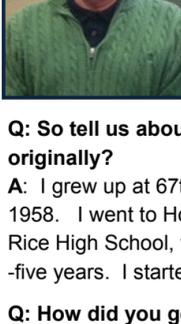




Recreation Department Prepares For Summer Activities

Director Dennis Duffy reflects on 45 years with the Village



Q: So tell us about your background. Are you from Evergreen Park originally?

A: I grew up at 67th and Peoria and we moved out to Evergreen Park in 1958. I went to Holy Redeemer Grammar School and then to Brother Rice High School, where I later taught Civics, Criminal/Civic Law for thirty-five years. I started in 1974 and retired in 2009.

Q: How did you get involved with the Recreation Department here in the Village?

A: The Recreation Department began in 1970. If I remember correctly, the League of Women Voters went to Tony Vacco, who was Mayor at the time. In those days, you had the Boys Club and the Athletic Association, but no organization devoted to the entire village. They formed a committee (Mayor Vacco was big on committees) and began the Recreation Department. My father Martin was appointed the first Commissioner/Director of Recreational Services. I began working with him that same year as his assistant.

Q: And Duffy Park is named after him, of course.

A: Yes, it is. I worked with him for ten years, until his passing in 1980. Then in July of 1981, they gave me the official title of Director/Commissioner of Recreational Services.

Q: Please explain the difference between a Recreation Department and a Park District.

A: A park district is a separate taxing body. For example, Oak Lawn residents pay a separate tax for that Park District, and they do very well. In Evergreen Park, we didn't want to pass the extra tax burden along to our residents, so our Recreation Department is encompassed in the Village budget.

Q: What are the main differences you've seen over the years?

A: Definitely the growth of the programs. When I first started, of course, they didn't know how everything was going to turn out. The budget was \$10,000 annually. Our budget is close to \$650,000 now. And we've added an ice rink, a driving range, a dog park. We've got a very strong pre-school program, plus events and classes for kids. Our dance program is very popular. We try to keep up with the fads. Belly dancing was a fad, but mercifully, that's gone now. Now we Zumba and Yoga. . .we try to keep up with everything. And I think people are more physically active now, so they want those kinds of programs and we try to give them as many as we can.

Q: The building you're in now (the Maher Community Center) was built in 1951 as a replacement building for the old Evergreen Park Christian School. Do you remember when it became the Maher Community Center?

A: This was after the Village had purchased the building from what became Chicago Southwest Christian School, who was moving into Oak Lawn on Central Avenue. Hamilton Maher had been the Village Clerk and passed away in 1985. So a few of the Village Trustees. . .Jerry Bosch was one of them. . .pushed to have the building designated as a Community Center and named after Mr. Maher. The dedication ceremony was held on September 12, 1986.

Q: Where had the Recreation Department been headquartered?

A: We had originally been housed where the Street Department Garage is located now, over on 93rd Street. That was the main Recreation Department office. But after we purchased this building, it was decided that it would be a better location for us and the Youth Department and the Office of Citizens Services, you know. . .all under one roof. And it made sense, with all the classrooms now available for the preschool and the other activities.

Q: What are the difficulties that the Recreation Department encounters?

A: Most of all, it's a problem of space. We have only so many buildings, with things going on everywhere. We've got the Activity Center on 98th Street, now we have the Senior Center on Homan. Over the years, School District 124 has been very accommodating to us, but now they have their own athletic programs within each school; basketball teams, and so on. We've lost some space due to this, but we still have a very good relationship with them.

Q: A comment that we hear a lot from the residents is the wish for a new state-of-the-art community/activity facility. .

A: Well, yeah, I don't think there's any one in the Village from the Mayor on down who wouldn't want that. Over the years, we've explored the option of possibly purchasing the Racquet and Fitness Center across from 50-Acre Park on 91st Street. But the cost would be too much for the village to bear and the residents aren't going to want that kind of a tax increase. And there's lately been a lot of talk about re-opening Aqua Park, but that had been privately owned. The Village did not and never has owned that property. We were, though, very lucky to purchase the land along Kedzie Avenue at a time when soccer was becoming popular again. . .and of course, now with Yukich Fields we have football, baseball, soccer and lacrosse, plus a nice running/walking area. So I think we've made good use of that land space. Because. . .just as importantly. . .in a village that's only four square miles, we have close to 100 acres of open space devoted to parks and playlots and ball fields. We certainly don't want to eliminate or compromise any of that.

And, what some people don't realize is that, within the Village, we have a Boys Club and Athletic Association and Boys and Girls Softball and Baseball. . .and that these are *separate* organizations from the Village who LEASE our parks. Those permits come from the Recreation Department to keep those organizations from double-booking a particular field. It keeps the schedules coordinated. The drawback of that is that we get the calls or complaints about those organizations, when in fact, they are their own sustained and individually chartered organizations. When one of those clubs was in the news a year or so ago, our Recreation Department and the Village Hall received all sorts of ugly calls and threats.

Q: What is the biggest event in Evergreen Park?

