



Recreation Division 2023 Annual Report



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YEAR END SUMMARY

It is with immense pride and enthusiasm that I present the Recreation Division’s Year End Report for 2023. Over the past twelve months, our commitment to excellence and innovation has shone through various initiatives, with a particular emphasis on staff development, rebranding of our youth dance and acrobatics program, rebranding our youth sports leagues, program growth and development, and the physical location change of our studios.

The focus on staff development, both at the regular full and part time staff level, as well as the seasonal staff level was a priority in 2023. Efforts were made for professional development to strengthen our internal capabilities as well as with our seasonal staff to enhance the quality of services we provide.

The rebranding to Unity Dance & Acrobatics and to the “A” League for our youth sports leagues allowed us to refresh our image, re-introduce the philosophies of our programs, and bring new excitement and energy to the programs that the community could engage in.

Unity Dance & Acrobatics saw major transformations with the location change of our studios from the City Center Plaza to the newly built out space in the Northland Mall. The staff were very adaptive during the change and the community has been very supportive of this move. We were able to celebrate the new location with a grand opening event in August.

Overall, program numbers remain strong. We completed a recreation satisfaction and needs survey at the end of 2023 that has provided great insight into what the community wants for future recreation. We are excited to use those results and continue to provide high quality recreation opportunities for our community.

As you delve into the insights and data presented in this report, it becomes evident that 2023 has been a year of transformation and progress for the Recreation Division. I want to extend my gratitude to my dynamic staff, volunteers, and community members who have contributed to the success we saw in 2023. Together, we have created a legacy of excellence that will continue to leave a lasting impact with our community.

Staff Notes/Trainings

- January 12 Niki graduated from the Thrive Leadership Academy put on by the city.
- Niki, Jeff, Krystal, and Liz attended the Wisconsin Park and Recreation annual conference and trade show in February in Wisconsin Dells.
- Jeff completed the SafeSport training through his membership in the United States Tennis Association.
- Niki, Jeff, and Krystal attended the IPRA webinar on “Leader as Coach – Getting Great Results When Not Around.”
- April 21, the Recreation Division team participated in a training session that focused on our values, what we want our legacy to be as a team, and how we would continue to challenge each other moving forward. Staff committed to a two-year journey together that will center around eight leadership topics presented by a staff member quarterly. This is a way for us to continue our professional development at little to no cost as we will be providing the trainings internally.
- April 25 and 26, Niki attended the Toward One Wisconsin Conference held at the Hilton Paper Valley.
- Jeff, Krystal, and Niki attended the virtual IPRA webinar on “Proactive vs. Reactive Problem Solving – Dealing with Change.”
- Margaret attended the Heart of the Valley Chamber’s Digital Marketing Summit on May 16.
- Liz attended seven CVMIC leadership classes as part of the Emerging Leadership Certification Program. Liz is 83% complete with the program.
- Throughout the year, Krystal has been taking bridge courses with American Red Cross. She is certified in First Aid and CPR, CPR for the Professional Rescuer, as well as being a Water Safety Ambassador.
- Liz renewed her Certified Parks and Recreation Professional (CPRP) certification on September 1.
- Liz, Krystal, and Niki attended a training session put on by Appleton Downtown Incorporated titled LGBTQ+ - Diversity and Inclusion put on by the Rainbow Alliance Advocacy.
- Margaret attended the City-County Communications & Marketing Association webinar on March 21 on “Taking Your Social Media to the Next Level.”
- Margaret attended “Generational Strengths and a New Kind of Diversity” webinar on October 11.
- Margaret Attended “Social Media Trends in 2024” webinar on December 12 put on by Boot Camp Digital
- Niki attended the Thrive 2.0 training session on October 11 on Crucial Conversations presented by Alonzo Kelly.
- Krystal started a graduate school program in Recreation Management with University of Wisconsin - Lacrosse in September.
- Krystal and Niki attended the Stop the Bleed training put on by the Fire Department.
- On September 27 Niki provided a training workshop to the team that focused on Strategic Planning and Leading Change.

- Liz and Jeff attended the Wisconsin Park and Recreation Association fall workshop in Green Bay on September 28 & 29.

Recreation Programs/Enrollment

Pre-School/Early Childhood



We started off this year making a few changes to our Appletots program. We began offering four Appletots classes with a maximum of 15 participants in each class instead of 12 due to the high demand of the classes and to better serve our community. Throughout the winter and fall sessions we offered a variety of classes such as Picasso Tots, Bookworm Tots, Color Tots, Nature Tots, Transportation Tots, Wild Tots, and our most popular class, Family Groovy Tots. Each class consisted of a story, sensory play, and crafts. Our summer Appletots Extra

class was eliminated and in its place we offered four half hour Appletots classes. These classes were held outdoors at Telulah park due to the dance studios being relocated to the Northland Mall.

Preschool dance had another great year. We offered classes on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings. The classes took place inside City Center Plaza, Appleton West High School, and our new location, the Northland Mall. We did not see a decline in numbers with the temporary location or the new location. We offer these independent classes for ages 3-7. These sessions are 12-weeks long, and we offer tap-jazz-ballet combo classes, hip-hop tots, and tumbling. We seem to be meeting the high demand for preschool dance classes.



Our summer Friday Fun classes continue to be a big hit in our community.

These early childhood classes are great for families with young children looking for things to do in the summer at different city parks each week. Each class consists of a craft, movement activity, and a story. We offered eight different themed weeks. Some popular themes this summer were, Paw Patrol to the Rescue, All Things Magical, and Bugs and Blooms.

This was the second year we offered the Playdate in the Park program. The goal of this program was to promote our parks, get people to connect to the outdoors, and help families meet others that live around their neighborhood. After placing more emphasis on promoting this program this summer, we were hoping to see an increase in participation from last year. Unfortunately, this program did not take off as we hoped. We offered six different playdates at different parks on Wednesdays, but the attendance was very low. We do not plan on continuing this program in 2024.

	<u>Participants</u>
Appletots	201
Preschool Dance	386
Friday Fun	327
Open Play	6 Families
<hr/>	
Total	920

Youth Activities

Our 2022-2023 winter open gym began as normal in the middle of November and ran through the end of February. A change this year was to only hold open gym program at Ferber Elementary. This change cut the cost of rent for the program in half while keeping attendance the same. Attendance was high early in the season and slowed down as the winter progressed. Participants were appreciative that we offered the program for children and families of Appleton.



KidStage is our partnership program for kids ages 4-12 who have an interest in theatre. We have experienced some ebbs and flows in registration throughout the year. In the beginning, Kidstage offered a Frozen showcase, which was so popular we needed to open a second session. Following the Frozen session, we experienced a drop in registration for spring, summer, and fall classes. Reviewing the data and feedback from families, our partner and owner of Kidstage, Mark Cain, feels this could be partially due to showcase

selections. In 2023, Kidstage offered Frozen, Robin Hood, The Muppets Summer Camp, and Willy Wonka. Kidstage experience a 21% decrease in participation from 2022.

We collaborated with North East Skateboard Trust (NEST) and Surfin' Bird Skateshop to offer skateboarding instruction at Telulah Skate Park. Instruction focuses on beginner and intermediate skills. This summer we offered three sessions each on Mondays and Thursdays. Enrollment was 37% lower this summer than 2022. We had a total enrollment of 56 out of 126 possible enrollment slots. We are working with NEST to figure out what is the best way to move forward with course offerings for the future to get more kids involved in skateboarding.



We continue to partner with Tanya Rosenthal to offer babysitting certification courses to youth ages 10-14. In this course youth learn fundamentals and build confidence in childcare, safety, emergency consciousness, as well as CPR/AED for adults, children, and infants. Because of the popularity of the course, we were able to increase enrollment by 20% over three classes. All classes were nearly full. In 2023, 92 youth took the class. For the future, we will be offering more courses over the year and holding a higher enrollment rate.

Our marketing partnerships with Karate America and The Academy continue to offer karate instruction for ages 4-12 in a program called Karate Fun. Both organizations offered Karate Fun classes throughout the year. Class sizes are typically reported between 5-8 kids per session.

