

Pottawatomie & Beyond...

A publication provided for the community by St. Charles Park District

Spring 2009

Budding Artists and Musicians Put Down Their Creative Roots in Early Childhood Programs

It's not such a leap of faith to go from mastering the fine art of gluing glitter on construction paper to getting a Masters of Fine Arts degree from a prestigious university. It's also just as likely that clapping in time to "The Alphabet Song" could one day lead to conducting a symphony orchestra.

Through classes such as "Little Arpeggios/Mini Maestros" and "Pee Wee Picasso and Play," preschool children from 18 months to 6 years of age are receiving the kind of musical and artistic instruction that can prepare them for either career – or for anything else life might throw their way.

According to both the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Art Education Association, such exposure to the arts at an early age is vital to children's development. It provides them with critical motor, learning, and socialization skills that will hold them in good stead as they move into kindergarten and beyond.

"The Park District's goal is to do everything we can so they are prepared to be students for the rest of their lives," says Krista Mulready, Early Childhood/Preschool & Camp Supervisor.

As part of the "Preschool Drawing Program," for instance, youngsters learn practical skills such as how to draw a straight line. But break that lesson down into its most fundamental steps, and the first ability children master is the proper way to hold a pencil – the essential prelude to learning how to write.

"At this young age, children really enjoy making a variety of crafts," says Mulready.

"One of their favorites is tracing their handprint and gluing feathers to the fingers to make a turkey."

Other lessons are more subtle. Bobby needs a green crayon, and Krissy has just finished using hers. When Bobby – politely – asks Krissy if he may borrow it, both children are navigating the delicate intricacies of how to share and cooperate. Meanwhile, over in the "Family Fugue" music session, the sound of young voices belting out "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" becomes more than a rollicking sing-along; it's an exercise in learning how to take turns, as the refrain moves from one group of children to another.

Likewise, when Miss Tracey, one of the District's preschool teachers, encourages James to sing in a softer voice, or Miss Joelle, an early childhood program instructor, suggests Katie use a crayon instead of a colored pencil, both children are being guided in taking directions from a different authority figure

than their parents – another important step in preparation for the day when they will walk into a school classroom and need to pay attention to the teacher.

While the price of an art or music class might run anywhere from \$13 to \$75, the look on a child's face when he runs home proudly waving his latest art project and shouting, "see what I did!" is priceless.

Taking such obvious pride in their work and receiving positive feedback from teachers, classmates and, of course, mom



and dad, helps build children's self-esteem. By following directions and having a completed product to show for it, children gain immense satisfaction from doing something all on their own. Indeed, when they reach for a blue marker instead of a yellow one to color in a picture of a school bus, or pick up a tambourine instead of a tomtom to tap out the beat of a lively march, children show that they are capable of making decisions on their own – often the first opportunity they have to do so.

Such creative exercises not only help children understand and interpret their experiences, but also provide an avenue for them to communicate their ideas and feelings. Little Austin may sing energetically, or barely mumble the words; Hannah may draw an upturned smiley face, or crisscross a page with angry red lines. Just as a thermometer gauges a child's fever, these creative outlets can provide an astute teacher or aware parent with the tools for evaluating a child's emotional well-being.

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Park Board President's Message

Sunshine and daffodils are nearly in sight as your local Park District prepares for the spring season. Thus, it's time to emerge from your cocoon and explore the numerous recreation and leisure activities available to you and your family as District residents. For information on all program offerings, please refer to our spring brochure or visit us online at www.st-charlesparks.org.

The District is making steady progress implementing the projects approved in the District's 2008 referendum. As the weather warms up, you will see construction underway at Campton Hills Park, the site of our new pool complex and environmental education center. Other improvements are taking place at several smaller sites.

Recently, the Park Board renamed Pottawatomie Pool to Swanson Pool and named the Pottawatomie Park pavilion tower in honor of James H. and Joann N. Collins. Please refer to the articles on page 3 of this publication for more details.

Lastly, the District is proud that Primrose Farm is recognized as an award-winning facility by the St. Charles Chamber of Commerce. We thank the Chamber for their support as we continue to improve, enhance and expand recreational opportunities for people of all ages.

Cordially Yours,



St. Charles Park Board

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Referendum Progress Report

Before the snow fell this winter, the earth work for the Campton Hills Park Swimming Pool Complex was completed. Construction bids for items such as carpentry, electrical, concrete, plumbing, etc., will be received on February 24th from several companies, and staff will analyze them in hopes of beginning construction of the foundations for the pools, bath house and more.

Throughout the planning process for the new Environmental Education Center at Campton Hills Park, the Park Board and staff have been guided to make the building as energy and resource efficient as possible. Visitors can expect to see many examples of green construction materials and methods, as well as conformance to LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards. Plaques and signs will interpret the building's many green features, and highlight those that can be easily and inexpensively duplicated at home.

