

FALL 2005

Recreation & Parks in **GEORGIA**

Official Publication of the Georgia Recreation and Park Association



GRPA
celebrates
60 years of
success!

**Statesboro-Bulloch County
Parks and Recreation...
Look at Them Now!**

Dog Day Afternoon in Athens

**Therapeutic Recreation
Services in Georgia's
Park & Recreation Agencies**



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From the President

by Deborah Mockus, CPRP

The desire of Georgia residents to stay closer to home has been a positive outcome for our profession as we continue to work diligently in increasing the awareness of the benefits and values of local parks, programs and facilities.

In looking back at the summer season, many communities experienced programs filled to capacity, and facility and park usage that surpassed years past. No doubt, there are several factors affecting this trend of increased participation, some of which include escalating energy costs, changes in the school calendars coupled with year-round school in some communities, emphasis on reducing and preventing obesity through physical activity and healthy lifestyles, and, of course, the quality of services that are being provided. Whatever the reason, it was evident more people modified the traditional vacation plans of traveling long distances and stayed closer to home, utilizing local facilities for leisure pursuits.

The desire of Georgia residents to stay closer to home has been a positive outcome for our profession as we continue to work diligently in increasing the awareness of the benefits and values of local parks, programs and facilities. Our increased audience provides the perfect platform for us to effectively communicate the contributions parks and recreation makes to the quality of life of the citizens we serve, not to mention the economic impact of staying closer to home. Parks, programs and facilities are all fundamental components to healthy and sustainable communities, and to healthier living.

Whatever the reason for increased participation, it is also a direct reflection on the wonderful services each of you deliver and the success at meeting the needs of all whom are served. With people becoming more physically active, they are looking to their local parks and recreation departments more than ever to satisfy their leisure needs, and are consequently more eager to be supportive of our efforts. ■

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From the Executive Director

by Tom Martin, CPRP

As we celebrate the 60th Anniversary year of GRPA, I thought many of you would appreciate some of the significant milestones that have

occurred during the years. Some of you have been involved in the development of these events ... all of us have been the benefactors.

- 1945 April Organizational Meeting – Athens, GA – GA Recreation Workers Association.
First President, Carl Hager, Director of Recreation, Brunswick
Approximately 14 public recreation departments in existence.
Membership: 37 charter members; Dues \$2
- 1946 State Legislature passes GA Recreation Enabling Law.
First Annual Conference held in Augusta – 150 delegates.
First publication established: *Georgia Recreation Review*.
- 1947 Name changed to Georgia Recreation Society; Dues raised to \$3.
- 1949 Hospital Section established as first official section (forerunner of Therapeutic Section).
- 1952 Membership total: 119; Balance in treasury: \$634.
- 1953 Adopted 1st official emblem & seal of the organization.
- 1954 Exhibit booth space sold at annual conference to generate revenue.
- 1956 Districts formed along congressional lines and district commissioners elected.
- 1957 First Professional Award presented to Cliff Kirby of LaGrange.
- 1958 Georgia Recreation Commission [state agency] established by Legislature.
Statewide Voluntary Registration Plan adopted.
- 1959 Establishment of state's first Recreation Degree at GA Teachers College (Now GA Southern University).
Georgia Recreation Commission abolished by the new Governor.
- 1960 Discussion started about hiring a fulltime Executive Director for GRS (this didn't occur until 1978).
- 1962 First President's Assembly held in Griffin; Certified Professionals: 171.
- 1963 Georgia Recreation Commission reestablished; State scholarship program established (Became Leisure Careers Foundation in 1969).
- 1964 First Athletic Manual written; Jim Colley of Douglas, Chair.
- 1965 Membership: Individuals – 316; Agency – 75.
- 1966 Changed name to Georgia Recreation and Park Society.
Beginning of NRPA as an organization of 5 merged national associations.
- 1968 GA Board of Recreation Examiners approved by State Legislature.

