

Town of Ocean City Recreation and Parks Department 2013 Highlights

Overview

The Ocean City Recreation and Parks Department plays an important role in providing facilities, programs and services that enhance the health, welfare and prosperity of our community. We continued that important role in 2013 as we supported the social, environmental and economic well being of Ocean City and the surrounding area. The value of recreation and parks is a primary reason why people choose to live in or visit Ocean City.

Awards and Recognition

Golf Digest Magazine rated Eagle's Landing as a "Best in State" golf course for 2013-2014.

Sunshine Artist magazine again rated Sunfest as the #1 Classic and Contemporary Craft show in America and Springfest as the #5 Classic and Contemporary Craft show in America. Sunfest was also named Maryland's Finest Festival by *Maryland Life* magazine. The American Bus Association selected Winterfest as one of the top 100 destinations in America and *Eastern Shore* magazine selected Winterfest as Maryland's Favorite Holiday Tradition.

Improvement Projects

We made progress on several important recreation and parks improvement projects in 2013.

- G-Man Paving resurfaced part of the pathways at Northside Park.
- American Tennis re-surfaced two (2) Premier tennis courts at Little Salisbury Park.
- Chesapeake Landscaping completed site work around the Northside Park Outdoor Exercise Area.
- The Maryland Community Parks and Playgrounds program awarded a grant of \$30,000 for shade structures at the Ocean Bowl Skate Park.
- Becker Morgan worked with staff in the development of a design for Ocean City's new Beach Patrol Headquarters.



Preliminary concept rendering of proposed Beach Patrol Headquarters

Administration

The Administration Division oversees the planning, personnel, customer service, building maintenance and financial functions of the Department. The Division also manages the facility reservations operation, which included issuing permits for over 43 private sports tournaments that generated \$118,695 in revenue, an increase of over \$12,261 from 2012.

The Department leadership and Division Managers participated in the Town Strategic Planning Process led by Lyle Sumek Associates. The planning process produced a Vision, Mission, Goals and Action Agenda that were subsequently approved by the Town Council. The Department leadership followed up on several Strategic Planning Agenda items including the new Headquarters for the Beach Patrol, Caroline Street Boardwalk Stage and Comfort Station, Private Special Event’s policies review and the Sunset Park Use Analysis.

The Department Director actively participated in the preparation of the Town’s Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) for FY 2014 – 2018 that was subsequently adopted by the Town Council. The Council also approved bond funding for the design and construction of the new Beach Patrol Headquarters on Talbot Street.

Director Tom Shuster and Assistant Director Susan Petito conducted the recruitment and selection of Frank Miller, as the new Special Events Superintendent to succeed John Sullivan in April.

The Department leadership also actively participated in the Tourism Coordination Group, an interdepartmental management group, that met regularly during the year to assess and respond to the impacts of tourism-based activities on the Town.

The division also continued its third year of the Repositioning Work Group that brought together representatives from each division to develop the two primary positions of the Department. The two primary positions are expressed by the slogans “Discover an Ocean of Fun!” and “Get Active. Be Healthy. Have Fun!”



Recreation Programs



The Recreation Programs Division, under the leadership of Kate Gaddis, continued to provide a wide range of programs and activities for youth, adults and seniors that improved the quality of life for individuals, families and the community. New programs included archery clinics, outdoor zumba, beach volleyball camp, drama camps, youth flag football league, adult kickball league and more. Participants continue to be satisfied with the experience they are getting as one women tennis participant said, ***“The staff makes you feel welcome whether you are visiting Ocean City for a weekend or live here full time”*** and ***“they make tennis fun in a non-threatening competitive way.”***

Summer Camps continue to be a main seasonal attraction for the Recreation Programs Division with 73 sessions of camp offered in a nine-week period and over 2,819 participants served.

The Ocean City Tennis Center had a very successful year as tennis programs continue to grow in popularity with participation in our women’s programs increasing each year. Total revenues were \$65,604 up \$1,540 from 2012.





