET BY FUND

$159,699,757

General
25%

Police, Fire, Parks,
Library Administration
& Central Services

$114,168,732

Special Revenue
18%

Road Use Tax, Self-
Supported Municipal
Improvement District
(SSMID), Police Grant,
Community Development
Grants & Tax Increment
Funds (TIF)

$111,758,583

Enterprise
18%

Parking, Sanitary, Solid
Waste Storm Water,
Housing & Golf

$92,619,673

Capital
16%

Bridges, Streets,
Buildings, Sewers,
Sidewalks, Parks & Traffic
Control

$90,053,941

Debt
15%

Health, Fleet,
Forestry, Telephone,
Radio Maintenance,
Repair, Replacement
& Stores

$44,118,079

Internal Service
7%

$2,400

Expendable Trust
<1%

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Sustainable Community
Our Neighborhoods, Our Downtown

Collaboration with community stakeholders to create lasting neighborhoods and commercial centers to live, work and play
PARTNERSHIPS

Des Moines Parks and Recreation and Des Moines Public Schools are in the third year of a joint partnership to provide youth sports programming for students and citizens of Des Moines. The city and school district work together to identify facilities, promote programs and prepare staff to offer boys and girls in grades 1-7 the opportunity to enjoy flag football, basketball, soccer and for the first time volleyball. The partnership was created to provide quality athletic after school experiences with a focus on fun, teamwork, sportsmanship and achievement.

The Iowa State University Landscape Architecture program brought 32 students to review and propose improvements to Prospect Park. As a part of their coursework, the group presented their design ideas to members of our staff.

The City of Des Moines partnered with the Iowa Sports Foundation to provide the first Corporate Games to Greater Des Moines and Central Iowa. This first year initiative included 29 organizations from around the Metro who sent members of their staff to compete in over 20 different events. These ranged from yoga to golf, from basketball to track and field. The City of Des Moines was the only municipality to enter a team into the competition. The City of Des Moines served as an event host for seven different activities as part of the inaugural event. The City of Des Moines has already agreed to be partner again in 2017 as the Corporate Games are projected to double in size. This partnership is part of an initiative within the city to create a more active workforce as well as be a leader in innovating programming and reaching the widest range of citizens through our services and partnerships.

In 2016, the Des Moines Police Department’s youth Boxing Club relocated to the Pioneer Columbus Community Center. The club had spent the past 8 years on E. Grand Avenue in the Fairgrounds Neighborhood. As the popularity of the program grew, the search was on for a new home, and Pioneer Columbus has been a perfect fit!

At its inception, the Boxing Club was financed in part by the generous donations of local entrepreneur, Mr. William C. Knapp. Mr. Knapp continues to provide critical support for the club, and a former boxer himself, is one of the club’s biggest fans. Many other organizations and individuals have contributed to the club’s success, and the Police Department is grateful for their efforts.

Under the watchful mentoring of Senior Police Officer John Saunders, youth in our community develop both physical and emotional maturity needed to become successful adults. There is a rising level of juvenile crime in our Nation, and Des Moines is not immune. Structured sporting programs have proven to be effective in providing at-risk youth an option to criminal activity. Positive discipline, effective leadership, and a supportive peer group are all found within the DMPD Boxing Club. It’s been said many times, that a kid in sports, stays out of the courts.

“The Des Moines Youth Sports program is providing a great opportunity for young men and women to develop the skill-set they need to be successful athletically at the high school level.”

COURTNEY HENDERSON
Hoover High School Varsity Boys Basketball Coach
Des Moines Cemetery advocate Gerald LeBlanc began to champion the cause of infant grave markers in the area called “Baby Hill” at Woodland Cemetery in 2006. The babies have been in unmarked graves for over 100 years. Cemetery markers are the responsibility of the family members; however, in this case, there were no markers or the wooden markers did not survive the elements. Of the 540 graves, only 20 had markers that remained. After securing a number of financial gifts, LeBlanc approached the Abigail Adams Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) for their support. In late 2015 and 2016, the highly motivated DAR was able to take this project across the finish line with $33,205 funded by cash and in-kind contributions. A grant proposal was funded by Governor Terry Branstad from the Iowa History Fund for $10,000. The Governor’s commitment was made into a challenge grant with gifts from Suku Radia, Kurt Rasmussen and Prairie Meadows. The most recent in-kind contribution from McCall Monument for $5,455 will complete the project for the remaining stones. Watch for a dedication event in 2017 when the final stones are placed.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have generously assisted the Natural Resources crew with 1,400 donated native plugs that were planted into three separate bio-swales which in turn cleanses water runoff before entering Yeader Creek and ultimately into Easter Lake. In addition, twenty acres of donated Monarch specific seed mix was applied at Ewing and Pioneer Parks. In a few short years as these areas mature the environmental impact can be substantiated by the cleanliness of our discharge water and our habitat improvements for all insects, birds and small mammals in our ecosystem.

In working with Polk County Conservation, their team has readily provided advice about timber stand improvement practices, especially in identifying invasive species and techniques to remove them. They have also been helpful sharing information on prairie restoration, by suggesting plants that will achieve our desired results. On the programming side, we have partnered with them and Blank Park Zoo to provide the Family Nature Club series in different parks throughout the year.

“...in Des Moines we are lucky to have a great mix of neighborhood, athletic and signature parks. They offer features from roses and lilacs to disc golf and soccer. With great trails and dog parks, both people and pets are able to exercise and enjoy the great outdoors. Often overlooked are some of the great offerings indoors at the community centers, from wellness to fellowship. None of this would be possible without the outstanding work of the Des Moines Park and Recreation staff. I count myself lucky to have been able to work with them directly on a number of events, including the annual Star Party in Ewing Park. It is the great public/private partnerships that Director Page and his staff have formed that allow Des Moines to be home to such great parks, trails and more on a very limited budget and staff. Everyone should make an effort to explore new park spaces and discover for themselves what a great park system we have in Des Moines.”