The new Environmental Education Center, expected to open in early 2010, is intended to serve not only as a

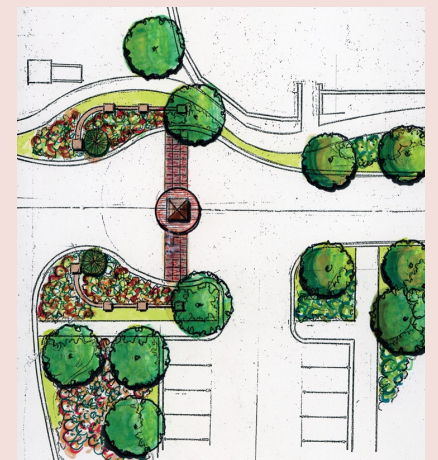
destination, but also as an invitation to explore the amazing biodiversity just outside the building's doors. Exhibits within the lobby and exhibit room will reflect this directive. Dioramas will depict a geological timeline and explain how our region came to look the way it does today. The centerpiece of this exhibit will include an indoor wetland featuring Blanding's turtles, an ancient species now threatened in Illinois due to habitat destruction. The exhibit room will focus on the predominant ecosystems (woodland, wetland, prairie, savanna) at Campton Hills Park and also address human impacts that have affected these areas, for worse and for better. Exhibits will include an interactive mural designed to attune visitor's senses to the park's wildlife inhabitants, as well as the park's Native American wigwam and dugout canoe.

In regard to acquiring open space, it is important to note that Park District staff attends numerous meetings, including meetings of the City of St. Charles' Plan Commission, to make sure that the ratio of land development and open space in our community is adequate to serve the needs of new and existing residents.

Parks Projects Update

Park improvements continue at Mt. St. Mary Park with the addition of a permanent rest room with vault toilets. Also, the tennis court was renovated and upgraded into a combination tennis and basketball court. These projects were financed in part with a \$400,000 development grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources "Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development Grant Program."

Pottawatomie Park's new entrance will be finished this spring with the addition of formal park entry walls and lush landscaping.



New Facility Names Approved by Park District

At the January 13th Park Board Meeting, commissioners unanimously approved the renaming of Pottawatomie Pool and the naming of the tower at the Pottawatomie Park pavilion.

Henceforth, Pottawatomie Pool will be called Swanson Pool, which was named in honor of the late Algert S. Swanson who served on the St. Charles Township Park Board when the pool was constructed and his daughter, Carol Swanson Glemza, a long-time Park District employee.

According to Nancy A. Cox, St. Charles Park Board President, Mr. Swanson played a critical leadership role in the acquisition and development of several facilities at Pottawatomie Park, while Carol Swanson Glemza began her Park District career

shortly after the facilities were built and continues to dedicate herself to the Park District and its operation.

The Great Depression in the United States (beginning in late 1929 and continuing into the 1930s) greatly affected the entire country, including St. Charles, Illinois. Many people were out of work.

Algert S. Swanson, as owner and operator of Swanson Brothers Memorial Works/ St. Charles Memorial Works, became president of a state monument business owners' organization and traveled frequently to Washington, D.C. for meetings. He was aware of government relief programs to aid troubled cities and organizations and convinced the Township Park Board to apply for a grant.



With the help of government leaders that he had met while working on the NRA (National Recovery Act), the St. Charles Township Park District was awarded one of the largest grants ever given at the time. A telegram announced the gift and, when it became known, the townspeople "jumped for joy."

The grant enabled the Board to complete Pottawatomie Golf Course, Pottawatomie Swimming Pool, and the amphitheater in the park. Also, funds were used for renovation of the ball field and bleachers. The projects helped put many unemployed people back to work in jobs which served the public good and conserved the skills and self-esteem of the workers.

Pottawatomie Golf Course was designed by renowned architect Robert Trent Jones, Sr. and soon became known as the sportiest nine-hole course in the area. Pottawatomie Swimming Pool was one of the two largest pools in the State of Illinois when it was built. The amphitheater was the site of local events, theatrical presentations, addresses by national figures and the annual Miss St. Charles pageant. The ball field was the home of the St. Charles Industrial League and attracted full houses every night of the week for years.

"St. Charles and area residents were fortunate to receive all of these facilities, which continue to be used and enjoyed by the general public, and we are indebted to Mr. Swanson and Carol Swanson Glemza for their service to the community," said Cox.

The Pottawatomie Park pavilion tower was named in honor of the late James H. and Joann N. Collins, both of whom played a critical role in the development of St. Charles as we know it today.



James was the Chairman of the Board for Collins Development, a company responsible for such local projects as the Fox Chase Development, Foxfield Square, a commercial/office complex on East Main Street in St. Charles and a number of other developmental projects throughout and beyond the State of Illinois. He served on the board of directors for Harris Bank St. Charles and the Henry Rockwell Baker Memorial Community Center. In fact, the Baker Community Center's auditorium was named for him on June 19, 1986.