The Ocean Bowl Skate Park boasted its proud historical significance of being the country's oldest continually operating municipal skate park at the inaugural Ocean Bowl Bash, held on Wednesday, June 19th, the day before the 2013 Dew Tour officially opened for its third visit to Ocean City, Maryland. An open house with free skating, fun competitions, music and more filled the park area, attracting amateur and professional skaters alike. Several of the Dew Tour champions such as Tom Schaar, Bob Burnquist, Pedro Barros, Andy McDonald and Steve Caballero, among others, were skating at the park throughout the extreme-sport weekend, mixed in with excited and star-struck young skaters. Challenged by a mandate to modify annual staffing levels as well as a push from elected officials to modify hours, the skate



park was able to shave staff expenses without compromising services. Competition with free-admission parks both locally and throughout the country may have contributed to this year's 5% decline of admission and pass revenues; however, other revenue initiatives (private lessons and equipment sales) saw an 8% increase. Grant-funding was secured to provide a much-needed shade structure in the north-east corner of the park to provide skaters relief from the hot sun during the long summer hours. Clinics, camps, competitions, and other recreational opportunities rounded out the offerings at the Ocean Bowl, and parents of annual pass holders continued to appreciate the safe and positive environment ensured by the staff. The park was open a total of 323 days and hosted 10,329 skaters.

Total recreation programs revenue for 2013 was \$765,916. That is up by 5.7% (a \$43,747 increase) over 2012.

The highly popular St. Patrick's Indoor Soccer Tournament Series continued to sellout with 173 participating teams over 4 weekends and producing \$71,946 in revenue.

Value added, free programs continued to be offered on the beach for the summer. Free Movie Nights were provided on Monday and Friday evenings and Family Olympics Night was offered on Tuesday evenings in the summer on 27th Street. The uptown Ocean City locations were offered for the fourth year with movies once a week on the beach sponsored by the Carousel and the Princess Royale Hotels. These programs have been well received by visitors and locals alike and were expanded in 2012 at the Carousel location beginning in early June and running until the end of August.

Senior Citizens programs continued to flourish with many participants attending popular activities such as Line Dancing, the Senior Bowling League and the annual Valentine's Dinner Dance.

The concession stands at Northside Park operate annually late February through October with indoor and outdoor sales. The Home Run Café at the Northside Park Softball Pavilion, in its fifth year of operation, continued to excite customers, eliciting comments such as, "Best lemonade ever," "Great staff," "Best turkey club anywhere in Ocean City," and more. Though a series of weather events reduced the outdoor operation's revenue opportunities, indoor event sales showed a slight increase over the previous year, and overall staff costs were reduced by approximately \$5,000.

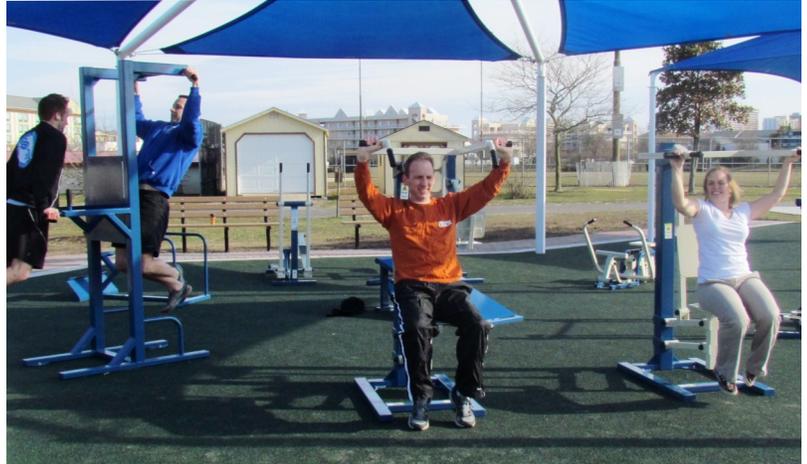
Parks Division

The Parks Division continued to provide stewardship, maintenance and improvements to the community's 16 public parks and recreation facilities and the beach. A major focus of the Parks Division is the care and preparation of athletic fields and sports complexes used by the Recreation Programs Division and by private sports tournaments. The Parks staff also provided maintenance of the landscape and green infrastructure at public grounds such as parking lots, transit facilities, streetscapes, medians, bulkheads, utilities, open space, and rights of way under Town control.

