

Recreation, Sports & Leisure

Recreation, sports and leisure activities are *essential components of a balanced and healthy lifestyle*, leading to healthy individuals and a healthy society. A stronger overall community results from contributions towards improved physical and mental health. Involvement in recreational sports and leisure activities has *social benefits* by creating opportunities that encourage neighbors and fellow citizens to connect, instilling a personal investment in the community. Opportunities for *improved social capital* exist through these many activities and organizations that support them.

Recreation in the natural environment allows for the development of positive behaviors in regard to environmental appreciation, conservation, and stewardship. Recreation, sports and leisure activities are important social, cultural, and economic opportunities that help shape the Springfield community.

BLUE RIBBONS

Springfield-Greene County Library

The Springfield-Greene County Library District has 10 branches and the Mobile Library. Daily preschool storytimes focus on early literacy at the branches. Offsite tween and teen activities encourage creative expression, and electronic resources provide homework help and sophisticated research. All ages are welcome to the Summer Reading Program, live concerts, book discussions, live theater, and art exhibits. The branches are a convenient, comfortable place for study and exploration complete with free Wi-Fi and public computers.

Initiatives and Programs

The Healthy Living Alliance (HLA) and Triple Play program demonstrate the collaboration needed to confront the obesity red flag cited in this and previous Community Focus reports.

The Healthy Living Alliance was founded in



Kids participate in hip-hop dance classes at Williams Elementary School.

2011 by Jordan Valley Community Health Center, Ozarks Regional YMCA, and the Springfield-Greene County Health Department. HLA is now a partnership of more than 30 community-minded organizations working together to reduce obesity and tobacco use in our community. The first two years have focused on connecting existing partner programs and resources with specific health needs in low-income schools and worksites.

In 2012, a \$1.3 million Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Small Community Transformation Grant was awarded to the Ozarks Regional YMCA to help Springfield cultivate healthy eating, active living, and healthy and safe physical environments. Grant activities will bolster the Healthy Living Alliance's impact through data collection and sharing, farm-to-school planning, and community-wide aid and education for evidence-based health strategies across multiple sectors.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Springfield has partnered with multiple universities and mental health professionals to provide Triple Play, a comprehensive wellness plan for the mind, body, and soul. This initiative improves overall health through programming and planned activities to educate and assist children's physical and social well-being in all areas.

Urban garden programs continue to provide local, sustainable, and nutritious choices for families. The Grant Beach Community Garden is located between Grant Beach Park and Weaver Elementary, where nearly 95 percent of the students participate in free or reduced-cost lunch programs. As a result, this Center City garden is well situated to benefit residents.

Parks, Open Space and Greenways

Residents have long understood and continue to demonstrate the value and importance of parks, open space and greenways. Celebrating its centennial in 2013, the then-named Springfield Park Board was established May 22, 1913 after Springfield voters overwhelmingly approved a mill tax for the establishment and maintenance of free public parks and playgrounds. The Park Board took over maintenance of Washington and Lafayette Parks, both established in 1869, and set about planning new parks. The next 30 years involved the development of parks, now considered Springfield's Historic Parks, with additional growth occurring since the 1950s. In 1996, voters approved the expansion of the park system and the name changed to Springfield-Greene County Park Board. In serving the residents of Springfield-Greene County, the Park Board oversees more than 100 city-county parks and facilities encompassing some 3,600 acres.

The Springfield-Greene County Park system is a National Recreation and Park Association Gold Medal award-winning department. Springfield and Greene County are privileged with a Park system that far surpasses both the quality and quantity of facilities and programs typical of municipalities this size and larger.

Park Improvements and Additions

Jenny Lincoln Park received a fully accessible playground through a partnership between the Kiwanis Club of Downtown Springfield and the Park Board. The playground incorporates both play and exercise components. The equipment helps develop upper and lower body strength, balance, and cognitive abilities.

The Dan Kinney Family Center is the Park Board's third Family Center, expanding family fitness and recreation opportunities to eastern Springfield and Greene County. The two-level, 35,279-square-foot facility is located at Dan Kinney Park, also the home to The Betty and Bobby Allison Miracle League Ball Field. The Family Center includes a full-size gymnasium, indoor 1/16-mile walking/running track, fitness center and

SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY LIBRARY ACTIVITY

	Circulation	Attendance	Programs	Attendance
2006	3,232,679	1,632,927	1,979	47,043
2007	3,373,550	1,635,204	2,013	46,190
2008	3,626,792	1,678,868	4,640	52,473
2009	3,964,937	1,989,866	3,022	52,663
2010	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2011	3,758,274	1,999,595	2,805	64,553

Source: Springfield-Greene County Library



An accessible playground is now open at Jenny Lincoln Park.