Jim Bollard
VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

One of the single most important collaborations we have with the community is our volunteer program. Each year, thousands of people supplement limited financial and staffing resources and perform a variety of duties including:

- Cleaning up parks and trails
- Growing annuals in the greenhouse
- Invasive species removal
- River and creek clean-up
- Cemetery maintenance and preservation
- Monarch monitoring

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AWARD WINNERS

Each year, the volunteers are recognized for their commitment and service to the Parks and Recreation Department. This year’s winners - selected by a Volunteer Recognition Selection Committee - are:

• Susan Noland, Lifetime Achievement Award
• John Bissell, Volunteer of the Year
• Wells Fargo, Corporate Group of the Year
• Parks Area Foundation, Volunteer Group of the Year
• Dr. Mike Eberle, Friend of the Year
• Paul Wiezorek, Coach of the Year
• Ganesh Ganpat, Volunteer Supervisor of the Year
• Carlton Peterson, Special Volunteer Award

Lifetime Achievement Award-Susan Noland
Susan Noland, a local artist and business owner, has been an active member of the Des Moines Park and Recreation Board, since 2004. For over a decade, Noland has been instrumental in developing important partnerships with a variety of groups, including conservation organizations and building support for our Department. Noland volunteered as Park Board Chair, Urban Conservation Committee chair, liaison to the Grays Lake and Meredith trail advisory committee, a liaison to the Friends of Des Moines Parks Foundation Board, and a variety of ad-hoc and appointment committees. Since her appointment to the board in 2004, Noland has brought enthusiasm, connections and varied experiences as an artist, gardener, and community service volunteer. We honor her with the 2016 Lifetime Achievement award for the thousands of hours of volunteer leadership and her unwavering advocacy over the years.

Volunteer of the Year-John Bissell
John Bissell has volunteered for many years sharing his knowledge of birds with visitors to Gray’s Lake Park. The programs provide a short walk and time outdoors in nature. His strong passion for bird watching can be seen each year as he volunteers for thirteen weeks of bird watching sessions, from March through May. He engages young and old, new participants and seasoned birdwatchers alike. His Initiative and ownership of the lunchtime birding series is to be commended and is a step towards our mission of Helping Des Moines Live Well, Play Hard and Protect the Earth.
Corporate Volunteer Group of the Year—Wells Fargo

Wells Fargo is committed to encouraging a stronger community where their employees live. They believe one of the most important contributions their team members make is using their professional skills and knowledge to help organizations such as the City of Des Moines. Their commitment as sponsors of events such as Earth Day Trash Bash is supplemented with hundreds of corporate volunteers in our historical Ewing Park Lilac Arboretum weeding, restoring the Children’s Forest, cleaning trails, planting flowers in Union Park, improving our waterways, cleaning and raising thousands of veteran’s headstones, transplanting flowers in our Greenhouse, installing playgrounds and painting basketball courts. We honor them for their corporate care, compassion and commitment to our community in 2016.

Volunteer Group of the Year—Parks Area Foundation

The Parks Area Foundation (PAF) focuses on community improvement projects with a strong emphasis on education about our rich history. PAF neighborhoods contain two National Historic Districts which are working to renovate, restore and make streetscape improvements. This volunteer-led group has volunteered time to meet with City representatives every other week for the past two years and have worked hard to raise funds and support for a new Riverview Park. PAF has raised more than $40,000 to redevelop Riverview Park into a new public space and entertainment venue. PAF volunteers hosted nine free concerts during the 2016 summer, as part of their Rendezvous on Riverview concert series, to help provide positive programming for the park and neighborhood. We honor them as the 2016 Volunteer Group of the Year for their volunteer initiative and work on neighborhood and park revitalization.

Volunteer Friend of the Year—Dr. Mike Eberle

Dr. Mike Eberle is a champion for our parks system. For the last eight years, he has served in many different capacities for the Friends of Des Moines Parks (Friends). Eberle’s leadership as President of the Friends has ensured even outlying neighborhood parks have seen improvements, such as new equipment, when City budgets were not available. The Friends have raised more funds for our Parks and Recreation programs while he was on the board than any other time in their history. Eberle led the efforts to organize and implement the signature Friends of Des Moines Parks annual golf fundraiser. This event has raised approximately $85,000 to support the Parks and Recreation Department. Eberle’s energy and creativity has helped him find grant and private donor support. For his tireless work toward the betterment of our community, we honor Dr. Mike Eberle with the 2016 Friend of the Year award.
Coach of the Year—Paul Wiezorek
Paul Wiezorek has coached in our youth sports leagues for most of the past 20 years. During this time, Wiezorek coached all three of his children and has returned to coach his grandson this season. Wiezorek has led his teams to several successful seasons as a youth basketball and youth flag football coach. Wiezorek is passionate and dedicated to teaching youth, not only about sports but about life as well. He has coached for many other programs through the years, including the Grandview Little League for eight seasons. Wiezorek led his team to the 15-year olds Little League World Series. He has also coached spring baseball at East High School and middle school flag football. Wiezorek has reached thousands of kids and taught them many valuable athletic skills and life lessons.

