100 Years of Recreation

Games, Photos & Stories from Milwaukee Recreation's Archives

www.MilwaukeeRecreation.net

MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
MILWAUKEE RECREATION
Experience Life.
In the Beginning...

Dorothy Enderis: Recreation Pioneer

It's difficult to imagine what Milwaukee Recreation would be without the visionary leadership and unforgettable legacy of Dorothy C. Enderis. Enderis joined our department with its creation in 1911, setting the standards and shaping the philosophies that still guide us today. When Enderis was appointed Director of Recreation in 1920, she had high expectations for her staff and led them through a series of major expansions. Under her guidance, Milwaukee became a model for the finest playground and social center programs in the nation. According to the Milwaukee Sentinel (10/2/34), “Miss Enderis is one of those pleasant and comfortable people, who, though being alert, never gives the impression of being hurried. She has a way of accomplishing everyday detail and revolutionary things with the same matter-of-fact ease.” When she retired on December 8, 1948, Enderis was honored by a crowd of 1,000+ residents who gathered at the Milwaukee Vocational School Auditorium. That evening, a bright electric sign was installed at City Hall to commemorate her monumental contributions to not only the city of Milwaukee, but the entire recreation profession. From that point forward, Enderis would forever be remembered as the “Lady of the Lighted Schoolhouse.”

Recreation is timeless, but...

You can follow Milwaukee Recreation's timeline at the bottom of every page.
The Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) Division of Recreation and Community Services was established in 1911 to enrich the lives of Milwaukee’s youth, teens, adults, and seniors through recreational and educational opportunities. Chapter 509 of the Wisconsin Laws of 1911 was reportedly the first of its kind to assign a local public school system the responsibility for organizing and conducting recreation programs for both children and adults. The law recognized that recreation is an educational process and that both recreation and education are strong forces in total human development and the formation of a city’s culture. Shortly thereafter, Milwaukee gained national recognition as the “City of the Lighted Schoolhouse” for its use of public school facilities for evening recreation programming. While other recreation departments in a majority of U.S. cities conduct their programming in stand-alone recreation centers, our access to school facilities allows us to direct our resources into programming versus bricks and mortar, thereby providing our community with the best possible value in recreation programming.

The Beulah Brinton House

In the 1870s, Beulah Brinton’s house at 2590 S. Superior Street was a community gathering place for new immigrants in Bay View. For several decades, Mrs. Brinton provided recreation programs, enrichment classes, and even some basic medical care for her visitors. The Brinton House was a model for the social centers that Milwaukee Recreation would later open in the 1910s. In 1924, we opened our twelfth social center and named it after the woman who inspired the first eleven.

1931
Milwaukee Rec. entertains the city by forming the Milw. Players drama group

1933
By popular demand, the Milwaukee Women’s Municipal Athletic League is developed

1934
All-city Weaving Studio opens

1941
Milwaukee Rec. makes the right move with the first all-city chess tournament

1945
Outdoor Education programs introduced

1949
Introduction of Golden Age Clubs, expanding services to seniors

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Milwaukee Rec. makes the right move with the first all-city chess tournament

PRACTICAL AIDS IN CONDUCTING A NEIGHBORHOOD RECREATION CENTER (1918 - 1919)

- Each center must have its own yell and song.
- The swimming tank is to be drained every Wednesday evening.
- Play the phonograph in the evenings. Use metal needles and keep the speed set at 78.
- Instruct young men to remove hats upon entering buildings.
- Good piano playing adds to the effectiveness of moving pictures.

"The best feature of the social centers is that they are not only providing pleasure, but increasing the capacity of their patrons for joy." Milwaukee City Club Bulletin, 1914

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Centennial Snapshots

Academic Support
Over time, Milwaukee Recreation has expanded its services to provide academic support and child care services through before/after-school and summer enrichment programs. In 1992, we introduced our day-long Summer Recreation Enrichment Camps for school-aged children. The camps enable working families to have an affordable alternative to daycare during the summer months. In 1998, we opened eleven Community Learning Centers to provide homework help and recreation for students in Milwaukee Public Schools. Today, these programs are stronger than ever. By partnering with community agencies, we now oversee academic support programs at over 100 MPS schools!

Outdoor Education
Milwaukee Recreation introduced its first outdoor education programs in 1945 to complement the traditional playground and social center offerings. In the 1960s, the department recognized a national trend and responded to the demand for more outdoor experiences. This led to week-long day camps, gardening programs, astronomy clubs, resident camping referrals, conservation clubs, 4-H, and safety clinics for hunting & boating. As the programs grew, Milwaukee residents enjoyed fishing excursions, hiking clubs, cross-country ski lessons and programs conducted at Milwaukee County Parks (Grant & Whitnall) and the Zoo. The department also began providing environmental education programs at Palmyra Camp in Kettle Moraine State Forest, Oak Ridge Farm in Dousman, and Hawthorn Glen in Milwaukee. Today, our outdoor education programs continue to serve over 30,000 children and adults each year.