- GRPS became incorporated by State of GA.
Established a professional journal *Georgia Recreator*.
- 1970 GRPS cosponsors First Special Olympics in Georgia.
- 1972 GRPS employs part-time administrative secretary and used office space provided by DeKalb County Parks & Recreation Department.
- 1973 Administrative secretary position made full-time and GRPS entered into agreement with NRPA to share office space with the Southern Regional Office; GRPS undergoes major reorganization with many of current policies and procedures initiated.
- 1974 GRPS gains status as 501(c)3 non-profit under IRS.
Employed first full-time Executive Director, Jean Fountain from Florida.
Georgia Golden Olympics established.
- 1988 Hall of Fame established; First Inductees: Charles M. Graves & John Davis.
Changed name to GA Recreation and Park Association;
Established Leadership GRPA Program; Purchased debt-free office building in Conyers; Started awarding CEUs; Renamed magazine to *Recreation and Parks in Georgia* and newsletter to *Recreation and Park Matters*.
Georgia State Games & District Sport Festivals started; Adopts policy requiring certification of youth coaches for district & state tournaments.
Georgia becomes affiliate with National Certification Plan.
- 1997 First website initiated.
- 1998 Cultural Affairs Section established.
- 2000 Membership adopts Code of Ethics.
- 2001 Approves new Corporate member category; First Green Space Commission Grants approved; Adopts policy on Health & Recreation.
- 2004 Task Force on Youth Sports & Technology appointed.
Website updated with online job listings.
- 2005 GA Land Conservation Act Approved; Membership exceeds 2,000; annual budget at \$433,000. ■

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Statesboro-Bulloch County Parks and Recreation... Look At Them Now!



PHOTO: WORLD WATERPARK ASSOCIATION

By Broni Gainous, Marketing Coordinator
Chad Avret, Operation Division Manager
Statesboro-Bulloch County Parks and Recreation Department

From the first small-city, full-time recreation program in the South to one of the largest in Georgia, a lot has changed over the past 57 years for the Statesboro-Bulloch County Parks and Recreation Department (SBCPRD).

Officially established in April 1948 by an ordinance of the Statesboro City Council, the Department of Recreation could finally provide a city-wide orga-

nized recreation program. Its very first director was appointed at an annual salary of \$3,000. The director, the late Max Lockwood, stated in his *More Than Just a Dream* article that “he was it.”

“I was the only employee of the department, which had no funds allocated, no office, no playgrounds, or parks,” writes Lockwood. He also writes that the 19 years that he spent with the recreation department were

filled with “challenge and change, which touched the lives of thousands of young people.”

One of those young people was Lonice Barrett, current Director of Implementation for The Commission for a New Georgia. “For me, my first exposure to the programs at SRD caused me to immediately fall in love with the department, its staff, program participants and the community that embraced this department more than I had ever witnessed,” says Barrett. He also says what struck him the most was the incredible support the recreation department received from the business and civic community. “All of that, I soon found out, was due to the integrity of the leadership associated with SRD... people like Max Lockwood; Ralph Turner; Honey Bowen; Tiny Hill and his wonderful sons; Mr. Julian Hodges; colleagues such as Billy Yawn, Frank Hook, Charles Webb, the late Luetta Moore, Donald Nesmith, Harry Carter, Robert Tanner, Fay Foy (Smith) Franklin, Elaine Hulst, the late Phil Hodges; and all of the other program supporters, softballers and even the Lucky Seven’s,” he says. “I quickly saw that being a part of that program meant something special, and I have never forgotten that my attitude, philosophies, outlooks and work ethic were shaped in large measure because I was a part of that program.”

Barrett also states, “Don’t ever fail to acknowledge the impact that our first jobs, our first supervisors and our first learning experiences have on us for years to come... Statesboro and Bulloch County have always invested in its young people, and I will never be able to tell enough people thanks for what that experience at SRD meant to me.”

