



Green Places

Fall 2004 • Kent County Parks Department

Millennium Park Officially Dedicated

Millennium Park celebrated its grand opening and first full summer season with an all-day community celebration July 2.

Sun, sand and sparkling water were just three of the reasons for hundreds of smiles on the beach, volleyball courts, playground and Splash Pad. From tiny tots to seasoned seniors, park visitors from throughout Kent County enjoyed the many activities and features the park has to offer.

A sand sculpture contest on the beach produced an interesting assortment of critters, statues and castles. A mermaid, resting in the sand, took first prize.

"We wanted to have a full-fledged, community-wide party to commemorate the official dedication of Millennium Park," said volunteer Bob Tuuk who organized the event. "So many people have worked so hard, for so long, to make it a reality. The citizens of Kent County are fortunate to have such an incredible resource to enjoy."



Millennium Park has hosted thousands of visitors during the summer 2004 season. Some families made the park a regular weekly outing.

"This is the perfect place for a picnic and a day out of the house," said one mother of three. "Instead of playing video games or watching TV, the kids are out here running and laughing and climbing for hours. And after a day here, they don't even put up a fight at bedtime."

Visit Millennium Park Anytime:
www.millennium-park.org



Park visitors of all ages soaked up the sun, painted tiles, splashed on the pad, and played in the sand during Millennium Park's dedication celebration.



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"We do not inherit the land from our fathers. We borrow it from our children."
— Native American Adage

KENT COUNTY PARKS FOUNDATION

Thanks to the foresight of generations past, Kent County is blessed with a rich variety of park lands. For the sake of future generations, we must continue to protect and preserve our precious waters, forests and open land.

In the face of continued population growth, loss of farmland and urban sprawl, it's still possible to save pristine natural lands by investing in the development of new county parks.

Please use the attached envelope to help us preserve precious natural resources in Kent County today.

**SEND YOUR TAX-DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO:
Kent County Parks Foundation
P.O. Box 230165
Grand Rapids, MI 49523-0165**

For a copy of our Kent County Parks Foundation Brochure call (616) 336-PARK



Lakeside Trail Circles Pickerel Lake



The new boardwalk at Pickerel Lake provides a perfect place to cast a line.

Thanks to a grant from the Department of Natural Resources and the neighborly cooperation of Camp Roger, the Kent County Parks trail around Pickerel Lake is now a complete circle.

A new turnstile gets walkers, cyclists and strollers going in the right, clockwise direction on the trail, and a new boardwalk completes the loop.

"Out of concern for other property owners on the lake and traffic on their property, trail users are required to follow the trail in just one direction," said Roger Sabine, Kent County Parks director. "And now, this new link makes it possible to circle the entire lake."



Park Planned for Land of Two Rivers

In the world of county park development, there's land, and there's land. And then there's land with two rivers.

Like where the Coldwater and Thornapple Rivers flow together in Caledonia Township... 90 acres with rolling wooded upland, wetland, and 1,000 feet of frontage on both rivers.

"It's not often you can acquire the confluence of two rivers," said Roger Sabine, Kent County Parks director. "We are fortunate that Caledonia Township was so willing to partner with Kent County to try to make this happen."

Sabine said Kent County Parks has applied for a Department of Natural Resources grant to help fund the acquisition, but they are still looking for funding partners—businesses, families, organizations or governmental units—to cover the local share required by the end of the year.

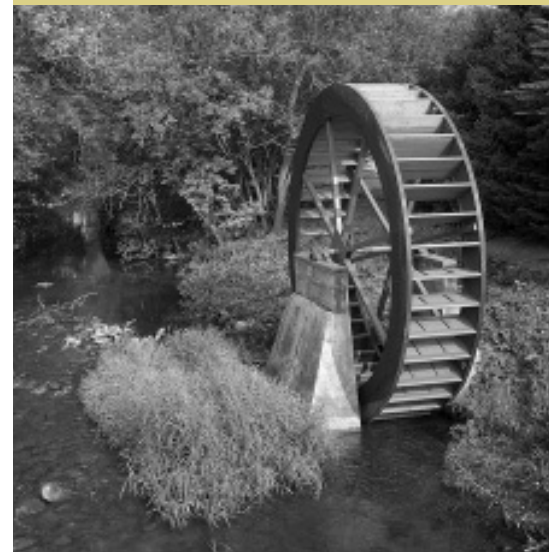
"If we're able to acquire this, as part of the development we could do a canoe and kayak launch," Sabine said. "You could put in at the launch, then paddle five miles downstream to 68th and Alaska, where we have a 209-acre parcel with a mile of frontage on the Thornapple Riverbend."

After losing one farm in that area to development, Kent County Parks worked with the Meijer Corporation to acquire and preserve the Thornapple Riverbend property. Meijer bought and held the land for two years, then sold it to Kent County when grant funding was available, taking no profit on the deal.

"We're fortunate to have partners like Caledonia Township and Meijer," Sabine said. "Their support is helping to preserve precious natural resources for future generations."