Special Volunteer Award—Carlton Peterson
Carlton Peterson, Retired President, Hamilton’s Funeral & After Life Services was appointed to the Des Moines Citizen Cemetery Advisory Committee (CCAC) in 1995. For more than twenty years, he has volunteered to provide input and direction for pricing/fees; numerous capital projects, and the addition of cemetery products options, such as niches, in-ground cremation cemetery blocks and single upright headstone blocks to the City Council. Carlton’s leadership through the CCAC advanced cemetery efforts and because of his leadership, our municipal cemeteries are one of the only in Central Iowa that provide a wildflower scattering area. We recognize Peterson’s more than twenty years of volunteer service and leadership on the Cemetery Advisory Committee.

Volunteer Supervisor of the Year—Ganesh Ganpat
Ganesh Ganpat increased volunteer engagement in our cemeteries in 2016. Projects have included the Adopt a Block program, Memorial Day assistance, veteran’s headstone raising, cemetery clean-ups and headstone recordings. Ganpat encourages staff to utilize volunteers in all aspects of their division from customer service to flag retirement. He worked with the Abigail Adams Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution volunteers to secure $27,000 to fund pioneer infant headstone installation at Woodland. Cemetery volunteers make improvements that protect historical resources, honor those that have passed and ensure their memories live on. In 2016, over 600 cemetery volunteers, with Ganpat’s leadership, donated more than 2,600 hours. The value of their service was over $61,000.
High Performing City Organization

Providing excellent customer service through efficient city processes, exceptional communication, and continuous improvement
OUR DEPARTMENT

**Parks** - The Parks Division is responsible for maintaining all the facilities and grounds within the Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department. This includes all park buildings, playgrounds, sport courts, pools and aquatic centers, wading pools, spraygrounds, mowed turf, prairie areas, woodlands, litter and trash removal, and snow removal. Also included are trails, both paved and nature, municipal cemeteries, landscaped areas, flowerbeds, trees and the city greenhouse.

**Planning and Development** - The Planning and Development Division designs, plans and implements park, recreation, natural resource, trails and open space projects that facilitate safe, inviting and memorable use of these facilities for enjoyment by citizens of and visitors to the City of Des Moines. The primary function of the Planning and Development Division is to manage the Park Improvement section of the City’s Capital Improvement Program by supervising and implementing planning and construction projects. To accomplish this, our staff possess broad expertise and understanding of fields such as architecture, landscape architecture, planning and engineering.

“What a joy to watch Greenwood Park being renovated this summer, and to know that the park I loved as a child will be enjoyed for years to come. I know how much planning, consideration, and creativity goes into projects like these, and everything is beautiful and welcoming. My toddler son and I visited the new playground for the first time this morning, and he hasn’t stopped talking about the new merry-go-round, bell, and pretend bus. We’ve missed having a public playground for little ones in the neighborhood, and are so grateful to have one nearby again. Thanks for all that you’re doing for Des Moines.”

MARIE GERNES
Recreation - The Recreation Division strives to create experiences that appeal to the widest variety of residents. The Recreation team looks to offer activities that enhance what exists but is always seeking to showcase sports, aquatics, volunteer opportunities, and the natural environment in ways they have not been seen before. We aspire to serve not only our regular participants but we look to create excitement for first time users as well. We offer a wide range of programs to match people’s diverse interests, using our top rate facilities conveniently located for all who participate. The Recreation Division is focused on excellence in leisure activities as part of a larger commitment to health, wellness, and the overall betterment of people’s lives.

Administration - The Administration Division is responsible for the overall operation and management of the Parks and Recreation Department. This includes the front line customer service over the phones, online and in person at the Richard A. Clark Municipal Service Center and the marketing and promotion of department facilities and programs. We are also responsible for the safety of the department’s permanent and seasonal team members while ensuring a fun and safe environment for the park and open space system’s users. The Administration Division also oversees managing the department’s operating budgets and creating partnerships with other organizations and being a direct liaison to the Friends of Des Moines Parks.
NATURAL RESOURCES

- 105,500 Annuals Grown for the Neighborhood Flower Program
- 81,500 Plants Grown for Parks, City Facilities and Recreational Complexes
- 75,000 Plants Grown for Fleur Drive Medians and Water Works Park
- 57,000 Plants Grown for the Downtown Streetscapes, Containers and Planting Beds
- 45 Acres of the Park System Burned Under our Prescribed Fire Program
- 800 Native Plants Grown

ATTENDANCE

- 8,722 Participated in Our Recreational Programs
- 3,627 Enjoyed Yoga Outdoors
- 2,289 Learned to Swim
- 9,867 Attended Special Events
- 86,441 Used One of our 10 Free Splash or Wading Pools
- 113,154 Visited One of our Five Pools/Aquatic Centers
- 2,029 Purchased Dog Park Permits
- 98,790 Utilized our Two Community Centers
- 3,156 Purchased Season Swim Pass

MARKETING

- 8,270 Number of Calls
- 8,353 Facebook Likes
- 2,715 Twitter Followers
- 1,694 Instagram Followers
- 827,638 Website Pageviews
- 329,505 Website Visits
- 13,292 Cemetery Search Users
- 13,449 YouTube Views
BY THE NUMBERS 2016

HOURS WORKED

173,497 Total Departmental Personnel Hours for 2016
30,746 Parks Maintenance/Repairs
17,735 Cemetery Operations
37,439 Aquatics Program (Pool Assigned Staff - Guards, Cashiers, Swim Lessons)
49,621 Recreation

VOLUNTEERS

5,370 Individuals Volunteered
36,879 Hours of Time
$868,870 Value of Volunteer Time Donated

COMMUNITY

2,121 Shelters and Other Facilities Rentals
14,375 Boat Rentals at Gray’s Lake
538 Interments at Seven Cemeteries
96,682 Rounds of Golf Played at our Three Public Courses
654 GRASP Cards Issued
830 Permits Issued for use of our Parks, Trails, Athletic Fields and Open Spaces
325 Days of the Year our Team Programmed Games, Practices or Events
2,000,000+ Gallons of Water Prepared and Chemically Balanced at the Municipal Pools for the 2016 Swim Season
LOOKING AHEAD TO 2017 PROJECTS

