

RECREATION, SPORTS AND LEISURE

“If people concentrated on the really important things in life, there’d be a shortage of fishing poles.”

Doug Larson

Springfield and Greene County have been recognized again and again for the quality programs that the recreation, sports and leisure community provides its citizens. One of the most prestigious was in May 2007 when the World Health Organization designated Springfield a “Safe Community” in recognition of its efforts to create and maintain a safe and healthy community for all citizens.

These recreation opportunities know no boundaries, serving all ages and abilities of citizens as spectators, participants and athletes. Residents enjoy an enhanced quality of life 365 days a year because of the recreation, sports and leisure activities in our region.

PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND GREENWAYS.

Springfield and Greene County residents value parks, open space and greenways; these were among the first elements of the Vision 20/20 Comprehensive Plan. Citizens continue to demonstrate support by twice passing sales taxes for parks. In 2006, the tax was renewed by voters so subsequent phases of the plan could be finished.

The Springfield-Greene County parks system surpasses both the quality and quantity of facilities and programs in peer cities. Recognized as a Gold Medal Award Winner by the National Recreation and Park Association, the Springfield park system was also recognized by NRPA in 2007 as one of 37 park agencies in the U.S. that have shown “dynamic leadership to advance community health and livability.”

The Park Board oversees more than 90 city-county parks and facilities covering 3,600 acres. These include state-of-the-art facilities such as Jordan Valley Park and the Chesterfield and Doling family centers.

The growth of this system provides the opportunity to host local, national and international competition, directly impacting the local economy. For example, Springfield is a host city for the 2007 Tour of Missouri, a new international professional cycling event that ranks among the nation’s top three cycling events. In any given year, softball, tennis,

golf, hockey, soccer, volleyball and Community Olympic Development Programs generate more than 8,000 sleeping room reservations.

Jordan Valley Park is regarded as the catalyst for center city revitalization. The two-rink Jordan Valley Ice Park was the first facility completed under Vision 20/20 and serves as a cornerstone



for Jordan Valley Park, which includes Hammons Field, the Expo Center, the Creamery Arts Center, Springfield Rotary K-Park (an outdoor classroom) and Founders Park. Development of Jordan Valley Park continues; once completed, it will encompass more than 200 acres.

Vision 20/20 continues to inspire the creation of new parks, facilities, services and trails. Ground-breakings in 2007 alone included Rutledge-Wilson Farm, Lost Hill Park, Valley Water Mill Park and Lake Springfield Park.

Springfield is one of only eight Community Olympic Development Program sites in the United States. Sanctioned by the U.S. Olympic Committee, the CODP provides athletes access to the nation’s best facilities, programs, coaches and competition to enhance their ability to compete in Olympic sanctioned sports. These programs are currently held at Cooper Park, Jordan Valley Ice Park, Doling Family Center, Chesterfield Family Center and St. John’s Sports Medicine Health Tracks.

Rivercut, a premier public golf course, consistently ranks in the top five public courses in the state of Missouri.

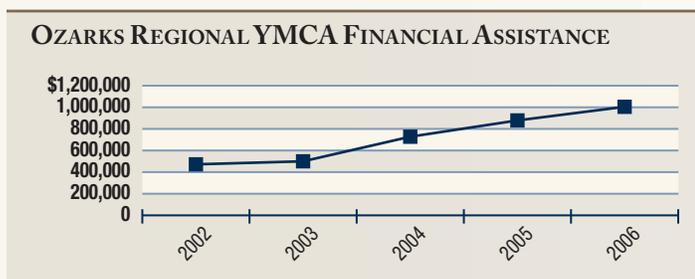
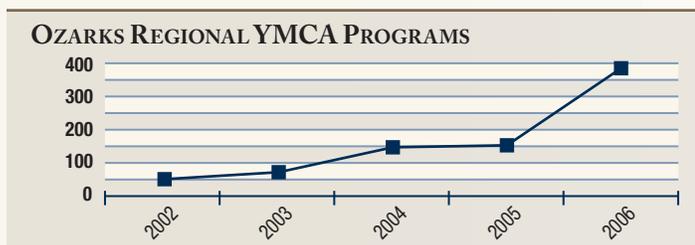
PARTNERSHIPS. The Springfield-Greene County Park Board, Ozarks Regional YMCA and Boys & Girls Clubs of Springfield have each broadened their scope with special programs that focus on childhood development, families and needs of the Springfield R-12 school system.