Horticultural, urban forest, and athletic facility maintenance are the primary focus of the division, but the additional responsibilities are wide ranging. Irrigation maintenance and repair are a crucial function in protecting the health and vigor of the athletic fields and landscaping within the Town. Another critical function is playground safety, which the staff strives to maintain to the most current safety and accessibility standards. Due to the diverse nature of their job functions, it is imperative that the Parks Division staff remains current on issues, trends and best practices in a multitude of subject areas. This is accomplished through staff training and certification programs highlighted in the milestones section.

The quality of care in all the parks is a symbol of the Division's commitment to provide excellent recreation and parks resources. Northside Park is the largest and most iconic park with a wide range of recreational opportunities. We recently added the outdoor exercise and fitness area that visitors and residents enjoy year round. In the fall the park hosts the Winterfest of Lights.

The Parks staff consists of seasoned veterans that take pride in their work. Two new additions under Parks' care are the new outdoor exercise area and the Center for the Arts. One visitor commented, ***"Your team has done a great job and continues to keep the landscape beautiful."*** Another person commented, ***"Please thank all of the employees that set up Fiesta Park for our summer picnics. They do such an excellent job."***



Northside Park Outdoor Exercise and Fitness Area

Improvement projects were limited in 2013, however, there were several including improvements to a portion of some pathways in Northside Park and resurfacing of the tennis courts at Little Salisbury Park. The division also produced the first printed guide to all Ocean City Parks.

*Robin Park
Playground*



Northside Park Lagoon





Ocean City Beach Patrol

The mission of the Beach Patrol consists of three important parts: education, prevention, and intervention. While the prevention and intervention components of the mission are highly visible, the efforts toward education in beach safety are equally as important.

Beach Safety presentations both on the beach and throughout the area continued in 2013. Schools, teams, church groups, scouts and other organizations have heard the message that if you are going to bring a group to the beach, they need to be aware of the dangers inherent at the ocean.

The Junior Beach Patrol (JBP) grew in 2013 to more than 220 members. It continues to be one of our most successful educational outreach programs. Six of the candidates appointed to the upcoming 2014 Surf Rescue Academy came from the JBP ranks.

The year marked the sixth straight season during which there were no drowning deaths during guarded hours. Beach Patrol education and outreach programs are critical factors in this success. Beach Patrol Staff performed close to 32,000 preventive actions this year. In 2013 there was a drastic reduction in “after hours” calls for swimmers in distress, an outcome attributable to our aggressive ocean safety media campaign. In fact there were no “after hours” fatalities at all in 2013. During the season, staff reunited 474 individuals who had become separated from their families. This number continues to decline from an average of over 1,000 each season because of Beach Patrol’s public awareness campaigns. The Beach Patrol responded with the Police Department on 137 incidents on the beach. We welcomed more than 4,500 surfers to the three surfing beaches without a single problem reported from anyone.



Beach Safety Presentation



SRT covering rescue in progress

Intervention is the part of the Beach Patrol mission that often captivates visitors. Surf Rescue Technicians (SRTs) risked their lives to enter rip currents and storm-tossed seas to rescue 2,017 individuals this season, both on and off duty. One grateful parent wrote, ***“I cannot express how thankful we are to have your lifeguards watch over us. My 10 year old son was rescued from being hit by a wave and knocked unconscious.”*** SRTs also rendered first aid to 1,229 beach patrons and monitored 137 patients for whom EMS response was needed. Five of these patients (none were drowning related) were successfully resuscitated from cardiac arrest by SRTs performing CPR and utilizing Automated External Defibrillators (AED). This past spring a group of SRTs were honored in Annapolis for a successful AED resuscitation the previous season.