Urban Riders is for our school age kids looking to learn how to safely bike on the road to some of their favorite destinations. We offer two levels of Urban Riders. Level one teaches trails & lanes and level two teaches more road safety skills. Both classes are held at Telulah Park. We experienced an increase in participation this summer requiring a third instructor. We are looking to add a level three class in 2024.



We partnered with the Einstein Project to offer free mobile makerspace experiences for families in Appleton downtown parks for the third summer. Einstein Project staff and community volunteers lead these free age appropriate, skills-based activities to promote creativity and critical thinking. They offered mobile makerspace experiences in Alicia, Colony Oaks, Derks, Erb, and Green Meadows Parks. They experienced a consistent turnout at each location with over 245 kids throughout the summer.

This is our first year partnering with YEL (Youth Enrichment League). They offered two Coding Animation and Video Game Camps at Pierce Park from June 12-15. Even though we experienced some colder/rainy weather that week, they were able to get all four days of the camp completed. We had 21 kids participate in this camp. We plan to expand our programming with YEL in 2024 to include sewing and robotics classes.



Our playground program wrapped up the season on Thursday, August 10. We ended up with nearly 870 participants encompassing eleven different sites. We had a great group of leaders this summer who made a huge, positive impact on our community. We received many positive comments from parents that said the playground program continues to be a great option for their kids to get outside, stay active, and meet new friends. We hired 28 playground leaders and two playground coordinators. We decided to increase the enrollment fee this summer from \$10 to \$25 per child. This increase may have caused a slight decline in enrollment; however, the increases revenue helped offset the cost of the staff wage increases in 2023. We also had 14 young adults participating in our Junior Leader Program, for ages 14 -17, that were given an opportunity to volunteer with our playground leaders at the park and gain experience and knowledge of the skills it takes to become a playground leader. We had various

special events for the kids to participate in throughout the summer including the neighborhood block parties, playground olympics, pool days at Mead and Erb pools, a kickball tournament, Children’s Playground Fair, and the annual Children’s Parade. The playground program continues to be a huge need for our community. Not only do the kids have a safe place to go during the day but they are participating in fun events, staying active, meeting new friends, and engaging in their community.



The Appleton Public Library continued to use the Scheig Center and the City Center Studio earlier in the year for their childhood, youth, and adult programming during the library construction project. This has been a great opportunity to show our community how we support and collaborate with each other in offering great educational and recreational programs.

	<u>Participants</u>
Open Gym	723
KidStage	136
Skateboard Instruction	56
Babysitting Course	92
Karate America	23
The Academy Karate	51
Urban Riders	29
Einstein Project	245
YEL!	21
Playground Program	868
Total	2,244

Youth Sports Leagues/Camps

The Youth Basketball League saw an increase in attendance again for the 2023 season. Participation in our kindergarten through 8th grade levels rose to 602 participants and we saw the largest increases in our kindergarten and first grade levels. The Appleton Area School District partnered with us again to provide space to play games and hold practices. Our basketball officials and staff received praise throughout the season for their continued growth in calling violations and showing a willingness to educate the kids in our program during gameplay. The volunteer coaches liked our game day adjustments to make things more efficient, rule changes to provide a better game, and the communication and resources provided to help with coaching.

A new 2023 program was our youth volleyball camp. This four-week camp took place in March and April, had 48 participants, and was held at the Einstein Middle School gym. The purpose of the program was to provide a fun and inexpensive environment for kids ages 10-13 to learn the fundamentals of the sport. Volleyball is growing in popularity nationally for all kids and registration filled quickly.

New during the second quarter was the rollout of our updated “A” League logo used for our youth sports leagues. The logo represents the Appleton community by emphasizing the “A” in Appleton. The pride we have in our youth sports leagues here, along with the community’s love for these programs, encouraged our change to have a name that people would be excited to identify with. The rebranding of our youth sports leagues began during the marketing period for our youth baseball/softball/t-ball season and has been used for all four of our 2023 leagues. The logo has been well received by the community. We also have created a new version of our logo for our staff members. The “A” Team logo was used for our sports staff members.



Our APRD youth baseball/softball/t-ball programs saw a small increase in participation from last year. In 2023 we had 835 kids play baseball/softball/t-ball in our program. As in the past, we offered kindergarten t-ball up to our Teen Core program for 7th and 8th grade participants. Appleton Memorial Park was a very busy place with our participants, coaches, parents, and fans watching these leagues on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday nights.

After record high participation in our youth Tennis Camp and Little Hitters in 2022, it has level off in 2023. We added additional camps at Green Meadows Park that were well received. Our tennis camps for ages 8-14 had 135 participants, which is still higher than pre-pandemic levels. The participation numbers for our Little Hitters tennis program regressed to levels prior to the pandemic. Our tennis and sports camps are an hour long, but our Little Hitters program is only a half hour. We have evaluated the cost and length of the Little Hitters program and made some adjustments in 2024.



This is year two for our “new look” to our summer youth sports camps. Last year we adjusted the number of classes and the types of sports we offered. This year we added a new site for our basketball camp (Green Meadows), allowing the maximum class size to move to 20 kids, (previously 16), and offered some introduction to pickleball camps at Telulah Park. The results of these changes have led to large numbers throughout the summer. The record registration for the entire summer was 729. We look forward to continuing to figure out ways to best serve this demographic of young sports camp participants.

Appleton Lacrosse has continued a partnership with us for the sixth year. These lacrosse clinics offer the fundamental skills of the sport in two sessions based on grade levels. In 2023, out of the two classes, 28 out of 40 spots were filled, which is a decrease from 2022. The younger grades were well enrolled, but the older grade levels were lacking. There is collaboration with Appleton Lacrosse to figure out the best way to proceed with the partnership and to get children involved in the new WIAA sponsored sport.



Tuesday night youth flag football was back at the Appleton Memorial Park fields. Enrollment was almost the same in 2023 as in 2022, but age differences created a different league. Enrollment was down by 40% in the 5th and 6th grade league but up in both the 1st/2nd grade and the 3rd/4th grade leagues. We were able to create two additional teams with the middle age group to make up for the low numbers in the upper grade level league to create the balance from the previous season. This

season we had dedicated staff that wanted to do well as referees across the board from rule enforcement to having fun. Overall, it was a successful flag football season.

The Appleton Parks and Recreation Department fall youth soccer league continued to see growth in 2023. A total of 920 participants in kindergarten through 8th grade played their games at the USA Sports Complex on Saturday mornings. Over the last few seasons, the staff has focused on providing our volunteer coaches the resources and education needed to help coach all our youth soccer players. Our volunteers have appreciated the extra resources and communications that has been provided. We will continue to provide these things to help grow all our “A” League programs.



APRD Running Club went through some changes in 2023. Because of low enrollment in fall 2022, it was decided to only hold Running Club in the spring. We continued to offer programming for grades 4-8, but we moved to Erb Park, which gave the club a meeting and storage space within the Oasis Room at the pool. Erb Park also offered more diversity in the landscape for outdoor running. Along with our dedicated instructor, we hired a co-instructor with a lot of personal experience with running and working with children. The club’s final fun was scheduled to coincide with the Smiles and a Movie fun run in Appleton Memorial Park. This gave participants a culminating event to show off their hard work. The club was full, with 20 participants this session and we will continue with the changes made.

	<u>Participants</u>
Youth Basketball Leagues	602
Youth Baseball, SB, T-Ball	835
Soccer League	920
Flag Football League	221
Youth Tennis Camp	249
Lacrosse Camp	28
Little Hitters Tennis Camp	143
Runners Club	20
Youth Basketball Camp	178
Youth Soccer Camp	186
Flag Football Camp	59
Multi-Sports Camp	154
Sports Exploration Camp	108
Youth Volleyball Camp	48
Total	3,751



Teens

Our Teen Core basketball program was held during the week at Huntley and Franklin Elementary schools throughout the 2023 season. Allowing the kids to play on their own night during the week has been a success. The group of basketball players was a bit smaller during the 2023 program, but the 25 players in the league enjoyed the opportunity to play basketball in a relaxed and fun atmosphere.

Teen Core baseball/softball began with 31 participants for the summer season. The participants and the staff enjoyed a great season and the Teen Core program continued to draw interest from 7th and 8th graders looking to play sports in a positive environment.