SPARC. The school-park concept, School Parks Are Reaching Communities (SPARC), is supported by a park sales tax aimed at the development of 27 school parks over a 25-year period. The schools use the parks during the day and the City-County park system provides programs before and/or after school. In 2007, the Park Board is on track to complete SPARC parks at six schools.

In addition to regular programs, SPARC began a walking program to target childhood obesity. The Step Club involves about 2,000 students and parents each week in 25 schools.

OZARKS REGIONAL YMCA. In 2006, Ozarks Regional YMCA provided 385 programs and awarded over \$1 million in financial assistance to children and families. Prime Time, a before and after school child care program, serves 2,260 children daily at 43 schools.

In response to the nation's obesity problem, Ozarks Regional is one of 30 YMCAs in the U.S. participating in a pilot program to reduce obesity and promote healthy living. Also, a mobile YMCA unit takes healthy activities into neighborhoods.



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS. Children ages 6 to 18 participate in activities on three campuses. In 2007, attendance is expected to increase 10 to 15% due to remodeling of the Musgrave unit and a new Henderson unit.

PROFESSIONAL/COLLEGIATE TEAMS. Springfield Cardinals, Double A minor league franchise of the St. Louis Cardinals; Price Cutter Charity Championship, a PGA event; Springfield Lasers, World Team Tennis; Springfield WolfPack, professional indoor football; and Missouri State University, Division 1



NCAA, combine with Drury University, Evangel University, Central Baptist Bible College and Baptist Bible College to provide sports entertainment.

SPORTS MUSEUMS. Missouri Sports Hall of Fame and Missouri Softball Museum preserve and highlight our unique sports history through permanent and interactive displays. The History Museum for Springfield-Greene County also features sports exhibits.

OZARK GREENWAYS. Springfield's planned network of trails and greenways calls for 130 trail miles, with completion to date of 85 miles, connecting citizens with areas of interest like Wilson's Creek National Battlefield and Springfield Conservation Nature Center.

WATERWAYS. Nearby lakes and rivers offer water enthusiasts a wide choice of activities. The world's largest sporting goods store, Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World, was started in Springfield. Next door is Wonders of Wildlife Museum & Aquarium.

CAVES. Riverbluff Cave has been internationally recognized as the oldest fossil cave in North America; fossils date back at least 830,000 years and possibly over one million years. Rocks and mud sealed the cave for about 55,000 years until 2001 when a construction crew blasted a hole in one end while building a roadway. Other caves are Crystal Cave and Fantastic Caverns.

LIBRARY. Springfield-Greene County Library District's two destination libraries, the Library Center and the Library Station, and its other six branches offer summer reading clubs, free programs and concerts and an educational toy collection for preschoolers.

SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY LIBRARY ACTIVITY		
	2005	2006
Visits	1,626,184	1,632,927
Program attendance	76,454	83,946
Checkouts	3,156,468	3,232,679

DISCOVERY CENTER. The Discovery Center has become the premier science education resource in Southwest Missouri, offering interactive exhibits, programs, special events, videoconferencing, outreach programs and professional development. Through a recent expansion project, Discovery Center has led the way in sustainable design and construction with a LEED-Certified Gold building. *(See Natural Environment section.)*

DICKERSON PARK ZOO. The Dickerson Park Zoo has seen tremendous growth over the past decade thanks to public and private donations. Recognized for its contributions to Asian elephant research, the zoo celebrated the birth of an elephant calf, Nisha, in July, 2006. It is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and participates in several Species Survival Plans for endangered and threatened species.