• 6th Avenue Trail Connection
• Allen Community Garden Opening
• Ashby Park Improvements
• Bill Riley Trail Railroad Bridge Replacement
• Cemetery Record Digitalization
• Evelyn Davis Park Fitness Equipment
• Ewing Park Flow Track
• Ewing Park Lilac Plaza
• Fairmont Park Construction
• Four Mile Creek Greenway Master Plan
• Glendale Abbey Restoration Phases 2 and 3
• Inaugural Youth Volleyball Program
• MacRae Shelter and Park Road Updates
• Parks and Recreation Department Comprehensive Plan

• Park Signage Phase 5 Installation
• Pioneer Columbus Community Center Renovation Phase 2
• Road Improvements at Glendale and Laurel Hill Cemeteries
• Waveland Golf Watershed Improvements
Upgraded City Infrastructure & Buildings

Modernizing the city through enhancement of transportation networks, utilities and technology
Neal Smith Trail Renovation Phase 1
Widened and resurfaced 1.07 miles of existing recreation trail from Riverview Park to Euclid Avenue

McHenry Trail Connection
Constructed a 3/4-mile soft-surface recreation trail connection between McHenry Park and the Interurban Bridge

Prospect Park Disc Golf Course
A new 18 hole disc golf course was constructed in Prospect Park with the help of the Des Moines Disc Golf Club

Four Mile Creek Streambank Restoration
Restored 261 feet of deteriorated streambank with innovative repair methods to enhance water quality and protect recreation trail corridor

Four Mile Community Center
Improvements include a new reception/help desk that is visible from the front entrance allowing visitors immediate access.

Birdland Trail Connection
Constructed a 1/4-mile multiuse concrete trail connection along Saylor Road connecting north to Birdland Drive

Martin Luther King Jr. Park Exercise Equipment
Four pieces of outdoor fitness equipment were installed by AARP of Iowa and Habitat for Humanity

Redhead Park
Installed a new playground, basketball court mural surface, sidewalk, Civil War memorial area, benches, bike racks, entry sign, and planted trees with volunteers and funding from Rebuilding Together

Pioneer Park Road
Improvements include the reconstruction of the Pioneer Park road and parking areas, new picnic areas with picnic tables and grills, and new ADA accessible sidewalks connecting all of the facilities

Pioneer Columbus Community Center
Improvements include a new reception/help desk, a new north entrance, a new fitness area, a new computer area, and an expanded multi-purpose room

Fifth (Jackson) Street Bridge
Renovation of a historically significant bridge built in 1898 to become a landmark of our trail system

Gray’s Lake Entry Signs
Both park entry signs were dismantled, repaired, and repainted to complete the full renovation

Dan and Mary Kelly Family Foundation Sprayground
A new push button interactive water playground with 15 spray features opened in Greenwood Park

Walnut Creek Streambank Restoration
Restored 294 feet of deteriorated streambank with innovative repair methods to enhance water quality and protect recreation trail corridor

Waveland Golf Course Water Quality Enhancement Phase 1
Stormwater improvements to Waveland Golf Course #3 including new stormwater pipe, grading, sod, and seed.

Glendale Abbey Restoration Phase 1
Restoration of the exterior of the Abbey including tuckpointing mortar joints, stone repair, and cleaning of the stone exterior. In addition, a new roof was installed on the Abbey.

MULTI-LOCATION PROJECTS

Water Slide Restoration
Includes the restoration of the waterslides at Birdland Pool, Nahas Aquatic Center, Northwest Aquatic Center, and Teachout Aquatic Center

Trail Closure Gates
The installation of 25 new gates throughout the trail system that will allow us to close the trails during flood conditions

Tennis Court Resurfacing
Includes repairing the cracks and resurfacing the tennis courts at Burke Park and Brody School Park
Key
- Completed Projects
- Trails
- Streets
- Parks & Open Space
- Bodies of Water

(map not to scale)
Livable Community
Expanded Leisure, Arts & Cultural Opportunities

Maintaining and expanding opportunities that enhance quality of life for all generations
FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

Aquatics - There are five pools and aquatic centers open from May until September. Season swim passes are available for individuals and families. During the month of April, purchase a swim pass and save $5 to $20. Private party rentals are an option at all of our aquatic facilities, making them a unique option for your next birthday party or special event. Family Swim Nights are held monthly and Doggie Dives are held the last day of the pool season as a great opportunity for dogs and their owners.

There are 10 traditional wading pools, four splash pools, six spraygrounds and two fountains operating in Des Moines parks free of charge. Our wading pool season extends from the first full week in June through mid-August. The days and hours of operation vary by facility. These water facilities are specifically aimed at children ages 10 and under.

The wading pools are dispersed throughout the city and offer supervised water play. It is a great opportunity for children to meet other children, have fun, and build water confidence. Parental supervision is required.

A splash pool is a splash pad with standing water and spray feature offering water play. Splash pools are staffed; however, parental supervision is strongly encouraged.

A sprayground is a splash pad with spray features without standing water. Spraygrounds offer unsupervised water play. Staff is not provided at spraygrounds or fountains, parental supervision is required.

Cemeteries - The City’s seven municipal cemeteries are large, historic and embrace the cultural diversity of our community. Comprising nearly 10% of the City’s parkland, the cemeteries’ 353 acres contain more than 172,900 interments in below and above ground spaces and niches. Through volunteer support, private contributions, increased focus on revenue and efficiencies, the municipal cemeteries are evolving to exceed consumer’s demands.