Frank Hook, Senior Director at Georgia Southern University and one of the leaders Lonice Barrett mentions, states that the recreation department was his life! “I owe so much to the great experiences I was able to receive over my many years at the Recreation Department,” says Hook. Frank Hook began working at what was called the “Center” for many years when he was in the seventh grade and in 1979, he became the Director. “If I have any success in life, it is due to all the wonderful relationships and work experiences I gained during my time at the recreation department. It will always hold a very special place in my heart.”

Tom Martin, Executive Director for GRPA, even has ties to the Statesboro-Bulloch Parks and Recreation Department. “I owe my professional career and a lot of my personal growth to the Statesboro Recreation Department and especially to Max Lockwood,” says Martin. His family moved to Statesboro when he was 12 years old and the recreation department was his first exposure to organized recreation. “I was an instant participant in many programs. When Max offered me a job as a high school junior, I readily accepted and I’ve been in the field since that time,” says Martin. “The six years I spent on the staff at the Statesboro Recreation Department through high school and college will always stand out in my mind as the backbone of my professional experiences.”

These comments and many similar to them show the support that has helped the Statesboro-Bulloch Parks and Recreation department grow and succeed over the past 57 years. In its long history, SBCPRD boasts only seven directors – two of which governed 38 out of the 57 years. Max Lockwood, the department’s first director, served for 19 years before returning to Coffee County’s Chamber of Commerce. In later years, he was named one of *Georgia Trend’s* 100 most influential Georgians.

The department’s current director, Mike Rollins, has served the past 19 years. He was President of GRPA in 1996 and has been named GRPA First



PHOTO: WORLD WATERPARK ASSOCIATION

District’s “Professional of the Year” and he, like GRPA, serves as an advocate for quality recreation and park industries within the state of Georgia.

Other directors for SBCPRD include Ralph Turner (1966-1967), Lonice Barrett (1967-1970), Tom Browne (1967-1976), Frank Hook (1976-1979), and Ron Nix (1979-1986).

Without the great leadership of these directors and very supportive community leaders, the department could not have become as successful as it has today.

Fifty-seven years have passed and the Statesboro-Bulloch Parks and Recreation Department has changed more than just its directors. SBCPRD now focuses on countywide initiatives by offering programs in the communities of Portal, Brooklet, Stilson and Nevils.

“When I made the decision to come to Statesboro in 1986, it was mainly due to the rich history and strong support that the department had from local citizens,” says Director Mike Rollins.

Not long after Rollins became Director, the Recreation Advisory

Board revised the mission of the recreation department to read: The Mission of the Statesboro-Bulloch County Parks and Recreation Department is to provide all citizens quality, accessible, and diversified parks and recreation services through total community involvement.

“Our County Commissioners, County Manager, Recreation Advisory Board, staff and local citizens do not take these words lightly,” says Rollins. “The quality of our facilities and the diversity of our services are a testament to the commitment that Bulloch County citizens have made to a superior quality of life for its families. This strong team effort has made us a destination for both young and old searching for the best.”

Over the years, through outstanding leadership and community support, the department has accomplished many feats including, but certainly not limited to, offering eight recreational facilities, one of which is Georgia’s “Diamond in the Rough” Mill Creek Regional Park; a building dedicated to

Senior Citizens; a greenway plan for Bulloch County; more than 3,000 participants in Athletic programs, more than 600 participants in After School Programs, and more than 2,000 participants in Summer Camp; the opening of a \$10 million Agribusiness Center; and last but not least, building and opening the \$5.2 million Splash in the Boro family aquatic center and water park.

Mill Creek Regional Park, opened in 1993, is a state-of-the-art recreational complex which was funded through a 1% Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax. Mill Creek, 1996 USSSA Complex of the Year, has played host to more than 200 tournaments, including four national tournaments. In July 2005, it became the first venue to host four USSSA World Series tournaments for divisions 11U, 12U, 13U, and 14U. Mill Creek Regional Park boasts 160 acres with 18 athletic fields, a lake, walking trails, 10 picnic pavilions, and 900 parking spaces.