Kids enjoy Doling Aquatics Center.

weight room, aerobics room, game room, childcare, community room, and locker rooms. The Dan Kinney Family Center offers fitness and dance classes, sports programs, access to personal trainers, childcare, health assessments, seminars, the Healthways SilverSneakers fitness program, and the new Fitness on Request interactive group fitness video module with a variety of programs. The building is designed to meet LEED Silver Certification and could accommodate future construction of an aquatics addition.

For three years in a row, public pools have set records in attendance. Unusually high temperatures in June–July 2012 contributed partially to the jump in attendance. Additionally, pool hours were extended, operating seven days a week without raising admission prices, which have remained the same since 2009. Chesterfield Family Center also was made available to the public at outdoor pool rates. The new Doling aquatics addition opened in February 2013. The indoor addition features three pools that include a 25-meter, three-lane lap pool, a zero-depth entry pool with a water slide, aqua arch sprays, pools and falls play feature, water umbrella, basketball goal, and whirlpool spa.

Trails and Waterways

The Springfield area is fortunate to have access to trails, caves, lakes, and rivers. Protection of these resources is imperative (see Natural Environment section).

Since the 2011 Community Focus report, Springfield Public Works, the Greene County Commission, and Parks have worked to complete four lake, stream, and waterway improvements in excess of \$8.8 million with two additional projects in progress.

Trails and greenways continue to connect the community and special areas of interest. In 2011–2012, construction was completed on the Trail of Tears Greenway in southwest Springfield and new trail segments in Fassnight Park and on the Wilson’s Creek Greenway south of Rutledge Wilson Farm Park. The heavily used and much anticipated Galloway Creek Greenway reopened at U.S. 60/65 in October 2012, after being closed for three years for the highway interchange redesign.

Children in Nature Challenge

First Lady Georganne Nixon recognized Springfield as the first community in Missouri to achieve the Children in Nature Challenge. Created by executive order, this initiative challenges Missouri communities to take action by increasing awareness of opportunities to connect to nature, encouraging the use of nature-based curriculum in schools, and partnering with local organizations and businesses to connect children with nature.

“Children benefit physically, mentally and even spiritually by reconnecting with nature, and we need to provide them with the opportunities to do so. Springfield has done an amazing job of creating an environment that encourages children to get outdoors and enjoy nature. They are setting a good example for other communities to follow.”

—Georganne Nixon, Missouri’s First Lady

Economic Impact

The Springfield Cardinals AA minor league franchise, Springfield Lasers of World Team Tennis, Springfield Voodoo professional indoor football franchise, Community Olympic Development Program, combined with Missouri State University, Drury University, Evangel University, Central Baptist Bible College, and Baptist Bible College, lead the way in providing year-round sports entertainment while adding to the local economy. A separate economic impact study concluded the Springfield-Greene County Park Board generates an estimated \$13–\$15 million for the local economy by hosting more than 50 national, state and regional championship tournaments every year.

RED FLAGS

Obesity

Identified as a red flag since the 2007 Community Focus report, obesity remains a concern for the Springfield-Greene County community. Obesity continues in epidemic proportions for our country with Greene County’s rate remaining higher than the national average (see Community Health section). While many organizations and agencies are focusing on this red flag through collaboration and extensive programs, addressing



Fassnight Park’s completed Waterway/Stormwater Improvement Project.

obesity still requires additional and ongoing support.

Securing Green Space and Conservation

As stated in previous Community Focus reports, the need to secure green space and set aside parks for wildlife habitat and recreation is a long-term concern. Conservation and stewardship of the environment impact quality of community waterways and assistance with air pollution. Due to urban sprawl, this red flag will continue to increase in importance.

Economic Conditions

Recognized as a red flag in the 2009 Community Focus report, concerns regarding economic conditions remain largely unchanged. While there has been significant increase in use, agencies are faced with limited resources to match this increased demand.

The Greene County Commission elected to defer renewal of the 2006 ¼-cent county-wide parks and stormwater sales tax in light of current economic conditions. One-eighth-cent of this tax subsequently expired June 30, 2012. At the request of the Springfield-Greene County Park Board and other Greene County municipalities, the Greene County Commission may consider this important issue in the near future.

The county-wide sales tax generated \$10 million annually for Springfield-Greene County parks, stormwater projects, and for the communities of Ash Grove, Battlefield, Fair Grove, Republic, Rogersville, Strafford, Walnut Grove, and Willard. The expiring ¼-cent portion generated approximately \$5 million per year in new capital projects, development, and construction. The economic impact of not renewing the parks and stormwater sales tax includes the lack of funding for new capital projects as well as improvements to existing properties. This decision jeopardizes a commensurate level of construction and capital development for the area, which has been present for the last 10 years. Unfortunately, the current economic situation has postponed improvements to both City and County parks and stormwater projects. It also has hindered the community’s ability to successfully complete the second half of the 20-year Parks Master Plan for Springfield-Greene County.