Recruiting and retaining quality personnel is critical for the Beach Patrol to be effective both in public safety and as ambassadors for the Town. To support this need we held two Pre Employment Physical Skills tests in August that produced 36 fully qualified and exceptional new employees. More than 100 written compliments are received annually with virtually no complaints. One visitor wrote; ***“Thank you for your lifeguard Jenny. After she got off work she assisted me in jump-starting my car. I had my lights on from Rt. 90 and forgot to turn them off.”*** This is a testimony to the quality of each individual who works for the Beach Patrol. That is the reason the Ocean City Beach Patrol continues to have such great success and respect within the community and among visitors.

Special Events

The Special Events Division was in transition in 2013 with the retirement of John Sullivan and hiring of Frank Miller as his successor in April. The Special Events staff continued to produce successful events as Miller was brought up to speed on processes and details related to the well-established annual undertakings of the Division. The ten month event season showed that, even with weather extremes, Ocean City's Special Events Division was more than capable of producing professional nationally-recognized public events.

Springfest, under tough weather conditions, continued to show that "if you build it, they will come". Attendance remained strong with 100,311 guests. The featured concerts – Beatlemania Again, Justin Moore, and Foreigner, were all successful with the latter two sold out. Springfest is now ranked by *Sunshine Artist Magazine* as #5 in the Top 100 Classic and Contemporary Craft Shows in the United States.



The **OC Air Show**, a private event and signature attraction in June for the Town, fought great odds during the first year of sequestration with military support becoming non-existent. The Air Show still brought crowds to their feet with an all civilian performer line-up including the only privately-owned Harrier fighter jet.



South bank of Art's Alive and the lagoon at Northside Park

Art's Alive, came to life for its 13th year. This fine art show attracted modest crowds to Northside Park in June. The value of this event to the town remains high and 2014 will bring a boost to marketing the artistic side of the eastern shore as well as a side-by-side effort with Wine in the Park, now entering its second season.

Ocean City's **Fourth of July Celebration** wowed its crowd at the Beach downtown and Northside Park uptown with concerts and top-notch traditional fireworks. This was the second year of a three-year contract with American Fireworks.

Next year will take the celebration one step further with a revised mix of fireworks to modernize the show and increase the local viewer experience.



Sundaes in the Park

The annual **Sundaes in the Park** weekly concert series at Northside Park reached new heights with Town-funded, privately-produced, fireworks capping off the evening music program during July and August on Sunday nights. The fireworks, children's activities and continued successful line-up of bands resulted in higher attendance and increased ice cream sales.



Concerts on the Beach continued to show it has a draw beyond that of passers-by with family after family toting their beach chairs and blankets vying for the best spot on the sand near the temporary stage at North Division Street. Weather cancelled only one event and threatened a few others, but the crowds were persistent in their attendance.

The Special Events Division continued to work side by side with the Ocean City Development Corporation (OCDC) and the Recreation Boosters to create a relaxing mini-concert series Thursday nights at Sunset Park (**Sunset Park Party Nights**) during the months of July and August. This awarding winning park offers a great location for performing arts.

The Town of Ocean City saw the arrival and open tour of its first **tall sailing ship, the Andaluca Spanish Galleon**, under the Private Events arm of the Special Events Division. This reproduction of a Spanish Galleon required much effort on the Town's part to host, but its sheer presence and the media buzz that followed made the effort worth the resulting exposure. Special thanks goes to the Department of Public Works and the Engineering Department for creating a bayside mooring custom tailored to host a vessel of this caliber.