Splash in the Boro, Georgia's newest family water park and aquatics center, covers five acres and offers something for everyone! Guests can barrel down the three waterslides with inner tubes or on their backs. Children can spend time in the Play Pool that features zero-depth entry along with lots of gadgets such as water guns, valves that shoot water unexpectedly all over the pool, and a huge bucket that dumps 600 gallons of water every three minutes! The Leisure Pool offers zero-depth entry and goes as deep as five feet under the ropes and "lily pads." Visitors can lounge all day in the 800-foot Lazy River that circles the attractions area. There is also a four-lane Therapy Pool and a 10-lane, 25-meter Competitive Pool that anyone can enjoy. The Competitive Pool also provides the Bulloch County Sharks Swim Team a place to practice and hold swim meets throughout the year. There is plenty of shade for lounging created by PermaBrellas surrounding the play pool, and plenty of food in the concessions stand. Splash in the Boro is the exclusive seller in the area of Dippin'Dots – ice cream of the future!

In the first 365 days of operation, Splash in the Boro generated more

than \$1 million in gross revenues, and had over 105,000 visitors. These numbers far surpassed expectations, which projected annual revenues of \$440,000 and attendance of 65,000. To say that the initial season was a success would certainly be an understatement.

Splash in the Boro is a \$5 million facility "built by the community." In 2002, taxpayers voted to approve a one-cent Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) to pay for the facility. Owned by the Bulloch County Board of Commissioners,

Splash in the Boro is self-supported by using admission prices and concessions sales to pay daily operational costs.

Through the 57 years and seven directors, one thing remains the same: Statesboro-Bulloch County Parks and Recreation Department's drive to provide the area youth and adults with quality athletic programs, community recreation programs, special events, and so much more. That's why we always use the motto "Recreation... the benefits are endless." ■



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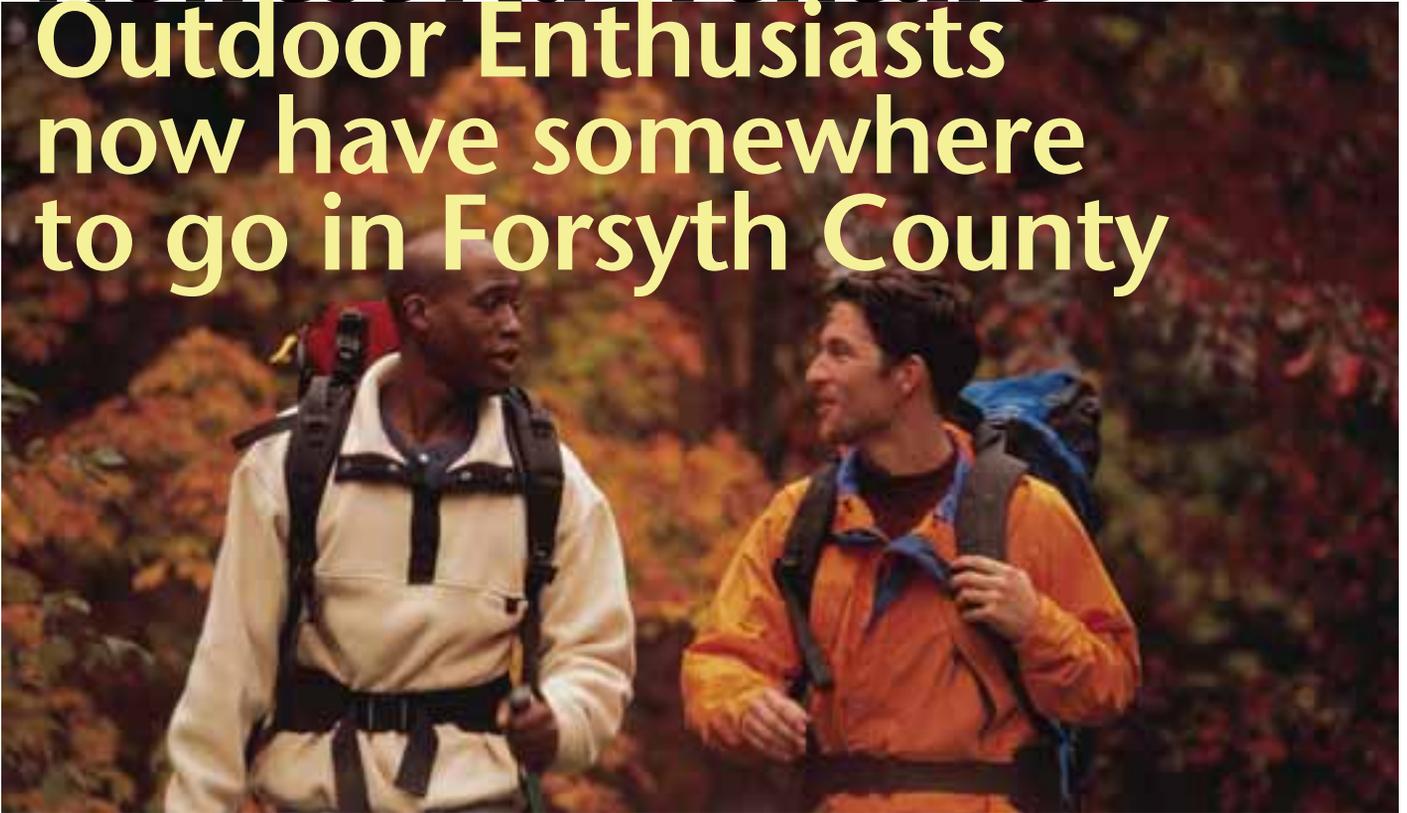
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Forsyth County's Newest Ad"Venture" Outdoor Enthusiasts now have somewhere to go in Forsyth County