First plotted in 1848, Woodland was a cemetery before Des Moines became the state capital. Laurel Hill Cemetery opened its gates in 1907 in the rolling hills of Des Moines’ east side, just south of the Iowa State Fairgrounds. Glendale has served Des Moines since 1904. Originally, part of the massive Waveland Park, the year 1900 saw this parkland divided into the beautiful Waveland Golf Course, with the remaining gently rolling hills and dales becoming Glendale Cemetery. Elm Grove, Oak Grove, Sims and St. Ambrose were acquired when their previous owners were financially unable to maintain the cemeteries.

The business model has shifted focus on consumer demand for non-traditional burial services including the Wildflower Scattering Garden and Columbarium at Glendale Cemetery. Increased beautification efforts such as tree plantings, statues, and garden beds have been supported largely by private contributions. The amenities when combined with the care of the grounds and existing assets truly have an impact on where residents choose as a final resting space.

“TOM FULCHER

“My father is a Veteran of WWII and buried in the veterans section of Glendale Cemetery. We are thrilled with the overall condition of the cemetery and realize that nature will take its toll. Our family agrees 100% that the site is our responsibility and if we want it to look nice, we need to spend some time with Dad every year and not expect the city to foot the bill for it. Keep up the good work...we and so many others do appreciate what you and your staff do.”
Community Centers - Des Moines has two multi-use community centers, located on opposite sides of the city to serve residents. These centers provide a place to learn, play, socialize, collaborate and belong.

Pioneer Columbus Community Center
Just minutes from downtown, the center serves as a neighborhood hub for people of all ages and hosts numerous recreation programs, weddings, receptions, birthday parties, funerals, showers and meetings throughout the year.

Robert L. Scott Four Mile Community Center
The center has an active weight room, a strong aerobics program, a well-attended senior walking club and is the nucleus for our youth basketball program. Both community centers are available for rentals, provide congregate meal sites for seniors aged 60 and over, warming and/or cooling centers during inclement weather, and host a number of Camp Fire and neighborhood meetings throughout the year. These facilities also host numerous youth and adult league sports throughout the year.

Dog Parks - Nearly 2,100 permits were sold for use at Des Moines off-leash dog park facilities in 2016. Annual permits are required and are available for purchase for just $20 at the City Clerk’s office in City Hall. The permit is good for all locations.

Dog park ambassadors are always needed at each park. Volunteer ambassadors help keep the parks safe by ensuring all patrons have their permit visible while using the facility, informing users of the facility rules and requirements and more. If you are interested in becoming a dog park ambassador, please email parksvolunteer@dmgov.org or call 515-237-1386.

Golf Courses - All three City of Des Moines public golf courses, A.H. Blank, Bright Grandview and Waveland, have affordable rates and vary in course design, ranging from tree placement and sand traps to green size, which offers golfers a different experience each round.

A.H. Blank Golf Course
Located at SW 9th and County Line Road, first opened in 1971 as a nine hole course, it then expanded to 18 in 1985. This course can be challenging as water and sand come into play on many of the holes, especially the front nine. Throughout the 6,700 yard course there are 31 sand traps and 10 water holes. Blank’s clubhouse features a full service deli, pro shop and banquet room. The course also has a driving range. Blank has a miniature golf course available for groups, parties or just individual fun.

Bright Grandview Golf Course
Located at 2401 East 29th Street, was built in 1902, making it one of the oldest courses in the country. Bright Grandview has a total yardage of 5,422 yards. The clubhouse, new in 2012, has a full bar and grill, pro shop and banquet room.

Waveland Golf Course
Located at 4908 University Avenue, is the oldest municipal golf course west of the Mississippi River, built in 1901. The entire course, which measures just over 6,500 yards, is on wooded hillsides surrounded by mature trees. Waveland also has a putting green available for practice. Golfers say this is the most difficult of the City’s three public golf courses. Waveland’s clubhouse is a vintage 1940’s red brick building, complete with a pro shop, banquet hall, full bar, concession counter and excellent food. The Waveland clubhouse was built in 1936 as a WPA project.

Commonalities of all three courses include Fat Joe’s Pizza, GPS systems in carts at Waveland and Blank and free sledding during the winter months. Besides being utilized for the corporate outings, tournaments and every day rounds of golf, all three clubhouses can be rented for your wedding, birthday party or holiday get together. For more information about any Des Moines public golf courses, please visit dmparks.org
Greenhouse - Des Moines Parks and Recreation owns and operates a 15,000 square foot greenhouse located at 2501 SE Maury. The vast majority of the labor needed for plant production is supplied by volunteers who donate thousands of hours to produce the annuals used to beautify the city. To volunteer, email parksvolunteer@dmgov.org.

Parks - The Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for the management of 76 parks across Des Moines. Besides the special features found in some of the signature parks (Ewing, Union, Greenwood, Gray's Lake and John and Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park) patrons can enjoy a variety of amenities such as:

- Basketball Courts
- Softball Fields
- Volleyball Courts
- Boat and Bicycle Rentals
- Enclosed and Open-Air Shelters
- Picnic Areas with Tables and Grills
- Natural Playscape
- Skate Park
- Soccer Fields
- Tennis Courts
- Concessions
- Disc Golf Courses
- Fishing Ponds
- Playgrounds
- Sledding Hills
- Nature Trails

Gray's Lake Park is the city's best-known and most-visited recreation area. The park has unique qualities and features that prove to be popular regardless of time of day or season of the year. The iconic 1,400 foot long Krudenier Trail Pedestrian Bridge over the lake is the park's most distinguishing feature. Even more dramatic at night, the bridge comes to life as a rainbow of colors light up its 16-foot-wide pathway and reflects off the dichroic glass panel railings. The 1.9-mile walk around Gray's Lake is known as “doing the loop” for some residents it is a daily ritual that even trail repairs and flooding won’t interrupt.