Music, Theatre, & Visual Arts
Milwaukee Recreation has a rich history of supporting the arts, beginning with art classes and workshops for painting and weaving in the 1930s. The department fostered the development of groups like the Milwaukee Players in 1931, the Milwaukee Civic Light Opera Company in 1939, the Summer Puppet Theater in 1951, and the After-school and Summer Youth Orchestras in 1965. We continue to offer a variety of arts and crafts classes for all ages, art internships for high school students and a visual and performing artist-in-residence program at our summer camps. In addition, our department began providing environmental education programs at Palmyra Camp in Kettle Moraine State Forest, Oak Ridge Farm in Dousman, and Hawthorn Glen in Milwaukee.

Mobile Fun & Education
Milwaukee Recreation has always embraced the philosophy of accessibility. In other words, if you are unable to travel outside of your neighborhood for recreation programs, we just might have a solution! Over the years, this concept has led to a number of fun and creative mobile recreation units. For example, we've created a Summer Trailer Theatre, a Museumobile, the Traveling Star Wagon (a mobile planetarium), two Survive Alive trailers for fire safety lessons, the Barnyard Friends Van, the Super Snake Show Van, circus trains with live zoo animals, the Rec. ‘N’ Roll Mobile, and more. In 1998, we introduced the Wacky Wheels Skate Van. And let’s not forget Crunchy, the Talking Garbage Truck!

Active Older Adults
Milwaukee Recreation was an early pioneer when it came to serving our city’s older adults. By 1965, we had 40 Golden Age clubs for persons over 60. Each club had a leader who was employed by our department. The Golden Age clubs attracted thousands of Milwaukeeans, mostly women. We then introduced “Extra Years of Zest” (XYZ) clubs for men, which centered around card playing, dartball, and, of course, refreshments. Today, these programs continue to thrive under a different name: Milwaukee Recreation’s Organization for Active Seniors in Society (OASIS).

Therapeutic Recreation
Milwaukee Recreation has a long history of serving individuals with disabilities. The department began providing recreation for physically and mentally handicapped children in 1961, expanding to include deaf and emotionally disturbed children in 1968. In 1979, we received a grant to start a school-based leisure education program called Lifetime Recreation Skill Schools for Special Populations. Services were expanded to provide a community-based program outside of the school day called Program for Exceptional Students and Disabled Adults. In 1988, the program was presented with the National Recreation and Park Association Gold Medal Award for the Outstanding Program in the Nation. In 2002, the program was renamed Therapeutic Recreation Programs for Individuals with Disabilities, but its mission remains the same: to improve the quality of life for children, youth, and adults with disabilities, and their families, through providing quality recreational and educational experiences.
The wooden pin is an iconic symbol of recreation in Milwaukee. Since the very beginning, we've used it for countless games and activities— from capture the flag to champ bowling. Most remarkably, the pin has never changed with the passage of time. Whereas today's baseball gloves and tennis shoes look dramatically different from their 1911 counterparts, the wooden pin looks exactly the same. Long live the pin!

### Learn to Play Team Pin Snatch

- Divide players into equal teams and have them line up on either side of the playing area with a wooden pin in the center (as shown below).
- Assign a consecutive number to each player. Each team member should have the same number as a player on the opposing team.
- When the leader calls out any number, the players with that number should run to retrieve the pin. The first player to snatch the pin and return it to his/her own goal line before being tagged by the opposing player scores one point. The first team with ten points wins the game.
Learn to Play Poison Snake

• Players should hold hands and form a circle around 6 to 12 wooden pins which are spaced at least twelve inches apart.
• Set a timer for three or four minutes.
• When the game begins, players must push or pull, trying to make the other players knock the pins down.

  • Each time a player knocks a pin down, he/she receives a penalty point.
  • When the time is up, the player with the fewest points wins. In a variation on these rules, the players who knock the pins down are “poisoned” and must leave.

Trivia Challenge

Using the information in this booklet, can you answer these questions? Return this answer form to the address below by December 1, 2011, and you’ll be entered into a drawing for a Rec. Centennial prize pack!

1.) Milwaukee is known nationally as the City of the Lighted __________.
2.) A new Beulah Brinton Community Center was built in this year: ________.
3.) If you worked for Milwaukee Rec. in 1918, you were expected to drain the swimming tank every __________.
4.) True/False: Milwaukee Recreation runs a farm in Dousman. T F
5.) True/False: The wooden pin is a timeless recreation classic. T F
6.) What game would you place in an emergency game kit? ______________________

Your Name: ____________________________
Your Address: ___________________________
Your Phone #: __________________________

Send this answer form to: Rec. Centennial Trivia Challenge c/o Milwaukee Recreation 5225 W. Vliet Street, Room 162 Milwaukee, WI 53208

Visit our website for historic films!

If you enjoyed looking at the photos in this booklet, you may be interested in our historic film collection. We recently discovered 10 hours of 8mm and 16mm films in our archives. Some of the footage dates back to the 1920s! After we converted the films to digital files, we donated them to the Milwaukee County Historical Society for proper storage and preservation. Throughout the year, we’ll be posting highlights at MilwaukeeRecreation.net.
To celebrate a century of service in 2011, Milwaukee Recreation opened its vaults and compiled this booklet of games, photos, and stories. For additional content, including historic film footage, visit MilwaukeeRecreation.net.

Emergency Recreation Kits made for air raid shelters. Leroy Czerwinski, Director, Grant Street Center. March, 1951.