By *Matthew Pate, Outdoor Program Supervisor*
& *Laura Pate, Program Coordinator, Forsyth County Parks and Recreation*

For many years, the Forsyth County Parks and Recreation Department was known for its team sports activities and athletic parks. However, in the past few years, Forsyth county has grown tremendously in population and the need for passive recreation space and program diversity has become apparent. Forsyth County Parks and Recreation Department's newest ad"venture" is Outdoor Programming, which entails passive park development and Green Space acquisition. The new outdoor programs and facilities give people the opportunity to hike, mountain bike, rock climb, rappel, sea kayak, canoe, sail or learn about natural history all within the confines of Forsyth County. These programs take place at some of our newest parks such as The Sawnee Mountain Preserve, Central Park or

Young Deer Park and Charleston Park on Lake Lanier, to name a few.

The Sawnee Mountain Preserve is the newest Forsyth County Park and the first of three phases was unveiled on June 4, 2005. Phase I, which began development in September 2004, includes 3.5 miles of hiking trails, two picnic pavilions, a restroom facility, a 150-seat outdoor amphitheater and 40-space parking lot. The Preserve and its facilities were designed to blend in with nature and provide a passive area for people to come and enjoy the outdoors. The highest point of the Sawnee Mountain Preserve stands at 2,000 feet above sea level and boasts some of the most scenic views of North Georgia. From the top of Sawnee Mountain, hikers can take in a panoramic view of the North Georgia Mountains, Lake Lanier and the Atlanta skyline. Currently, the

Sawnee Mountain Preserve is home to rock climbing and rappelling activities at the natural rock outcropping known as the "Indian Seats," summer environmental and high adventure camps, birding classes, and hiking. There are also plans to host bluegrass and jazz concerts along with guest speakers at the outdoor amphitheater. The excitement continues as the county currently works on Phase II of the three-phase plan.