Shelters - Dispersed throughout the city, our department provides nine enclosed shelters and 43 open air shelters, some are available for reservation others are “first come, first serve” shelters. These facilities offer users the perfect location for birthdays, family reunions, baby showers, neighborhood meetings, meal sites and much more.
Sports Complexes -
Greater Des Moines Softball Complex
This complex is the premier facility in the area for adult softball play. Each year this site hosts the district and state Amateur Softball Association tournaments. In past years, national tournaments such as the North American Fastpitch Association, World Championships and the Senior Slow Pitch World Series have been held at the facility.

In addition, Des Moines Parks and Recreation’s adult softball leagues, consisting of nearly 400 teams, schedules nearly 2,500 league games yearly at this location.

The complex has four irrigated turf fields, all of which are lighted. All fields have scoreboards and bleacher seating. Other complex amenities include a playground, concession stand, maintenance facility and parking lot to accommodate up to 200 vehicles.

James W. Cownie Baseball Park
This park is one of the top baseball facilities in the area and hosts many local and national United States Specialty Sports Association tournaments. Each summer, this site hosts South Des Moines Little League with over 500 youth playing nearly 300 games.

The complex consists of eight irrigated turf youth fields, two of which are lit. All fields have scoreboards, and covered bleacher seating. Other complex amenities include a playground, batting cages, concession stand, new maintenance building and parking lots to accommodate up to 250 vehicles.

James W. Cownie Soccer Park
Cownie Soccer Park is the home field for Grandview University, Drake University, and local high schools including Roosevelt, Lincoln, East, Carlisle and Des Moines Christian. This renowned facility hosts many of the state’s most prestigious soccer events including the boys and girls high school state soccer tournaments, Menace Midwest Invitational, “Just for Girls” Spring Tournament and more. In addition, the complex has hosted the US Youth Soccer national tournament including Region II Championships and The Presidents Cup Tournament.

Cownie amenities include 12 irrigated turf fields, four of which are lit and have scoreboards. Field nine at the complex is considered championship level and consists of 2,000 seat bleachers, a press box and a video platform. The facility also has a 1,200-vehicle parking lot, concession stand, playground, and maintenance facility.

Trails - The 63 miles of paved multi-use and 18 soft surface nature trails are the most popular and most used amenities in the park system. Trails offer users a way to connect to places, nature, friends and culture. Trails aren’t just for exercise; numerous riders utilize trails for their daily commute. By reducing the number of cars on the road, those who bike reduce pollution and fossil fuel use. The result is cleaner air and healthier lungs for everyone.
- Pioneer Columbus and Four Mile Community Centers were both updated during 2016. The project at Four Mile focused on the expansion and renovation of the main multi-purpose room that included new flooring, paint and improved ventilation. In addition, a new welcome center and workstation for staff added greater visibility of activities. A new lobby/activity room, office space and enhanced workstations in the computer lab were also part of the project. Pioneer Columbus gained square footage by enclosing a space on the north side of the facility. One of the main walls has been removed to open up the entire lower level between the gyms. This space will now include a fitness room with new equipment, an expanded conference room upstairs and a new welcome center to allow staff greater viewing of the multiple areas of the building. The weight room has received new flooring, lighting, weight equipment and machines.

- An updated Gray's Lake Park Master Plan was approved by City Council in September. The Gray's Lake Park and Meredith Trail Advisory Committee contracted with Confluence Planning and Design to update the master plan. The goal of this update was to continue the success that the park has seen over the last 15 years by providing a blueprint for repairs and improvements. Proposed elements will strike a balance between park safety and the natural environment of the park. This updated master plan will also provide an agreed upon vision for the Committee and the City to use when allocating limited City funding and for prioritizing what projects the Committee will privately fundraise.

- Waveland Golf Course hole #3 underwent major renovations in 2016 to increase water flow during rain events, aid with the speed of play by allowing carts to drive on the turf and create a better golf experience. The project is part of a larger master plan to help support the watershed of the entire area in and around the course and Glendale Cemetery.

- Once a month during the school year, members of the Des Moines Police Department visited Four Mile Community Center for “Cops vs Kids.” This new recreation program is designed to provide a positive experience with law enforcement as well as keeping kids active. Wednesdays throughout the school year, due to early outs from Des Moines Public Schools, are the busiest and most well attended days at both our community centers.

- Members of the community 50 years of age and over were invited to participate in the inaugural “Senior Variety Show and Holiday Party” at Four Mile Community Recreation Center. Prizes such as seasonal items, poinsettias, and gift certificates were awarded for the “Smoothest Moves,” Most Creative Act,” and “Bravest Routine.” A free holiday-themed party and lunch followed the performances.

- Des Moines Parks and Recreation continued providing Monarch butterfly conservation efforts through education programs and increasing native pollinator habitat. Educational events in the spring and summer were held where participants learned about Monarch butterflies and other pollinator species, then created a personal flower pot containing both host plants and nectar plants that they took home with them. During one of these such events held at Gray’s Lake, the participants also helped establish a Butterfly Garden in the park. Then in the Fall, Monarch tagging programs where Monarch butterflies were captured, tagged

"After knee replacement surgery 5 years ago, I had to give up playing tennis. I thought my best days were behind me until one year ago a friend arranged for us to play a game of pickleball at Pioneer Columbus Community Center and I was hooked. I have been playing pickleball at Pioneer Columbus twice a week ever since that day. I love to play because it enriches my life. I get to meet wonderful people with interesting stories. I've been able to lose weight, gain a lot of friends, and have a ton of fun. I don't have to reserve a court or organize who I am going to play. I can just show up during the scheduled pickleball times, pay my fee and find a game. Thank you Des Moines Park and Recreation!"
with an identification marker and then released to continue on their migration were held at Union, Sargent, Gray's Lake, Franklin Gardens and Ewing Parks. Over 160 Monarchs were tagged and released by the end of October.