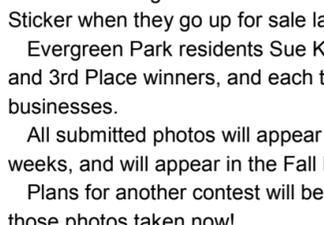
A: Certainly the parade. This will be the 48th Annual Independence Day Parade. It's really grown. The biggest obstacle there is that you need music. We try to get as much music as we possibly can; the problem we have with getting music is that all of the high schools in the area who have bands. . .Brother Rice, Marist, etc., all of them who participate in the St. Patrick's Day Parade. . .well, they're not in school. Of course, we are appreciative of our own Evergreen Park High School, their band is there every year. So, when the number of music floats is down, we try to make up for it with specialty groups, like the Jesse White Tumblers. And it's such a family-focused event; within a half-hour after the parade ends, 95th Street is so well cleaned up, you would never know a parade had just gone by. And all that is due to the great work by the Street Department. It's a great showcase for the Village, because it really is a Village-wide party. People get their yards all trimmed and ready, everybody is happy and friendly.

Q: The Summer Concert Program is just around the corner as well.

A: That's a very popular program and we are so happy to have these different orchestras come in and play different kinds of music. And remember that Rich Daniels is an Evergreen Park guy and a Brother Rice graduate; his City Lights Orchestra is a staple here in the summer and all around Chicagoland. We try to have events going on all year round, hitting all the holidays. We have a Halloween Festival for the kids, then the Dickens Christmas Celebration in December, all centered around the Community Center and Circle Park. Last fall, we had Evergreen Park boy Perry Danos give a concert at 50-Acre Park, and I think you can expect see more things like that done over there, too.

Q: Summer is coming, so it's getting to be your busy time.

A: It's always busy and Jill and Karen do a great job of keeping it all together. But, you're right. . .*Day In The Park* is in the works for June 25, we've got the Parade the following Friday (July 1). And to jump back to 50-Acre Park. . .the driving range is open now and that has been a big hit for us. You know, we bought that of the old golf course in order to preserve some of that open space; it's kind of nice that we do remember the storied history of that golf course by having the driving range there. You can come on out to your own backyard to hit a few golf balls after work or on a weekend. Then we have the Candlelight Theatre group, and Movies In The Park, and other programs like that available. We try to have something for everybody. It's one of the nice things that makes Evergreen Park a nice place to live. . .



Day In The Park
Saturday, June 25
Independence Day Parade!
Friday, July 1

Photography Contest Winners Announced

Top Three Vote Gatherers Showcased At Village Meeting

From May through the end of January, the Environmental Recycling Commission held a contest, inviting Evergreen Park residents to submit photos representing the beauty of Evergreen Park. The winning photo would become the photo used on the 2016-2017 Vehicle Sticker. By the time the deadline rolled around, fourteen wonderful photographs had been submitted.

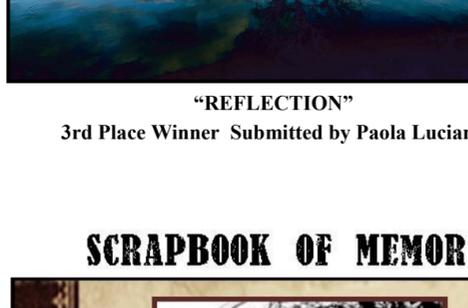
Voting was done by residents, as the photos were on display at a voting station at the Village Hall; residents could also vote online at the village's website.

The top three winners were announced at the Village Board meeting on Monday, April 4.

Tony Mazrim, whose photo was the top vote gatherer, received a gift card to an Evergreen Park business, and will also receive a free Vehicle Sticker when they go up for sale later in the summer.

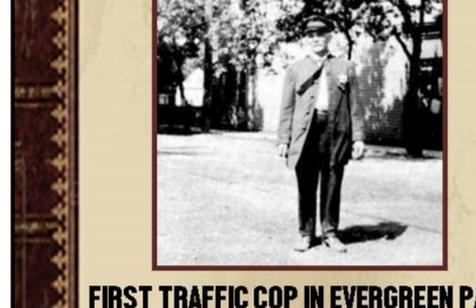
Evergreen Park residents Sue Kerwin and Paola Luciano were the 2nd and 3rd Place winners, and each took home gift cards from EP businesses.

All submitted photos will appear in The Village Green over the next few weeks, and will appear in the Fall Recreation Department Activities Book. Plans for another contest will be announced soon, so start getting those photos taken now!



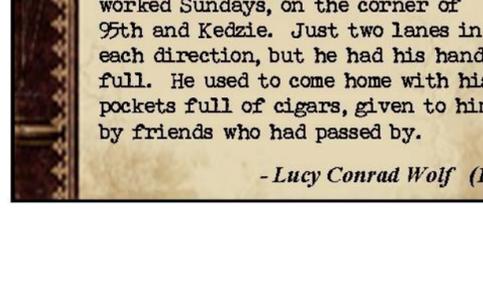
"WELCOME TO THE PARK"

1st Place Winner Submitted by Tony Mazrim



"SUNSET OVER CHAMPIONSHIP GAME"

2nd Place Winner Submitted by Sue Kerwin



"REFLECTION"

3rd Place Winner Submitted by Paola Luciano

SCRAPBOOK OF MEMORIES



FIRST TRAFFIC COP IN EVERGREEN PARK

My father, "Buckskin Bill" Conrad, was the first traffic cop in the Park, sometime in the 1920s. He only worked Sundays, on the corner of 95th and Kedzie. Just two lanes in each direction, but he had his hands full. He used to come home with his pockets full of cigars, given to him by friends who had passed by.

- Lucy Conrad Wolf (1968)