The plans for Phase II include a 7,000-square-foot state-of-the-art outdoor education center that will be the administrative home to the Outdoor Program section. The Outdoor Education Center's facilities will include exhibits on natural and cultural history, classrooms, a lab area, a library, a lounge and three educational gardens. The center plans to offer programs on local natural and cultural history for

school groups and the public, as well as adventure programs like rock climbing and rappelling. There will be teacher trainings in environmental education, along with gardening and birding demonstrations and interpretive hiking trails. Forsyth County is fortunate to be working with Garland Reynolds, a local architect, on this project. Garland is responsible for designing several Outdoor Centers in Georgia; some of his most notable achievements are the Hike Inn at Amicalola Falls, The Jane Hurt Yarn Center at Tallulah Gorge and the Native American Museum at Rhinehart College. Jordan Jones and Goulding, a local design firm, will be handling the site development and outdoor landscape architecture for the Outdoor Education Center. Soon after Phase II construction is underway, the plans for Phase III will begin.

Phase III is the final stage of development for the mountain. In 2003, the county purchased a unique and local landmark named the Barker House atop the Peak of Sawnee Mountain. The land surrounding the Barker House was purchased using Green Space funds and with the help of the Trust for Public Land. The Barker House sits atop Sawnee Mountain at its highest point and looks like a flying saucer perched in the trees. Currently, the Department and Commissioners are studying how to best utilize the facility for programming. In the next year, a decision is expected on its future. Aside from the development

of the Barker House, the department plans on adding another parking lot and trail head with 10 miles of hiking trails on the southwest side of the mountain. Those trails will allow visitors to see almost every vantage point the Mountain has to offer.

When all three phases of development are completed, the Sawnee Mountain Preserve will be the second-largest county park in the state of Georgia at more than 750 acres. The Sawnee Mountain Preserve is supplemented by several other parks and facilities where outdoor enthusiasts can play.

As part of the department's commitment to passive parks, the county has acquired two Lake Lanier parks by entering into a lease agreement with the Corps of Engineers for Young Deer Park, a 14-acre facility, and Charleston Park, a 154-acre facility. Charleston Park will become the home of the Outdoor water sports program and currently offers kayaking, canoeing and sailing programs to youth and adults. In the future, there will also be a system of multi-use nature trails for people to enjoy.

Another recent accomplishment was the addition of a 3.5-mile mountain bike trail and the state's first "official" Free Ride Park at Central Park. The members of the Roswell Alpharetta Mountain Biking Organization (RAMBO) constructed the 3.5-mile mountain bike trail using volunteers and community service workers from the Bell Forsyth Judicial circuit. The

Free Ride Park was developed by the Southern Free Ride Alliance. Free Riding is new a form of mountain biking that combines traditional cross-county type obstacles with BMX style jumps. The two-acre park boasts big jumps, rock drops, a teeter-totter, skinny and gap jump. Riders of all ages and from all over the Southeast are using the park. Due to the success of the mountain bike trail project, RAMBO has been asked to evaluate mountain biking at future park sites in Forsyth County. One of the parks being looked at will be connected to the Big Creek Greenway project, which is currently in the master-planning phase.

The Big Creek Greenway is a linear multi-use trail that currently exists in parts of north Fulton County. The Forsyth County section is currently being designed and will be partially funded by transportation enhancement project funds. When complete, The Big Creek Greenway will run from the base of Sawnee Mountain in Forsyth County down to the Fulton County line where it will match up with the Alpharetta section and continue all the way to Roswell and the Chattahoochee River.

In summary, the Forsyth County Parks & Recreation Outdoor section has been busy in its infancy and will continue to grow. The possibilities right now are endless, and the future is very exciting. If you are ever in the area, we invite you to come by and play or just visit us at any of our new facilities! ■

Image Is Important: Rural Recreation in South Georgia

By *Tim Estes*
Athletic Director
Americus-Sumter County Parks and Recreation

While delivering quality services and being good stewards of tax payers' money are two of the main goals of any good public parks and recreation entity, athletics remains the most visible aspect. The perception in which a small-town Southwest Georgia department is seen, rightly or wrongly, is based on what the public sees on the athletic field. It is probably the tax payers' only first-hand observation of the department's effectiveness. How often does a parent or John Q. Public get to view the inner struggles of operating a public aquatics facility? How often do they see the ongoing battle between the recreation professionals and the government leaders to determine whether recreation is an investment in the citizens or an expenditure? Do the public and/or the government leaders care about attracting and retaining quality professionals that are often overworked and underpaid? The simple answers are... very seldom and who knows? The reality in rural Southwest Georgia is that these decisions may be based on the quality of athletic programs within the entity.