Sunfest entered its 39th year as Ocean City's grand arts and crafts festival. Picture perfect weather and an event that has once again earned *Sunshine Artist Magazine's* #1 ranking in the Top 100 Classic and Contemporary Craft Shows in the United States saw crowds of 175,299 over the four days of the event. Featured performances of an Elvis Tribute (Jesse Garron), Kip Moore and Kacey Musgraves, and the Beach Boys proved to be a winning combination with very successful ticket sales each of the three concert nights. Vendors across the board realized record revenues.



Our winter was highlighted by the 21st annual **Winterfest of Lights**. Coca-Cola contributed to the twinkling lights this year with a polar bear light display, simple and fun in design, showing a new direction in light display sourcing. Santa Claus became the emcee for the tram ride this year hosting a selection of new music that pushed the capabilities of the tram's sound systems. Jaws delighted guests as he does every year hiding near the holiday displays and lighting up at just the right time to delight passers-by. With six days less than 2012 and two weekends diluted due to weather extremes, Winterfest still managed to achieve above average daily attendance, proving that the event truly has become a holiday tradition and "must-go" for families on the eastern shore.

New Year's Eve fireworks were hosted for a second year as part of Winterfest festivities. The event saw increased crowds over its first year and shows potential for continued growth.

Ocean City hosted almost 200 separate private events in 2013, from weddings to city-wide public events to the nationally recognized Dew Tour. The onslaught of new events has spurred the need to redefine event categories, review labor and equipment usage and has uniquely positioned the Town to now "pick and choose" those opportunities that best satisfy the Town's expectations at times when the local economy most needs them. As new offerings continue to present themselves, it will take a city-wide collaboration with attention to detail to provide the proper information for Mayor and City Council to make informed decisions.



*Sunfest,
Ocean City*

Eagle's Landing Golf Course



Under the capable leadership of Bob Croll and Joe Perry, Eagle's Landing hosted 31,284 rounds of play in 2013, more than any golf course in the Ocean City area. *Golf Digest* ranked Eagle's Landing as a "Best in State" course for 2013-2014. The Talon Club and the Local Rewards card remain very popular with the local golfers. All golfers were treated to great course conditions and outstanding customer service.

The Caddy Shack Restaurant, with its full service food and beverage menu, continues to receive customer raves for Food and Beverage Manager Melanie Rhodes and her capable staff.

Despite a very wet spring and hot stressful summer weather, the maintenance staff was successful in keeping the course in premium condition throughout the entire season.

Golfers from all over the region enjoy playing at Eagle's Landing. Bill from golfstylesonline.com writes: ***"There are plenty of golf courses I could pass on if I were told I could never play there again. Eagle's Landing in Ocean City, MD isn't one of them.....I am always ready to go back"***.



Milestones

Susan Petito, Assistant Director of Recreation and Parks, continued to serve as Secretary/Treasurer of MRPA for the second year. **Ron Strickler**, Recreation Supervisor, was elected as Chairperson of the RALS branch of MRPA and chair of the Professional Development Committee of NRPA Young Professionals Network. **Chris Clarke**, Recreational Supervisor, became a Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP) in January.

Tammy Beres completed 20 years of service and **Tom Shuster, Mike Redner and Bill Everett** completed 15 years of service in 2013. Additionally, Beach Patrol employee **Tim Uebel** completed 30 seasons of service and **Colby Phillips** of Beach Patrol completed 20 seasons of service.

Julie Golightly and **Craig Horvath** earned the Maryland Professional Fertilizer Applicator Certification. **Bill Everett** earned the Maryland Pesticide applicator Certification in Category 6: Right of Way and Industrial Weed.

John Sullivan, of the Special Events Division, retired in March and **George Choisser**, Equipment Manager at Eagle's Landing retired in May. **Tom Shuster** announced his intention to retire in April, 2014.



John "Sully" Sullivan



George Choisser



Tom Shuster



**Town of Ocean City, Maryland
Recreation and Parks Department**

Director: Tom Shuster

Asst. Director: Susan Petito

Discover an ocean of Fun!
Ocean City Recreation & Parks