

# Recreation, Sports and Leisure

In Springfield-Greene County, there's a leisure activity or sport for everyone. Jordan Valley Park, in the center city, is a crown jewel. It has the Expo Center; Jordan Valley Ice Park, which has two sheets of NHL ice; Hammons Field, home of the Springfield Cardinals AA Minor League Baseball Franchise; and Founders Park, where Springfield began.

## Parks, Open Space, and Greenways

Springfield and Greene County residents value parks, open space and greenways; these areas were included in the first Vision 20/20 project, a grass roots strategic planning initiative, and were the first of the Vision 20/20 plan components approved. Voters approved a five-year ¼ cent sales tax to fund implementation. Because of the rapid rate of development in and around Springfield, there is a race to secure green space and set aside parks for wildlife habitat and citizen recreation.

More than 80 City-County Parks cover over 2,600 acres. These include historical and state-of-the-art facilities such as Dickerson Park Zoo, Chesterfield and Doling Family and Aquatics Centers, Japanese Stroll Garden, Nathanael Greene/Close Memorial Park, and Cooper Park.

The Springfield-Greene County Park System is a National Recreation and Park Association Gold Medal Award-Winning Department. Community-wide efforts garnered the city recognition as the *Sports Illustrated* Sportstown for Missouri, partly because the area boasts numerous sports facilities. Those include Cooper Park, which has facilities for tennis, soccer, baseball and softball, and is the stadium home of the World Team Tennis Springfield Lasers Professional Tennis Team; Jordan Valley Ice Park; and the park system, which supports three Municipal Golf Courses and two

Junior Courses providing year-round golfing activities. Rivercut Golf Course, a premier public course, was ranked in the top five Missouri Golf Courses for the past three years.

Vision 20/20 supported the creation of numerous new parks

and 75 miles of trails and facilities. New parkland acquisition and land partnerships over the last year have included Rutledge-Wilson Farm, Lost Hill Property, and the cooperative use of the Valley Water Mill property in north Springfield.



2005 was the inaugural year for the Springfield Cardinals, a AA minor league franchise of the St. Louis Cardinals organization. Attendance has exceeded expectations, with the Springfield Cardinals in the top ten of all minor league cities.

The Springfield-Greene County Library District's commitment to public service is exemplary. Computerized reference services, Walking Books visits to the homebound, summer reading clubs for kids and teens, a circulating educational toy collection, and extensive programming are just a few of the services that make the Library District a popular destination.

Library Usage	2004	2005
Circulation	2,990,000	3,156,468
Attendance	1,583,213	1,626,184
Programs (Attendance)	2,628 (70,369)	2,665 (73,789)

Springfield was recognized as one of 23 communities in the nation for efforts in becoming a bicycle-friendly community. Bike trails contribute substantially to the community's overall quality of life; the miles of trails and bike lanes highlight the area's progress.

	2003	2004
Miles of bike trails	37	40
Miles of bike lanes	52	58

## Schools-Parks Collaboration

The School-Park concept, backed by the 2001 ¼-cent sales tax, will support 23 school parks over a 25-year period. To date, seven of those school parks are completed. The schools use the parks during the day and the parks provide programs after school.

## Recreation and Leisure Activities

The variety of recreation and leisure activities available is impressive. Here is a partial listing:

*The Springfield Family YMCA*, in our community for 116 years, has over 20,000 memberships and served 567,769 people throughout the Ozarks in 2004. More than \$726,700 in scholarships was provided to children and



families in need. The youth sports program is non-competitive. Programs include childcare, fitness, youth and adult sports, swimming, and arts and humanities programs. Prime Time, the YMCA's before- and after-school childcare program, serves nearly 2,000 children daily, providing 27% of licensed day care in Springfield.

*The Boys & Girls Clubs of Springfield* has three campuses open to boys and girls, 6 to 18, who pay annual fees to participate in Club programs. Scholarship funds help children who cannot afford the fees. Boys & Girls Clubs serve more than 3,500 young people annually, averaging 500 youth daily during the school year and 800 during the summer.

*Springfield-Greene County Library District* has nationally recognized destination facilities, such as the Library Center and Library Station, which attract more than 20,000 patrons each week.

*Wilson Creek National Battlefield*, site of an important Civil War battle, offers a 13-minute film, a six-minute fiber optics map program, a bookstore, a walking tour of the battlefield, and excellent Civil War research library.

*Springfield Lake*, a public recreation area, offers fishing and boating (six-horsepower limit).

*Fellows Lake* is popular for sailing and fishing, especially for largemouth bass (40-horsepower limit). Muskie were stocked in 1996 and 1999.

*McDaniel Lake*, a reservoir north of Springfield, allows bank fishing.

*Fantastic Caverns* is a guided, all-riding tour of an ancient underground riverbed filled with massive formations in natural limestone.

*Crystal Cave* has natural walking paths.

*Springfield Conservation Nature Center*, with nature exhibits and three miles of hiking trails, provides free conservation and educational activities for all ages.

*The Discovery Center*, an interactive, hands-on science, center presents hands-on experiments in science, earth science and energy.

*Founders Park* has a historical timeline mural depicting Springfield events over the last 100 years and an amphitheater for outdoor movies and live performances.

*Wonders of Wildlife*, a 92,000-square-foot blend of museum and aquarium, hosts nearly 250 species of live animals.

*Springfield Art Museum*, Springfield's oldest cultural institution, has eight galleries of fine art exhibits.

*History Museum for Springfield and Greene County*, in historic City Hall, is dedicated to preserving the region's unique history. Permanent exhibits trace local history from prehistoric times through the 1950s.

*Missouri Sports Hall of Fame* features interactive displays and autographed memorabilia.

*The Softball Museum* displays softball paraphernalia dating to the 1920s, highlighting state, regional and national tournaments.

*Springfield Skate Park* has both an indoor park and 25,000-square foot concrete park with great spectator seating.

*Riverbluff Cave* was acknowledged in 2005 as the oldest fossil cave in North America.