Teen Core soccer continued to be our largest Teen Core program with 45 7th and 8th grade players. The participants enjoyed the opportunity to play soccer in a less structured and fun environment. We have continued to work with the Appleton Area School District to help kids in their refugee program have a place to play soccer. Games were played on Saturdays at the USA Sports Complex.



In coordination with our summer playground program, we offered a junior leader opportunity, which allows young adults ages 14-17 an opportunity to gain both experience and knowledge in the skills it takes to become a playground leader. This summer we had a total of 14 junior leaders, which is an increase from the previous year. This year we had several strong volunteers that we hope to hire for next year.

	<u>Participants</u>
Teen Core Leagues	101
Junior Leader Program	14
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 115

Adult Activities

Our adult dance classes have thrived this year. We offered a variety of classes throughout the year and have found that tap and ballet barre are our most popular. We had such a large adult tap class we decided to offer a beginner and advanced class. We took a hit in numbers over the summer due to offering outdoor classes, but we have great enrollment with our new studio location. We almost doubled our enrollment numbers from 2022.



The Spanish classes are a great option for adults wanting to learn another language. Our Spanish classes take place at the Scheig Center where we offer Spanish beginner, intermediate, advanced, and a conversational class both in the spring and fall sessions.

Adult tennis lessons in 2023 had a total of 63 participants, increasing in size by almost 20 enrollments. The participants enjoyed learning and practicing the fundamentals of tennis, while also getting the chance to play matches with other players. We offer beginners lessons and combined intermediate/advanced lessons.

Ashley Schmidt, our partner with Debbie Daanen Photography, offered her Fundamentals of Photography introductory workshop at the Scheig Center in May. This is a two-day workshop that met on Tuesdays for two weeks. Participants learned about basic composition and lighting techniques and received hands-on instruction while putting their skills to use photographing the gardens at the Scheig Center. We had 22 participants sign up for this class, which is a 30% increase from last year.



After discussion with pickleball stakeholders and the community on how to best utilize the new Telulah pickleball complex, it was decided to adjust our program offerings. In the past we offered pickleball leagues, but after discussion, we realized there were several opportunities to play in pickleball leagues throughout the Fox Valley. To service community members that are new to the sport, six clinics were held

throughout the summer. These clinics were very well received and were offered at different times and days of the week. All the clinics were full, with 16 participants each. A total of 96 players participated and there was a waitlist for each clinic. These lessons were a perfect way for us to

connect new players to the pickleball community while teaching them the skills and basic rules to get started.

The Seed Guild is a nature-based program for adults that is run by Kari Witthuhn- Henning. This year Kari expanded her classes to include new, exciting topics. This year’s lineup included basket weaving, skincare cyanotype artwork, as well as her tried and true garden mocktails and forging classes. Some of the DIY and make and take classes did have an increased price and were hit or miss with the community. Overall, 96 participants enrolled in classes with the Seed Guild which was slightly down from last year with the increased number of classes.

	<u>Participants</u>
Adult Dance	151
Spanish	94
Tennis Lessons	63
Photography	22
Adult Pickleball	96
Seed Guild	96
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 522

Adult Sports Leagues

Our 2023 adult flag football league played on Wednesday nights at Appleton Memorial Park. They started in August with games through early October. There were 12 teams in the league with eight returning from previous years. For the third year in a row, we have worked through the season with field monitors rather than certified officials. The change has resulted in the same attendance and play in the league has remained the same.



	<u>Participants</u>
Adult Flag Football	180
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 180

Aquatics

Aquatics is an ever-evolving program for Appleton Parks and Recreation. Care and consideration have been made to design hours and classes that work for the community as well as a balance safety for the staff and participants alike.

Before the summer started, recruiting and training was a large focus. Appleton North and West both offered lifeguard training classes to their students. Recruiting efforts were made to try and entice the newly certified to work for Appleton Parks and Recreation. A handful of staff were hired from these visits to the classes. On the other hand, three lifeguard training classes were

offered to the community in the spring in March, April, and May. Out of the 32 people certified through the program, 17 (53%) worked the summer season at Erb or Mead Pools.

For lifeguard staffing, Appleton Parks and Recreation had 80 certified lifeguards across all positions (lifeguards/swim instructors, pool managers, and directors of instruction). 33 new lifeguards were hired increasing the staff by 25% from 2022. Overall, many staff members returned and with the shift in operating hours, learned new roles and responsibilities combining positions. This was primarily for cashiers and concessionaires. Slide attendants at both locations were all new, but we were able to fully staff the positions at the pools before the summer began. An assistant pool manager position was added to the staff at both locations. This position is a hybrid between lifeguard and pool manager to help gain experience and bridge the knowledge gap at the pools. For all the pool manager positions, there were 18 applicants, which was great to see as it showed employees wanted to advance within aquatics.



Meetings and training were a focal point for staff before the season began. Staff and position meetings and general training are vital to beginning the season. Individual meetings were held for cashiers and concessionaires where we reviewed policies and procedures as well as had time to practice using the demo site of RecTrac. Slide attendants were trained on the rules for slides as well as other responsibilities at the facility. Training for lifeguards was broken down into multiple sessions from learning the facility to practicing procedures. One of the trainings was a “live call” with Appleton Fire Department and Gold Cross response. They watched the staff perform care, demonstrate their role in emergency care, and ask questions of the EMS team. It was a great learning experience.

Pool hours were altered this season for a few reasons. The public hours were mirrored between locations to not cause confusion between hours at Erb and Mead Pools. There was some dissent from the community regarding the new hours, but ultimately, the alterations did not eliminate many hours, it simply required a shift in vision for the community. Keeping consistent in 2024 will have the community more onboard with the changes.

It was a challenging year at the pools starting the first week when we had two calls to emergency services for situations at Erb Pool. One child was displaying signs of a possible concussion after going down the slides. Another child had fallen off a concessions bench and required resuscitation and treatment for a spinal injury. On July 31, staff had to lock down Erb Pool due to an active shooter incident near the pavilion. Staff bravely stayed inside the facility with patrons and kept them calm and safe until released by the police. Mead Pool had a situation where two youth patrons got into a physical altercation. Police were not called as the staff handled the incident internally. Overall, the pool managers and staff handled each situation with tact, self-control, and professionalism.

In the fall, Krystal developed a leadership training series for senior lifeguard staff called Poolside Chats. This series will help lifeguards foster soft skills and bridge the gap to management at the

pools. Topics covered in 2023 were interest versus commitment in the workplace, perception as an aspect of communication, and methods and aspects of communication. There has been positive feedback from participating staff, and we will continue to offer this optional training opportunity.

Swim Lessons

Swim lessons continued to be a well enrolled program in 2023. Overall, enrollment increased 15% in 2023. Class offerings and times stayed relatively the same over the season. In the summer, there was movement of the upper levels to not mirror at the two locations as well as with the special needs program to accommodate summer school programming.



Starting in the summer, all swim lessons had a \$5.00 increase in price. This did not affect enrollment in the summer or fall sessions. The directors of instruction worked well with the administrative team to quickly adjust enrollees that were in multiple sessions to optimize enrollment for summer lessons.

Later in summer, we set up a diving clinic at the urging of staff members. This four-class clinic was offered two days a week during the evening swim lessons at Erb Pool. The class was developed by a staff member to cover the basics of diving with an emphasis on safety and fun. The class had nine enrollees with a small waiting list.

We continued our collaboration with the Even Start Program at Fox Valley Technical College (FVTC). The Even Start Program works on family literacy for non-English-speaking parents. Most of the families who participate in this program are refugees. We work with FVTC to ensure these families qualify for the fee waiver program and the college pays the nominal fee for participants. This summer the Erb Pool staff worked with 46 children, ranging from 3-14 years old. Basic swimming skills and water safety are taught to participants.

	<u>Participants</u>
East Pool Swim Lessons	257
Erb Pool Swim Lessons	869
Mead Pool Swim Lessons	763
West Pool Swim Lessons	339
Even Start Program	46
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 2,274



Open Swim

As always, the outdoor pool season started off with a hot and busy day. Erb and Mead Pools opened on Friday, June 2. Right out the gate, there was beautiful, warm weather and large numbers of people headed to the pools. The summer seemed to alternate by week between above and below average temperatures. This limited our ability to see the true impact of the new pool hours.