- Two new Blue Bird Box Trails were established at Woodland Cemetery and Laurel Hill Cemetery. During the nesting season, which lasts from March to August, volunteer monitors check the boxes once a week.

Summary for 2016

- 78 Boxes
- 140 Blue Birds Fledged – increase of 86 from previous year
- 27 Tree Swallows
- 53 Wrens
- 15 Chickadees

If a house sparrow nest or other animal are found in the box, they will be removed. When Blue Birds or other native species nest and raise young in the boxes, the monitors keep track of how many eggs are laid, how many young survive and fledge from the box, the dates of when it happens, which boxes are being used and if there is some kind of predation, they try to identify what happened.

- 2016 was the inaugural year of the Monarch Monitoring program. Over thirty volunteers signed up to monitor larval monarchs at three parks across Des Moines. Monarch Monitoring was launched in partner with the University of Minnesota’s Monarch Monitoring Lab. All of the data collected by our volunteers was shared with the University, helping them gain a national perspective on monarch populations and movement, and helping us understand how local conservation efforts can help save endangered pollinators. If you would like more information on how to participate in the program, email parksvolunteer@dmgov.org or call 515-237-1386.

- For the third consecutive year, dog park permit sales surpassed 2000 with the 2016 total reaching 2029.

- Slide restoration and repair for all slides in the system through a certified contractor.

- Yoga in the Park was held at Union Park and Western Gateway Park, as well as Gray’s Lake Park. Following yoga in July and August was a new offering called the “Summer Sampler” which highlighted a variety of wellness opportunities.

Programs that experienced growth:

- Increased pool attendance by 2%
- Increased swim lesson participation by 2%
- Increased Wading and Splash pool attendance by 2%
- Record number of summer bags teams from 30 up to 39 teams
- 40% increase in pee wee soccer participation.
- Ultimate frisbee participation numbers almost tripled
- Fall bags league had a record number of teams
- Youth flag football had a 50% increase of participation
- Adult flag football had a 20% increase of participation
- Adult basketball had a 50% participation increase
- Earth Day Trash Bash, Iowa’s largest Earth Day volunteer event was held Friday, April 22. This year 1,565 registered volunteers cleared away nearly 40,000 pounds of litter, debris, removed invasive species from 60 project locations. The estimated combined value of volunteerism and sponsors (cash and in-kind) was over $169,000 for the day.

- The Natural Resources and Heavy Equipment crews, collaborated with Public Works to repair a section of the 4 Mile Creek stream bank where high water caused erosion to within a few feet of the Gay Lea Wilson trail. The Natural Resources Crew cut 500 7-9 foot live willow stakes that you can see in the before picture, rolled 480 square yards of erosion fabric, inserted 300 live siltation stakes and planted 62 1 gallon native shrubs.

- Community volunteers and the cemetery team members completed a pilot project for veterans’ stones in September. Over four days, 128 volunteers assisted staff in lifting and straightening 2,425 in-ground stones, placing new underlayment materials and leveling stones. The city provided supplies and equipment. As the movement grew and more volunteers joined in, nearly 3,000 headstones were repaired. The estimated value of volunteer service is approximately $15,000. In addition, 21 donors contributed $5,500 to support the purchase of tools, materials and supplies.

- The forestry mulcher cleared 98 acres of overgrown areas throughout the park system at the following locations:
  - Pioneer Park
  - Waveland Golf Course
  - MacRae Park
  - Glendale Cemetery
  - Des Moines River Trail

- The cemetery team is utilizing digital maps instead of outdated paper copies. When team members need to find a burial site, they now simply locate the map on the IPad onsite and zoom in to find a burial lot. The tools saves time and calls from the field to the office regarding burial locations.

"It has been a pleasure to work with Ben Page and his staff on the journey towards creating the Becky Zallek Disc Golf Course at Prospect Park! This effort hasn’t been without obstacles but we’ve worked well together and overcome them each and every time. I am so thankful for their continued support of disc golf and their dedication to this worthy initiative. My sister-in-law, the late Becky Zallek, was a tireless proponent of disc golf in the Des Moines area, and would have been extremely honored to see this beautiful park being enjoyed by so many people in her name!"
The National Bicycle & Pedestrian Documentation Project was conducted for the seventh time in September. Over three days, 55 volunteers counted nearly 9,000 bicyclists and pedestrians at 28 locations. Notable findings include:

- Average estimated annual uses at individual trail locations were nearly 345,000 - an increase of over 100,000 from September 2015.
- There were two sites with over 1 million annual uses:
  - Walnut Creek Trail at Bill Riley Trail
  - Kruidenier Trail at Gray's Lake Beach
- Youth basketball leagues, presented in partnership with Des Moines Public Schools, held the Final Four Championship at Drake University's Knapp Center.
- Youth flag football leagues, presented in partnership with Des Moines Public Schools, held the championship games at Principal Park.

Meredith and Rebuilding Together chose Redhead Park as their project site this year. In one day 100 people donated $17,670 in volunteer labor to transform this neighborhood park. Work included:

- New playground equipment (valued at more than $70,000)
- Landscaping around historical marker
- Tree Planting
- Updated basketball court with custom mural
- New sidewalk
- New park signage, benches and bike racks

- A new sprayground and playground were added to Greenwood Park this year thanks to the generous donations from Dan and Mary Kelly Family Foundation and Bergman Academy.