Joann, daughter of Lester and Dellora Norris, was an award recipient of a Charlemagne Award in 1990 and a life member of the Delnor Community Hospital Women's Auxiliary. She served on the board of directors and was a member of the Delnor-Community Hospital Foundation, Pottawatomie Garden Club and Norris Cultural Arts

Center. She also volunteered her time to about 15 area organizations.

Donations from the family's foundation, the Dellora A. and Lester J. Norris Foundation, continue to support the St. Charles community with generous contributions each year. Those receiving significant support include the John B. Norris Recreation Center; Lester J. Norris Sports Complex;

Dellora A. Norris Cultural Arts Center; Baker Memorial Methodist Church; Delnor Woods Park; Delnor Community Hospital; Delnor Glen Residential Living Center; Pottawatomie Park, Pool, Pavilion and Golf Course; St. Charles Municipal Center; Arcada Theater; State Bank/Harris Bank; Main Street Bridge; Hotel Baker; Hotel Baker/Garage/Carroll Towers; St. Charles National Bank; Henry Rockwell Baker Memorial Community Center; land for St. Charles East High School Complex; and land for St. Charles Boy Scout Headquarters.

"The Norris Collins family has been great friends to the St. Charles community and the Park District," said Nancy A. Cox, St. Charles Park Board President. "We are extremely grateful for their generosity."

Park District Honored with St. Charles Chamber of Commerce Awards

The St. Charles Park District was presented a 2008 Civic Image Award from the St. Charles Chamber of Commerce in recognition of the restoration of the historic Primrose Farm. The farm will provide interpretive experiences showing the impact of technology and social change on the lands and farm families of the Fox Valley. Approximately three miles of trails loop around and through the nearly 183-acre property, visitors can get a little agricultural education with their

exercise as they hike and bike past hop crops and farm animals.

The St. Charles Park Foundation was presented a 2008 Community Image Award from the St. Charles Chamber of Commerce in recognition of the addition of a 75-foot long pond feature, designed to replicate a natural spring flowing into the Fox River, which is located adjacent to the Pottawatomie Park pavilion.

Primrose Farm Expands Livestock

The livestock displayed at the historic Primrose Farm will continue to grow in the coming months. Staff expects to see some baby lambs soon as four bred ewes were generously donated by Don Knepp of Barrington, Illinois, last winter. Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry continues to donate a variety of chickens including Auburn Java, Lacewing Java and White Java, as part of their "Genetics and the Baby Chick Hatchery Program."

Staff traveled to an Amish farm in south central Indiana on Dec. 22 to bring back two Belgian geldings. Bob and Tom, as the draft horses were named, are 8 years old and have much experience working on a farm including plowing, planting, cultivating and pulling sleds and wagons.



In March, the District plans to purchase cows and pigs with the help of the Park Foundation's contribution of over \$3,700, part of which was the money raised from last year's Farm Frolic at Primrose Farm. Four Jersey dairy cows will be milked daily to help feed the other animals on the farm. In fact, the District will be offering a "Hands-On Milking" class for ages 4 and over. The Yorkshire pigs, which will be used for breeding stock, have been a common type of pig raised in the Fox Valley area since World War I.

Primrose Farm Park is open to the public from dawn to dusk. The animals are available for viewing around 7:30 a.m. when chores start. All animals are kept in fenced-in areas, and staff encourages visitors not to pet or feed the animals. For additional information, please call Kirk Bunke at 630-513-4370.



Budding Artists and Musicians

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However, as great as the behavioral benefits of early art and music education may be, the artistic level of creative instruction is equally significant. Seemingly complex musical concepts of pitch and tempo, for instance, can be conveyed



to children through simple multisensory activities that use familiar objects such as scarves and colored floor mats. And while their parents (or, more likely, grandparents) may think

"*accelerando*" is something the Fonz would say to Richie Cunningham while "cruising the strip," young music students are taught that it's really the proper term for making the music – not a souped-up street rod – go faster.

Knowing the proper names for things also goes hand in hand with knowing how to more accurately view the world around them, and sharpening these perceptions takes place in various courses provided throughout the early childhood art curriculum. When first asked to draw a tree, for example, a student may produce the simple circle-on-a-stick. With step-by-step instruction over a number of sessions in which terms like perspective and contrast are teamed with lessons in shading and direction, the student can begin to incorporate the branches, leaves, and bark that will bring the tree to artistic life.

Bringing one's child to artistic life is one of the most joyous experiences of parenthood. By taking advantage of the extensive art and music courses provided by the St. Charles Park District, parents are providing children with a broad foundation in artistic literacy that may encourage an appreciation that will last them a lifetime. Just remember: Monet and Mozart had to start somewhere, didn't they?