This summer, a group rate was put into place for non-profit organizations and day care providers. These groups would sign up in advance to get a reduced rate for visits to the pool. There were established rules and regulations to ensure proper supervision and swim attire for visiting groups. Staff was also able to prepare for the groups' attendance. Overall, there were five organizations who visited throughout the summer at both locations. This process made for an easy and quick entrance.

Monitoring attendance was a season long issue using RecTrac. Communication with Vermont Systems started early in the summer because summer pass scans were not shown as being recorded at Erb Pool. It took until September to get a better idea of the issue, but that did not remedy the problem. More conversations and possible redevelopment with Finance will need to take place to hopefully make for a smoother 2024. The below numbers for visits may be slightly skewed because of this chronic problem.

Mead Pool

Lap Swim (paid)	244
Open Swim (paid)	19,736
Twilight Swim (paid)	1,841
Lap and Open Swim (passes)	6,227

Erb Pool

Lap Swim (paid)	486
Open Swim (paid)	33,198
Twilight Swim (paid)	3,297
Lap and Open Swim (passes)	5,420

Total	70,449
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Swim Passes

Summer pool passes are an option for individuals and families who visit the pools often during the season. The summer pass allows unlimited access to public hours and the punch pass permits 12 visits. Every season an early bird discount is offered to residents. This year the pass sale was extended until the day of the pool opening. This accounted for long lines and mass sales at the customer service office right up until the pools opened. Presales from the previous year were nearly doubled.

This year there was an increase in price for summer passes; all passes, with the exception of youth summer pass, were increased by \$20. Punch passes were altered to be the price of ten

visits, which was an increase of \$10. It was determined that the youth summer pass should be kept without an increase in 2023. Because of this, the early bird price and the punch card were the same price. Due to this, youth punch pass sales decreased by about 50%, however, there was a significant increase of youth summer pass sales. Overall revenue from pool passes increased by 40%.

In 2023 we introduced new fobs to replace summer passes. These cards are similar to memberships for gyms where they can be used year to year. Once the pass is scanned at the pool, the individual's picture pops up on the screen. Staff is able to take pictures to update, but a new pass does not have to be reissued. This should be easy for future seasons and lower the cost for materials.



Pass	Discount Price Sales 11/28/2022- 6/2/23	Full Price Sales Starting 6/3/2023	Total Sales
Adult Pass	30	3	33 (-7)
Senior Pass	27	4	31 (+4)
Youth Pass	59	59	118 (+57)
Family Pass	372	165	537 (+36)
Family Additional	1019	467	1,486 (+88)
Adult Punch Pass	20	78	98 (-44)
Senior Punch Pass	3	21	24 (-13)
Youth Punch Pass	39	127	166 (-151)
Total Pass Sales for 2023			2,523 (-30)
These sales represent both resident and non-resident passes			

Pool Rentals

Renting the pool for birthday parties, family reunions, school events, and other gatherings is a popular option. We offer two choices for the community. First is a private rental after public swim times, which are offered on weekend mornings and evenings at both locations. This season we added Friday evenings at Mead Pool which had several bookings. The second option is a party package during open swim time. The rental spaces can be reserved for three hours. 10 youth admissions and 2 adult admissions are included in the cost. These events can happen any day of the week. Erb hosts the outdoor Cabana and the indoor Oasis Room, while Mead offers the on-deck shade pavilion.

Private rentals were limited again this season to ensure we have proper staffing for public hours and rentals without straining the staff. We were able to accommodate most rentals requests. Pool rentals also saw an increase in fees in 2023, with private rentals increasing \$50 per hour and party packages by \$25. The rise in prices did not deter people from booking the pools. Overall, pool rentals were up by 11%.

	<u># of 2023 Rentals</u>
<u>PRIVATE RENTALS</u>	
Erb 50-Meter Pool	5
Erb Pool – Leisure	9
Erb Pool- Both	1
Mead Pool	20
<u>SHADE RENTALS</u>	
Erb Pool Cabana	27
Erb Pool Oasis	13
Mead Pool Shade	15
<hr/>	
Total Rentals	90

Local swim teams rent space at Erb Pool to have swim practice during the summer. Two teams continued this in 2023: Fox Cities YMCA Swim Team and Fox Valley Wave. A third team used to rent space, but that team dissolved after 2022. As with other programs, pool rental space fees were increased \$15 hour. However, this did not limit the teams from using the space. The teams share the space, and the price, in an amiable way. Practices start when the pool opens for the season and continue through end of July- beginning of August, depending on the success of their team.

Aquatic Special Events

During the pool season, each pool held a fun day to celebrate the summer with the patrons at the pools. Staff chose a theme and created games and activities for patrons to participate in. These events are not highly advertised to the community and acted in more of a pop-up format. This summer, Erb Pool had Packers Day in July and Mead Pool had Pirate Day in August. Both events were successful with themed games and contests. Pirate Day even had a ship making station. Staff at both locations had fun rotating responsibilities from running games and monitoring the pool.



The Fox Cities YMCA Swim Team hosted the Summer Classic on June 17-18 and the Bird Bath Invitational on July 7-9 at Erb Pool. Staff from both organizations meet to go over details of the meet to ensure for smooth events. With that, the YMCA oversees most of the event, while our staff is responsible for lifeguarding. The swim meets went well this year and we will continue with conversations, meetings, and follow ups to ensure for positive and productive events.

We had another great finish to the Mead Pool season with Doggie Day at the Pool. On Saturday, August 19 our canine friends joined us for a dip in the pool. This year we split the sessions differently to have two sessions for large dogs and one session for small dogs in between. Overall, 74 pups were registered with 15 walk-ups. As always, pet parents were thrilled at the opportunity to bring their dogs to the pool for the event.

	<u>Participants</u>
Doggie Day at the Pool	89
Total	89

Pool Concessions

Concessions was slightly different this summer. Items were proactively stocked to be set for the start of the summer. However, some options were reduced based on sales the previous season. Throughout the summer, special items were added to the menu to gauge new interests. This did not work out as well as expected but we know we can vary items and they will sell.

Because of the change in hours, staffing was done a little differently. The twilight open swim shift was only staffed by a concessions manager selling prepackaged items such as beverages, ice cream, and sweet treats. Since there were reduced hours and a lot of returning staff, concessionaires and cashiers shared shifts to be able to get staff the hours they wanted. This was not always ideal with different responsibilities, but staff learned new skills and tasks, as well as got some diversity in their work week.

	<u>Revenues</u>	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Net Revenue</u>
Mead Pool	\$45,558.27	\$44,543.46	\$1,014.81
Erb Pool	<u>\$68,544.54</u>	<u>\$55,411.75</u>	<u>\$13,132.79</u>
Total	\$114,102.81	\$99,955.21	\$14,147.60

Fitness and Wellness

We offer a variety of fitness classes in the community, which include Yoga, Strongbodies, Zumba, and Pure Strength. We also offered a few new classes this year including Power Hour and Fitness Foundations. During spring, summer, and fall, if weather permits, we encourage our classes to get outside and enjoy the park scenery while taking the class. Classes continued to grow with a 17% increase in participation from 2022 to 2023.



We continued to partner with Lisa Kramer to offer a free Yoga in the Park class called “Rock Om.” This is a kickoff to the Mile of Music week with an outdoor yoga class and a pianist playing in the background. The weather was beautiful, which allowed for many community members to participate in this free event.

We have continued our partnership with Joy Jordan. The Mindfulness classes have two sections, 101 and 201, which include formal instruction on meditation, current mindfulness practices, and working through how to control difficult emotions. She also offered two Mindfulness Retreats throughout the year. We observed a significant decrease in participation 2023.

We partnered with Christy Sprotte, founder of Fox Valley Mindful Learners, LLC. Christy is a nationally certified school psychologist with years of mindfulness coaching. Christy has been with us for a couple of years and has tried various mindfulness classes. Through trial and error and soliciting feedback from her participants she is finding participants like classes to be parent/child driven. She offered four different craft & connect classes consisting of scrapbooking, building, painting, and crafting.