- The historic Fifth Street Bridge reopened to bike and pedestrian late this year after local advocates and businesses raised the $2.3 million needed to restore the structure.

- Since the road in Pioneer Park had deteriorated to a condition that was beyond repair, the entire road was removed and replaced. The project included new asphalt paving with concrete curbs and parking areas, new picnic areas with tables and grills, a new overlook plaza with a view of downtown, and new sidewalks to provide ADA access to all of the park’s facilities.

- Two projects were completed on the Glendale Abbey this year. The first project was the restoration of the exterior, which included the repair of the existing stone, mortar joint repair, and stone cleaning. The exterior restoration was done by Innovative Masonry Restoration, LLC out of Kansas City, Kansas. The second project was a new roof and metal roof flashing for the Abbey.

- Tennis courts were resurfaced at Burke Park and Brody School Park.

“\[MILESTONES\]

I guess you could call me a frequent trail user. I use the trails for biking and running. They are an incredible asset to the community.

From a pragmatic standpoint they are a source of transportation, improved health, sightseeing and tourism and education (a friend recently gave some tips on where to find the best mulberries along the trails).

From a less pragmatic standpoint, they’re just fun. They get me out of my neighborhood and into others around town.

One of my favorite things to do is hop on the bike and head to Principal Park for a ball game. It doesn’t get any better than that.

We use the trails year-round and last year I started using the trails for winter biking — a whole new experience I highly recommend.

I am eagerly anticipating more trail connections around Easter Lake and elsewhere.

As we learned with the Walnut Creek trail several years ago, and more recently with the Gay Lee Wilson trail “connections are crucial.” The more we link up our trails and those feeding into Des Moines, more cyclists and hikers and runners and skaters will be able to enjoy them.

It’s great knowing I can hop on a bike and safely get to Principal Park, great restaurants, Easter Lake, Birdland, Downtown, Saylorville, Water Works Park and thousands of other destinations.

Winter cycling and hiking seem to be really taking off and the trails that used to be abandoned from December to March are filling up with people who won’t let wind chills or snow stop them from enjoying the ride.”

KEVIN COONEY
Trail projects included:
- McHenry Trail Connection to Inter-Urban Trail
- Great Western Trail Extension
- Neal Smith Trail Renovation, Phase 1
- Closure Gates Installed
- Birdland Trail connection

- March brought the NCAA Men’s Basketball Tournament to Des Moines as well as “Park Madness,” an online contest which encouraged residents and park lovers to vote their park through to the finals in a bracket-style tournament. The field of 64 parks and facilities was narrowed down through six rounds of voting, with Union Park selected as the winner.

- Two private groups kicked off fundraising projects for MacRae and Riverview Park. At MacRae Park, efforts are underway to add a new scenic overlook to the north side of the park, facing downtown. Riverview Park seeks to build an outdoor music venue with the capacity to hold 10,000 people. Interested donors can find information on both projects at dmparks.org.

- New outdoor exercise equipment was installed at Martin Luther King Jr. Park, courtesy of a generous donation from AARP of Iowa and volunteers from Habitat for Humanity. The equipment is located between the wading pool and the restroom building in the southeast corner of the park and allows parents the opportunity to workout while keeping an eye on their children enjoying the wading pool. Similar installations can be found at Franklin Field and Evergreen Park.

- The annual celebration of National Parks and Recreation Month took a new turn with the introduction of “Tour DM Parks.” During the month of July, residents were invited to get out and to take a tour of our parks, trails and facilities and then share their experiences via social media (Facebook, Twitter or Instagram). The tour consisted of 31 designated locations. Participants were asked to document their visit with a photo and then share it with the official contest hashtag #tourdmparks to be entered. Over 1,500 individual photos were submitted and 62 contestants competed in the final quiz for our grand prizes.

Comments from Participants:
- “What I love about this tour is finding spots in Des Moines I never knew existed even after living here almost six years!”
- “Witmer Park...How did I not know this was here?”
- “We hit all 31 stops on the Tour. It was a great way to explore Des Moines. I hope Des Moines Parks does this again next year.”
- “Westchester Park - Another hidden gem! I taught summer school at Hoover for about 10 years and until today I never knew this beauty was here!”
- “30.5 hours of playing at all 31 parks. Thank you for reminding us how vital parks are to every neighborhood.”

- Music Camp, collaboration between the Des Moines Music Coalition and Des Moines Parks and Recreation, returned this summer with increased enrollment. Students spent parts of two weeks learning from local musicians and music educators about music history and performance. Groups and bands were formed to develop music they performed at two live concerts. Participants performed at Historic Roosevelt Auditorium as well the once-in-a-lifetime chance to strut their stuff on the Generation Z stage at the 80/35 Music Festival. Each concert showcased the diligent work of the participants and instructors.
- In 2016 the Department began to utilize the City’s geographic information system (GIS) to better track the maintenance and upkeep of the park system. GIS allows the Parks and Recreation Department to map and collect data about the park system and assist in providing better data to make more informed decisions and recommendations to elected and appointed officials. Real-time tracking of the department’s mowing was implemented in 2016. At any given time this technology allows staff to know when each area of the park system was mowed, how many times it has been mowed this season and can be compiled to track historical trends of mowing across the park system.

The success of this implementation will allow the Parks and Recreation Department to better respond to citizen needs and requests while making best use of the funding allocated for the upkeep of the park system.

In 2017 the Department looks to expand use of this technology to flower beds, trash collection, cemetery management and an inventory of the park system’s assets.

- Community Garden Highlights:
  - Total Plots 218
  - Total Gardeners 176
  - Total Refugee Gardeners 38