WATER WHEEL ROLLING AGAIN

Built in 1976 to commemorate the nation's bicentennial, the water wheel at Dwight Lydell Park, in Comstock Park was given new life this year with a fortified steel frame and fresh wood facing.



Summer Tales Go Up In Smoke

At Lamoreaux Park, a phenomenon known as the BARD'S BONFIRE has become a summer tradition.

In the small park just off Coit in Plainfield Township, 50 to 100 listeners gathered around a bonfire during the last Friday night in June, July and August. Night after night, they were entertained by the tales of the Story Spinners, people who continue the time-honored tradition of telling, and retelling, the stories that color our culture.

The weekly event drew crowds of all ages. From young families to senior citizens, from baby boomers to gen Xers, people from all walks and stages of life participated.

"This is the kind of event you'd expect in New York's Central Park," said one guest. "Who would have guessed it was happening in Grand Rapids?"



An animated storyteller captures the crowd's attention during a Friday night bonfire at Lamoreaux Park.

TRAILS UPDATE

Connecting the County Trails Connects County Residents

Since the late 1980s, an extensive trail system has been growing foot by foot, year by year, throughout Kent County.

Now home to one of the largest trail networks in West Michigan, Kent County is crossed by the White Pine Trail and the North Country Scenic Trail, with work progressing on the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail. By the spring of 2005, it will be possible to travel from the Kent City limits to the Barry County line... without leaving the trail.

Kent County Parks has led the way. As a leader in planning and developing a cohesive trail system, Kent County Parks has worked diligently with other governmental agencies to acquire corridors, coordinate partners, secure funding and negotiate construction agreements.

The result is a community asset that one frequent trail user calls a

"secret highway system."

"You just don't realize how cool it is until you start using it," he said "There's no road rage out here... people on the trails smile and greet each other. It's where the community comes together and mingles."

More than just a recreation route, the trail network in some communities has evolved into a transportation route for commuters. As Kent County continues to struggle with increasing traffic and congestion on main thoroughfares, more residents may opt for a more serene commute via bicycle or roller blades. "It's a great car-free option for connecting the community," one trail user said.

Proposed Park in Lowell Inches Closer to Reality

The economics of industrial farming and global commerce have led to the loss of thousands of acres of farmland throughout Michigan. In many cases, those acres have gone the way of development and urban sprawl. But in Lowell, a former apple orchard has been preserved and added to county land for a proposed 700-acre park.

"The owner just didn't think there was enough money in producing apples in today's economy," said Roger Sabine, Kent County Parks director. "It's a sad tale of farming, and we hear it over and over."

Kent County Parks started buying land on the northeast corner of Cascade and Alden

Nash for the park in 1998. To date, 234 acres have been purchased, and the county has first right of refusal on 180 more acres.

If Sabine has his way, the tract will someday encompass 700 acres and be home to a multi-use county park.

There's beautiful rolling farm land, wetlands, huge old trees and steep slopes covered with ginger. There's potential for a small lake and equestrian trails... and a fabulous ravine.

Kent County has secured a North American Wetland Conservation grant through Ducks Unlimited to create more wetland area at the site, which is part of the Grand River watershed.

"There's beautiful rolling farm land, wetlands, huge old trees and steep slopes covered with ginger."



Gather Together

The heated 4-season shelter house at Douglas Walker Park in Byron Center is a perfect place to host holiday parties for families and friends. School groups, clubs and families are welcome to reserve the facility for activities throughout the year. Call 336-PARK.

Peter Secchia Named Outstanding Contributor



Peter Secchia, civic activist and fund raising champion for Millennium Park, was recently named “Outstanding Contributor” by the National Association of County Parks and Recreation Officials. Nominated

for the award by Kent County Parks, Secchia was recognized for his outstanding contributions of creativity, leadership, energy and contagious enthusiasm.

“Peter has been an extraordinary leader on behalf of Millennium Park,” said David Morren, Chair, Kent County Board of Commissioners. “He embraced the vision for the park with such incredible passion, and he has helped make that early shared vision a reality.”

As chairman for the Millennium Park capital campaign, Secchia helped raise more than \$8 million in private funds for land acquisition and development of the park. Kent County contributed \$14.5 million, with state DNR grants of \$5.5 million bringing the total funding to \$28 million.

WABASIS LAKE CAMPGROUND

A Favorite Destination for Summer Fun



At the campground's nature cabin, children learn about the natural world through a wide assortment of projects, arts and crafts.

Bailey's Doggie Dash!

Join us at Wabasis Lake Park on October 18 at 9:00 a.m. for a 5K Run/Walk for owners and their dogs. Registration begins at 8:00 a.m. The top three finishers in each age group (both men and women) will receive a trophy and an engraved dog dish. A “Bailey's Choice” award will be given to the dog(s) with the best Halloween costume! Race hotline is 863-0669. Website information at Google: keyword – Bailey's Doggie Dash.



*Green
Places*

**For more information, or to join our
mailing list call Kent County Parks:**

Tel: (616) 336-PARK (7275)

Web: www.accesskent.com/parks

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