We also continued to partner with the Appleton YMCA for the fourth summer to offer free outdoor fitness classes including Yoga and Zumba at City Park and Houdini Plaza. These drop-in classes took place throughout the week in June through September.

	<u>Participants</u>
Zumba	101
Pure Strength	69
Yoga	412
YMCA Yoga in the Park	392
Strong Bodies	99
Mindfulness	71
Yoga in the Park “Rock Om”	30
Fitness Foundations	6
Power Hour	5
Mindfulness for Families	39
Total	1,224



Unity Dance & Acrobatics

Unity Dance & Acrobatics (UDA) went through many changes in 2023 including rebranding the program and a new physical location. UDA has experienced significant growth over the years with Acrobatics becoming the largest genre in the dance program. We wanted to create a logo that emphasized Acrobatics along with inclusivity and growth. We updated the UDA name from Unity Dance Academy to Unity Dance & Acrobatics allowing us to include Acrobatics and keep the popular acronym, UDA. We also revisited the UDA philosophy statement, updating the description to include our strongest assets: quality instruction, lasting friendships, supportive of family life balance, inclusivity, affordability, and promoting a healthy recreational activity for our community.





In 2023 we were faced with the challenge of having to change our physical location. With a lot of coordinated effort across our department, we were excited to host the grand opening of our new location inside the Northland Mall on August 28. We invited the Mayor, Council Members, and the community to showcase our new location. UDA has become a leading dance program in the community and was voted a runner up for Best of the Valley in the category of dance.

The annual UDA recital was held at a new location this year, Appleton West High School. The recital was called “Empowered to Dance” and consisted of four shows taking place on May 5 and 6. This year we had a difficult time finding a location that would host our recital. Therefore we had to push back our recital two months later than we usually have it. We had 500 dancers in our recital program this year, which was comprised of 50 classes in various genres, including ballet, jazz, acrobatics, hip hop, lyrical, tap, and musical theater. Over 2,658 tickets were sold between the four shows. The dancers and staff did a wonderful job putting on four successful shows.

Our summer dance program was also a little different this year. We began classes on June 19 in the City Center Plaza Studios. After the first week we held the remaining sessions in the commons at Appleton West High School due to us needing to leave City Center Plaza. For summer we offered twenty-six youth dance classes for 6-weeks. We saw a large enrollment increase for summer classes from last year.

Our 2023-2024 fall youth dance season began the week of September 25. Enrollment numbers have gone up a significant amount from last season with 667 students enrolled. This year we are offering 56 classes total. To keep up with the demand, we offered more beginner classes than last year. We are offering ballet, jazz, acrobatics, hip hop, tap, modern, and musical theater. Acrobatics continues to be our most popular genre.

	<u>Participants</u>
Summer Youth Dance	317
Fall Youth Dance	667
Total	984



Special Events/Trips

We teamed up with the Appleton Police Department for the 3rd year to provide the Toy Ride-Along for the community. Just like previous years, we hit our maximum participation with 50 toys signed up. We worked with APD to coordinate the event, with the toy drop off and pick up at our office. The process gets more efficient each year and the police officers have more fun with it each year. Participants were given a certificate that included photos of their toys from throughout the week. We shared pictures on social media and many officers took time to write a personal note to the toy's owners as well.



Our department, a co-creator of Be Active Wisconsin Community Challenge, ran our third year of this challenge in March 2023. This challenge promotes people getting out and being active during the month of March. The community with the highest average active minutes based on number of participants was crowned the fittest community. This program has seen a decline in the number of communities participating. Last year we had 49 communities and this year we had 31. Appleton continues to lead with the highest number of participants throughout all 31 communities with 80 participants. The planning committee met at the completion of the challenge and determined to discontinue this program.



On March 25, our recreation team organized our first Mom Prom[®] event hosted at The Fox Club in the Fox Cities stadium. The planning for this event began in December of 2022, with the goal being to offer a program that would fundraise money to offset the cost of our scholarship fee waiver program that supports youth programming. We got to work planning for the event reaching out to local businesses for sponsorship money and donations. We were humbled by the number of businesses that were eager to support this event. With social media marketing, flyers, emails, and word of mouth, we had 299 participants register for this event raising \$8,835 after all expenses were paid. The evening was a huge success with so much dancing and laughter.

On April 22, we teamed up with local Geo Cachers and the Wisconsin Geocaching Association (WGA) to offer our third Cache In Trash Out (CITO) event in celebration of Earth Day. We had over 70 enrolled and close to 15 local geocachers came out to support the event. We started the event with a presentation on how to geocache and went over the basic steps of the geocaching phone app. Families then took off to clean up parks and hunt for caches. Fox 11 came out and did three segments on the event.



On Friday, June 9, we held our Ties and Tiaras event located at the Scheig Center. We had 75 couples attend our three one hour time slots. Our families enjoyed a magical evening filled with a bike ride for two, a professional photo by Debbie Daanen Photography, crafts, refreshments and snacks, and a dance party including a dance lesson for two. The Fox Cities Cycling Without Age donated two trishaws and pilots and Nick's DJ service provided music for the event. We received many compliments on the décor and the way the event flowed.

We had two Fun Runs this summer, the first of which was held on June 22, titled "Smiles and a Movie." This event is tied with the Movie on the Hill to provide a fun evening for families at Appleton Memorial Park. We continued to partner with RunAway Shoes to help us organize the event layout. Nick from Nick's DJ Services provided the musical entertainment. We had 272 kids registered for this run. On July 23, we had our Color Me Fun Run, which is the kick-off event for Children's Week. The event was a great success with over 400 kids registered.



We had four Movie on the Hill (MOTH) events scheduled, but due to inclement weather, we were only able to show three of the movies. On June 22, we played our first movie *The Bad Guys*. This movie was scheduled the same day as our Fun Run to give families a fun night out together at Appleton Memorial Park. We showed *Sonic the Hedgehog 2* on July 6 and *Top Gun: Maverick* on July 20. Due to poor weather, we had to cancel our last movie, *The Minions: The Rise of the Gru*, which was scheduled for August 3. Open canoeing and kayaking were offered on the pond prior to the start of each movie as well as kid's games. We averaged 250 people per show.



U.S. Venture Children's Week was held July 23-29. Our division had numerous activities going on throughout the week:

Sunday, July 23 was free day at Erb and Mead Pool for children. This year was busier than the previous, possibly due to warm temperatures. Erb had about 450 children take advantage and Mead had 200. Overall, a successful event for the start of Children's Week.

On July 23, we had our kick-off event, Color Me Fun Run. The event was a great success with over 400 kids registered. We had RunAway Shoes run the race logistics and Nick DJ service provided musical entertainment for the race.

New this year, we worked with the Fire Department to coordinate a pop-up splashpad at Lundgaard Park on July 24 from 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. They set up a truck and multiple hoses to spray down the neighborhood kids. It was a warm day and we had well over 200 kids show up throughout that



time frame. The popularity of the event has led to discussions of how we could do more of these events in the future on very hot days. The Police Department also came out to support the event.

Our Kid's Rummage Sale took place in Pierce Park on Tuesday, July 25, from 9:00 a.m. - noon. Children from the community brought gently used toys, games, clothing, and other items to sell. We promoted the children being the salesperson with support from their parents. Each family got a picnic table to sell from in the pavilion. This year, the temperatures were soaring for this event, topping off in the 90s. We had a full roster with 30 vendors signed up for the event, but we only had 19 show up to the event. Weather is the most likely reason behind the limited interest in the event.



That Tuesday was also our Dance-O-Rama event at Pierce Park. We had 23 dancers participate. We offered ballet, jazz, and hip hop. The 23 kids that attended had a great time and all were given information on classes for fall.



Wednesday was the annual Children's Parade that marched from Houdini Plaza to City Park. The playground program participates in this every year with some of the parkees and this year they dressed up in a beach theme. This event is primarily run through the Building for Kids with our assistance/support.

We had our annual Playground Fair on July 27 & 28. This event went down in the books for being one of the hottest fairs we have had. The temperatures approached 100 degrees on Thursday. This impacted our ticket and concession sales, but we still had decent attendance both days. Over the two days we made \$9,682 in ticket and concession sales. This is down from last year at \$15,000. We partnered with several organizations including the Appleton Police Department, Appleton Fire Department, Lamers Bus Lines, and Urban Air. They all provided a vehicle for kids to explore. We had over 20 different games/activities besides the inflatables for kids to enjoy playing and earning tickets to redeem at the prize redemption station. Overall, the playground fair was a great success. The staff did a great job keeping up their motivation and energy levels with the hot temperatures!

The Great Ball Pursuit – This is the 4th year we have taken the tennis balls from our programs and used them for a community engagement event. We used the same format as last year and numbered 400 balls and had four different drop times at 16 different parks. Community members participating were asked to grab only one ball. We had many issues with adults taking several balls. There was even an infamous “bald man on a motorcycle” that made multiple stops collecting numerous balls who was posted about on social media. We announced four winning numbers, and each winner received a \$25 gift card. The \$100 was sponsored by Dryer Vent Wizard. The man who reportedly collected numerous balls was NOT one of the winners! We still believe the event is fun for the community, but we will discuss if



adjustments need to be made to stop people from hoarding the balls. The article we wrote about the program for a Parks and Recreation Business Magazine was published in May 2023.

We had three bus trips in 2023. On Friday, May 12, we took 45 participants to The Fireside Theater to see the musical *Grumpy Old Men* in Fort Atkinson, where we enjoyed a delicious full course meal. On October 7, we took a full bus to Galena, IL. Participants enjoyed Galena's annual County Fair along with shopping in their historic downtown area. We took two buses to Chicago for our annual bus trip on Saturday, November 11. We had 100 people signed up for the Chicago trip. Lamers did a great job getting us there and back.



The bike rodeos continued to be a huge success for the community. We offered two bike rodeos, one in May for Bike Safety month and one in June. We partnered with Safe Routes to School through the East Central Planning Commission to provide bike safety stations that focused on braking, looking for pedestrians, bike maintenance, and bike signals. This was the first year we partnered with Jim Hansen, who owns a mobile bicycle repair business called Pedal Worxs Mobile. He checked every bike and made on-spot corrections/fixes to each bike that needed it.

This year Fox Crossing Parks and Recreation hosted the annual "A Day in the Park" at Fritsch Park on September 12. This is a collaboration between Appleton, Fox Crossing, Neenah, and Menasha Park and Recreation departments along with the YMCA of the Fox Cities. We had 200 participants attend. Participants enjoyed bingo, live music with Paul Everson, rickshaw bike rides in the park, and door prizes. We had several sponsors that financially supported this program including Network Health, Highlands, and Touchmark.



We continue to partner with the Appleton Public Library offering a Story Walk® with monthly rotating books on display located on the trails behind the Scheig Center. The Story Walk® was incorporated in some of our scavenger hunts and holiday events. It is impossible to calculate exactly how many families enjoyed the Story Walk® but we estimate approximately 300 families walked through the Story Walk® throughout the year.

Everyone's favorite fall event took place on Friday, October 13—the 4th annual Glow in the Park. As we did last year, the event was opened to 100 families across five timeslots to come through the event. There was a nominal fee of \$15 for residents/\$20 for non-residents. Fees helped cover the supplies for hosting the event. A few days before the event, we realized the weather was not going to cooperate. This event is usually held at the Scheig Center and Gardens in Appleton Memorial Park. Due to the weather the team worked to partner with the Fox Cities YMCA to host the event inside their facility downtown, which was a fantastic collaboration. As in the past, we had the book from the Story Walk® along with some interactive features. Seven local organizations, volunteers from the Kaukauna High School Key Club, the Police Explorers, and

some aquatic staff members helped facilitate carnival like games and other activities. With the quick thinking and adaptation of the Recreation team, the event was a success.



This was our fourth year offering the Letters to Santa program. It continued to be a great program for kids to write to Santa and receive a letter back before Christmas. We provide a template for kids to fill out and drop off during the holiday season. The Recreation team enjoyed reading each letter and wrote back to 365 children.

The Great Holiday Dash was a success for the 4th straight year! We allowed for 50 teams and all the spots were claimed a week prior to the event. They competed for \$1,000 in cash prizes that were donated by Fox Communities Credit Union. This is a fun road rally where teams “dash” around town to shoot short videos, take pictures, mark GPS spots, and answer trivia questions during the 3-hour competition. We again utilized the GooseChase app to which we uploaded 100 clues pertaining to our Christmas theme and Appleton Area businesses and landmarks. Based on the post event survey, the participants want the event to continue for years to come!



To celebrate Christmas this year, we created the Santa’s Lucky Socks Scavenger Hunt. The sneaky elf was hidden in a new location each week of December in Appleton Memorial Park. The 22 participants and their families had fun hunting him down and entering for a chance to win socks donated by Scheels.

	<u>Participants</u>
Toy Ride-Along	50
Be Active Wisconsin	80
Mom Prom	299
CITO	70
Ties and Tiaras	150
Kids Fun Runs	672
Letters to Santa	365
Bike Rodeos	159
Kids Rummage Sale	170
Movie on the Hill/Canoe	750
Appleton Children’s Week	8,000
Bus Trips	200
Great Ball Pursuit	400
A Day in the Park	200
Story Walk	unknown
Glow in the Park	428
Great Holiday Dash	200 (50 teams)
Santa’s Lucky Socks	22
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Total:	12,215

Facilities

Scheig Center

The Scheig Center continues to be a popular place to rent for weddings, bridal and baby showers, birthday parties, and holiday gatherings. In 2023, we had 97 rentals. The Recreation Division has also continued their use of the Scheig Center by offering programs on-site such as Yoga, Strength Training, Seed Guild, Mindfulness, Appletots, photography classes, library programming, and interdepartmental meetings/parties. The Friends of the Gardens group meets to have their volunteer meetings throughout the year. The Scheig Center continues to serve as a polling station for the City of Appleton as well.



Winter Recreation Facilities

Winter Recreation had a very unfortunate season. The facilities were open December 26, 2022, to February 26, 2023. There was snow to be able to open the sledding hill and the Cozy Clubhouse at Reid in December. There were four days of sledding before the temperatures increased and melted the snow we had. There was no snow accumulation again until January 21 when the Cozy Clubhouse was reopened. Throughout the entire season, we were only open thirteen days, yet revenue from concession sales increased by about 31%.

The ice-skating rinks across the city had a difficult season with the warm temperatures. Because the liner is on top of concrete, the Pierce Park ice rink under the pavilion was used several times throughout the season. There would be times the ice would melt, but it was easier to freeze with those conditions than on the grass. The Jones Park rinks and the Goaltender were only open the weekend of February 3. Opening these rinks was highly anticipated with hockey players and skaters ready to get on the ice. However, February 3- 6 were the only days ice was available at the Jones Park rinks. Warm temperatures quickly melted the ice the following week.

This season we began the rental of the ice skates donated by the Leadership Fox Cities, BLC Community Bank, Nicolet Bank, Scheels, and Business Lending Group, LLC. Rentals were offered when the Goaltender was open to the public for a nominal fee.

	<u>Attendance</u>
Reid Golf Course & Cozy Clubhouse	2,924
Jones Park & The Goaltender	313
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Total	3,237



Program Category	Participants
Pre-School/Early Childhood	920
Youth Activities	2,244
Youth Sports Leagues/Camps	3,751
Teens	115
Adult Activities	522
Adult Sports Leagues	180
Swim Lessons	2,274
Open Swim	70,449
Aquatics Programs/Events	89
Fitness/Wellness	1,224
Unity Dance Academy	984
Special Events/Trips	12,215
Winter Recreation Facilities	3,237
Total:	98,204



Volunteer Numbers

Youth Basketball	84	Coaches for leagues
Youth Baseball	110	Coaches for leagues
Youth Flag Football	34	Coaches for leagues
Youth Soccer	91	Coaches for leagues
Unity Dance Recital	71	Ushers, backstage volunteers/police explorers
Playground Fair	23	Volunteers to help with games/inflatables/police explorers
Junior Leader Program	14	Volunteer at playground sites during summer program
Glow in the Park	18	Set up and running games/activities
Total	445	

Sponsorships/Donations

Donations:

- Julie Johnson, race director, from Community First Fox Cities Marathon donated 400 goodie bags and presented us with \$1,500 to help support our Kids' Fun Run events.
- Evergreen Credit Union was the sponsor of the Youth Basketball League T-Shirts for \$2,500.
- Fox Communities Credit Union sponsored our Mom Prom event, donating \$1,500. We also received \$100 from Theda Care. Many local businesses also donated products and services for our raffle prizes.
- The Wisconsin Geocaching Association donated \$50 to help with expenses for our annual Cache In Trash Out event in support of Earth Day.
- The Fox Cities Cycling Without Age donated 2 trishaws and pilots for our Ties and Tiaras event.
- Our youth baseball/softball league was sponsored again this year by Engage Orthodontics of Appleton. They provided a financial donation of \$2,000.
- Community Blood Center sponsored the June 22 Movie on the Hill event providing \$600. They gave out free kites to the kids at the event.
- Dryer Vent Wizard sponsored the August 3 Movie on the Hill event giving \$500.
- Dryer Vent Wizard sponsored the June 22 Fun Run event giving \$250 to help off-set the costs of the event.
- Tri City Glass worked with us on a price for new mirrors for our new dance studios. They were able to give us a \$5,000 discount in exchange for sponsorship benefits.
- \$11,916 was our portion of the proceeds given by local businesses and organizations toward Children's Week events.
- Alliance Industries was the sponsor of the Youth Soccer League for \$2,500.
- Fox Communities Credit Union once again donated \$1,000 towards the 2023 Great Holiday Dash. They committed to the event early in the year which is great for marketing purposes.
- We received a \$100 donation from North East Skateboard Trust, \$250 from the Timber Rattlers, and \$100 from Team Winnebagoland for Glow in the Park. We also had numerous donations of candy, trinkets, coupons, and gift certificates by local businesses/organizations.
- Urban Air paid \$500 sponsor fee to set up their truck to promote their services at the annual Playground Fair.
- We raised \$850 in donations from Unity Dance & Acrobatics families and local business for the dance recital program book.



Community Partnerships:

- Partnered once again with the Police Department on the Toy Ride Along program.
- Partnered with RunAway Shoes and Nick the DJ to offer race logistics and musical entertainment for our two Fun Runs.
- Coordinated with the Fire Department to provide first aid training and how to handle emergencies in the parks with playground staff.
- Partnered with Appleton Police and Fire Departments for guest speakers during our Paw Patrol Friday Fun theme day.
- Partnered with Scheels to offer free socks to the winners of our Santa's Lucky Socks scavenger hunt.
- Partnered with Einstein Project to offer mobile stem activities throughout our city parks.
- Partnered with Wisconsin Geocaching Association to offer a Cache In Trash Out event to celebrate Earth Day.
- Worked with Appleton Fire Department and Gold Cross to provide Emergency Procedures Training at Mead and Erb Pools.
- Partnered with the Fox Cities YMCA Swim Team to put on the Fox Cities Summer Classic and the Bird Bath Swim Meets.
- Partnered with Fox Cities Cycling Without Age to offer bike rides for our Ties and Tiaras event.
- Partnered with the Appleton Public Library to offer library programming for early childhood, youth, and adults in our community.
- Partnered with East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission for our two Bike Rodeos located at Mead Park and Jefferson Elementary School.
- Partnered with the Appleton Police Department to provide a squad car and an officer for both bike rodeos.
- Partnered with Jim Hansen with Pedalworx to offer free bike tune-ups at both of our bike rodeos.
- Partnered with the YMCA to offer Zumba and Yoga classes at Houdini and City Park.
- Partnered with the Building for Kids, the Appleton YMCA, and other community businesses/organizations to host the annual Children's Week event.
- Partnered with Appleton Fire Department to set up a free pop-up splash pad at Lundgaard Park during Children's Week.
- Partnered with several organizations to make the Playground Fair a wonderful event. Appleton Police Department, Appleton Fire Department, and Lamers Bus Lines all provide a vehicle for kids to explore. Einstein Project provided free pop-up STEM projects at the fair. The Appleton Sensory Club provided a volunteer to work a game station from 12:30 – 2:00 p.m. during our sensory sensitive time open to those patrons that have special needs.



- Continued to partner with the Appleton Public Library to offer monthly rotating books on our Story Walk® in Memorial Park.
- Continued to collaborate with Neenah, Menasha and Fox Crossing Parks and Recreation Departments along with the YMCA of Fox Cities for the annual “A Day in the Park” which was held at Fritsch Park in Fox Crossing on September 12.
- Partnered with Lisa Kramer with Sunny Side Up Yoga to offer Yoga in the Park on August 3.
- Worked in coordination with Fox Valley Athletics to ensure the continued success of the adult softball leagues at Appleton Memorial Park.
- Partnered with Debbie Daanen Photography to provide Fundamentals of Photography class at the Scheig Center.
- Continued our marketing partnership with Karate America and The Academy to offer Karate Fun classes for ages 4-12.
- Partnered with the Wisconsin Herd Basketball Club to offer “Hoops with the Herd.” This was offered again after a year off and over 125 people utilized the ticket discount and represented the APRD basketball program at the February 6th Herd game in Oshkosh.
- Collaborated with USA Youth Sports Complex on the use of their soccer fields for our youth soccer leagues for grades K-8.
- Partnered with Joy Jordan to offer Mindfulness classes.
- Partnered with Christy Sprotte to offer family mindfulness classes.
- Partnered with Kidstage to offer fun theatre-based classes for ages 4-12.
- Partnered with Debbie Daanen Photography to offer a free photo opportunity for the Ties and Tiaras event.
- Partnered with the Fox Valley Technical School Even Start program to provide swim lessons to refugee families.
- Partnered with Youth Enrichment League (YEL) to offer coding classes at Pierce Park.
- Partnered with Tanya Rosenthal to teach babysitting training classes to 10- 14-year-olds.
- Partnered with Kari Witthuhn-Henning with the Seed Guild to provide Nature programs for adults.
- Continued partnership with Appleton Lacrosse Club to work with youth grades 1- 8.
- Continued to partner with Northeast Skateboarding Trust (NEST) to give skateboarding lessons to youth ages 5-16.
- Shifted to a marketing partnership with the Fox Valley Rowing Club to offer Learn to Row Classes held at the Telulah Park Boat Launch.
- Partnered with Fox Cities YMCA to host the Glow in the Park event.
- Partnered with Appleton Police Department to provide police explorers for all four shows at the Unity Dance & Acrobatics recital. They provided six explorers that helped direct traffic and provide safety for our spectators and students.
- Partnered with Appleton Police Department to provide police explorers to watch over the playground fair equipment. They provided two explorers that stayed overnight at Pierce Park watching over all the playground fair equipment and set-up of games.

Community Outreach:

- In January, Krystal went to Appleton North and West High Schools to talk with soon to be certified lifeguards about employment opportunities at Erb and Mead Pools.
- Jeff and Liz attended the job fair at Fox Valley Lutheran High School on March 2 where they were able to promote our open positions and talk with students about their interests.
- Laura and Krystal attended the Appleton North High School job fair on March 30 to talk to students about employment opportunities for the summer.
- On April 12, Jeff and Krystal attended the job fair at Appleton West High School to discuss summer employment opportunities with APRD.
- Jeff shared upcoming summer programs at Badger Elementary School.
- Margaret and Niki worked at the Fox Cities Kids Expo that took place at the Exhibition Center on April 15th. We brought the trikes to fit in the theme of “Kids in Motion.” It was a big hit and we were able to promote our upcoming spring/summer programs.
- On May 3, Krystal attended a community event at Horizon Elementary School to share summer programs offered with APRD.
- Niki presented information to community stakeholders about Children’s Week during the “Curiosity Chat” event at the Building for Kids.
- On May 5 Niki presented at the Kiwanis Club meeting with Tom to talk about programs and services we offer.
- On May 11 Liz attended the Rotary Club meeting to talk about summer programs.
- On May 18, Laura, Margaret, and Liz attended the City Celebration event that was put on by the City Departments.
- Niki worked with Long Vue from the NEW Hmong Professionals group to collaborate on a volleyball program that took place at Kiwanis Park on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.
- Being proactive, Krystal went to Appleton West High School to talk to the two lifeguard training classes about employment opportunities for the summer at Erb and Mead Pools.
- Niki met with the Linwood Retirement community to talk about our programs/services.
- Jeff and Liz attended the Back-to-School Bash event at Jefferson Elementary School on August 31 to help promote fall and winter programming.
- Margaret and Jeff worked with Kelley Duehring from AASD to get 12 refugee children registered for youth soccer. 9 of them qualified for our fee waiver program and the 3 others we assisted with registration as their parents speak minimal English.
- Jeff and Margaret attended the Sports Discovery Night at the Community First Champion Center on September 26.
- Krystal attended a community event at Johnston Elementary School on November 14. At this event we were able to provide information on programs offered in the winter season.



Marketing Highlights

- In 2023, we posted 393 Facebook posts and 300 Instagram posts. Our Facebook reach was 1,678,393, which was an increase of 29% from last year. Instagram reach was 139,128, which was an increase of 42% from 2022. We attracted 1,493 new Facebook followers to bring us to 14,935. Our Instagram followers increased by 426, putting us at 2,841.
- Although our winter recreation season was very short in 2023, Margaret was prepared with new signage for Jones Park that included hours for family skate times and information about the new skate rental program. We hope to have more of a season in 2024 so we can market our amenities and bring more awareness to the winter recreation we provide the community.
- We engaged the community in choosing a mascot for our department. River the Fox was chosen! He was introduced during our Toy Ride Along week in April and has gone to the Unity dance recital, Mead Pool, Scheig Gardens, Baseball, and many more events and programs this year.
- One of our most watched videos this summer was “A Day at Erb Pool.” Between the pool staff, Niki, and Krystal we were able to capture the videos and Margaret edited them into the final product that was shared on social media so community members can see what takes place at Erb Pool throughout a normal day and be reassured that the facility is being used to its full potential.
- Laura, Niki, Liz, and Margaret finalized the brand refresh of Unity Dance Academy. We renamed the program Unity Dance & Acrobatics, still using the UDA initials. The logo, colors and fonts have been reworked. The new logo was introduced at the recital in May.
- Margaret designed new signage for the new Unity Dance & Acrobatics studios. Exterior sign, decal for waiting room, and individual studio signs. She also designed a new bulletin board for the open house, a meet the teacher bulletin board, and a bulletin board for the start of classes.
- We held a Unity Dance & Acrobatics new studio open house and ribbon cutting ceremony on August 28th. We had well over 100 people come to tour the studios and learn about our program. We had water bottle stickers printed to hand out at the open house and car decals for participants to purchase.
- Margaret updated our display board and printed flyers for each of our community outreach events. She tailored the promotional information to the expected audience. We had displays and flyers for job fairs, sports focused events, early childhood focused events, and school events.
- Margaret, Jeff, and Niki finalized the renaming of our youth sports leagues. The leagues are now known as the “A” League. This includes basketball, soccer, flag football, and t-ball/baseball/softball. We worked with a graphic designer to come up with new logos for the league and then a specific logo for each sport. We introduced the new name and logo in the spring/summer activity guide and have followed up with targeted emails and social media campaigns. As we closed out 2023, we adopted the new name and logo through



all 4 sports leagues. It was great to see the logos on all the t-shirts in each season and out in the community. We are excited at how well it has taken off and we will continue to push the name and philosophies in the coming years.

- Margaret designed a new “A” League banner that is placed at the ball diamonds at AMP to help promote the new branding for the sports leagues. She also put together signs for each of the dugouts with QR codes to our website containing schedules, field maps, and standings.
- Jeff and Margaret completed an entire year of newsletter style communication for the A-Leagues. We typically send 4-5 per season and the proactive communication has proved to decrease the number of questions that Stephanie and Jeff receive throughout the season.
- We started a trend with our pool opening videos and we wanted to continue that for 2023. After kicking around ideas, we finally landed on the iconic “Caddyshack” scene. Dave Wentworth played the lead as the Bill Murray character and Margaret directed a group of lifeguards and managers for the rest of the scenes. We reached 7,000 views on Facebook and over 25,000 views on Instagram.
- In April we started promoting our Playground Program by putting yard signs out at all the parks that are playground sites. The signs included a QR code if people had questions regarding the program.
- Once the playground program staff was hired, Margaret put together a “Meet the Leaders” information sheet with bios and pictures of the playground leaders to send to registered families and to post on our website so that families could get a better feel of who was spending time with their kids.
- We had a lot of promotion/marketing for Children’s Week this year. Niki was involved with the creation of promotional videos, in-studio radio appearances, live TV segments, etc.
- Margaret and Stephanie kept the website updated throughout the year. Extra time goes into this process in January, just before the spring/summer guide goes out, and in June, just before the fall/winter guide goes out.
- Margaret and Niki developed a document on summer weather guidelines that outlines how we handle cancellations with certain programs/events/leagues. This was posted to our website and shared on social media as an informational piece to be proactive with our communication strategy.
- We continued with our “APRD News You Can Use” newsletter for another year. We sent 26 newsletters for a total of 502,684 emails with our open rate increasing to 44% in 2023 from 40% in 2022. It is great to see nearly half of the emails are being opened. Keeping the branding of our newsletter consistent seems to be working as people know what to expect when they open the newsletter.
- We continue to increase our proactive communication with target emails sent through Constant Contact for our programs and events. In 2023, we sent 60 targeted emails which was an increase of 58% from 2022. The open rate on these emails averaged 74% which confirms that we are finding great success in our overall program communication. Also, recreation supervisors and customer service have noticed less questions on programming for which we utilize proactive communication.

- We tracked our website usage through Google Analytics in 2023 but, unfortunately, our data got disconnected and we lost tracking for November and December. With our data for the first 10 months, we had 685,273 page views and 142,751 visitors on www.appletonparkandrec.org. The page views were up 25% through the first 10 months but the visitors were down 30%. Hopefully that is a sign that visitors were just visiting all different pages on our site!
- Margaret and Niki continued to attend the monthly City Communication Team meetings.
- July was Parks and Recreation month. We changed our Facebook cover photo to celebrate the month.
- Once again, we developed and distributed two activity guides in 2023. The spring/summer guide was printed and mailed to all City residents. We chose not to print the fall/winter guide due to the increased cost of paper. Instead, a postcard was mailed to all residents stating the guide would only be available digitally on our website.

Other Notable Accomplishments/Areas of Interest

- Niki worked with IT to have our registration software program (RecTrac) server housed in the cloud. This process took place in April.
- Margaret worked with Vermont Systems to convert our WebTrac splash page to the new Gen UI version. She was able to reformat the layout to make it more user friendly.
- The recreation division team worked to develop guidelines to assist staff in handling our programs when the air quality is not favorable for outdoor programming. These guidelines were added to our severe weather policy.
- Niki worked collectively with the staff to develop emergency contact forms for staff. These forms were also run through our risk manager and legal services for final approval and then distributed to staff to complete.
- Margaret and Stephanie worked with Tom and Greg to update the athletic field agreement so that it reflects the new rates adopted by council and to make it easier for the customer to understand and complete.
- Niki developed a sponsorship guide outlining opportunities for businesses/organizations to get involved with our programs and events.
- Krystal and Margaret collaborated to develop a design for the fobs that we used for summer passes at the pool.
- Niki updated the MOU with the Appleton City Band.
- Lifeguard Lola Levin was honored on August 28 with the Youth Good Samaritan Award by the American Red Cross of Northeast Wisconsin at the Heroes Classic Golf outing. Along with her recognition, Officer Franzke from Neenah was also awarded the Emergency Response award. These honors stemmed from the July 16, 2022, event at Erb Pool.
- With the Mayor's Communications Specialist leaving, Margaret and Niki reached out to the City Communications Team to see if they wanted to continue meeting. The team agreed and starting meeting in person, rotating locations in April. The group has been productive in working together to share tips and tricks on how to communicate each department's information to the public.