A few years ago, tennis superstar Andre Agassi had a series of Cannon Camera Commercials that proclaimed "IMAGE IS EVERYTHING." While that may be stretching the truth, there is no question that in rural Southwest Georgia, image is important. When you start to sell your house, you try to improve its curb appeal. This may mean painting, mowing, and lawn trimming the shrubs – or whatever else it takes to make a good impression on the buyer. This is something we should be con-

cerned about in our recreation programs, as well. Here are a few suggestions:

Personal Dress Codes: While most urban recreation professionals are required to wear business attire to work, many rural recreation professionals are still in shorts and T-shirts. While comfort is a concern, we should place professionalism over comfort. Who among us knows when a vendor may stop by the office or the park? While our duties may vary from department to department, it may be good to keep a change of clothing in the office for occasions that require a specific type of dress. Many departments have invested in staff apparel which seems to be a good trend. It is usually a good mix of style, comfort and practicality. Credibility and image are important and believe it or not, perception matters.

Facility Impressions: While personal dress codes are important, it may be just as vital that our facilities look good. They may not be new; in fact some may be older than us. A fresh coat of paint, neat landscaping and regular maintenance can leave a good impression on the users and casual passers by. While the age and design of your facility may be set in stone, the appearance is something that can be controlled.

Coaches Appearance: Who is responsible for the coaches in your leagues? While most urban departments have turned things over to private athletic associations, most rural departments still program the athletics in-house. Rather than buying them a team jersey, why not purchase them a golf shirt with your department logo. The cost is oftentimes the same as the



jersey, but it's a professional marketing tool. Encourage coaches to have a neat appearance while representing you.

Sportsmanship: In addition to the appearance of your professionals and volunteers, the behavior of the coaches and players is of the utmost importance. A demand for good sportsmanship by all who represent your department is key to portraying a positive image. Written guidelines can be developed to assist people with their behavior.

Media Comments: In rural Southwest Georgia recreation, there is a good deal of media coverage. Weekly and some daily newspapers usually cover tournaments. Make sure that your staff and your coaches are media savvy. They should never criticize an official or the tournament host.

All of this talk about image is not superficial. A person's perception is highly influenced by their initial impressions. It is much easier to be proactive and work to maintain a positive image than it is to repair a damaged one. The image that your agency has in the eyes of the public is most likely the image that your funding source has of you, as well. How does your city or county view you? ■

Dog Day Afternoon in Athens



By Cathy Padgett, Athens-Clarke County Department of Leisure Services

In the heart of the capital of the Bulldog Nation, every dog has its day at one of the seven dog parks maintained by the Athens-Clarke County Department of Leisure Services.

For the past 14 years, ACC Leisure Services has been in the business of serving man's best friend by offering specially designed and designated "dog parks." These off-leash areas provide a place where dog owners can allow their pets to run free in a fenced-in area. With a county ordinance requiring dogs to be on leashes at all parks and recreational facilities, the dog parks prove to be an ideal way for man's best friend to enjoy a leash-free day in the park.

Residents have a choice when looking for a place for dog recreation, with current dog parks at Memorial Park, Sandy Creek Park, and Southeast Clarke Park. The seven facilities, operating under regular park hours, vary in size and are located on opposite ends of the county.

The oldest dog parks are found at Sandy Creek Park, with the first opening in 1991, named "C. Spot Run." This north side county park now boasts a total of four two- to three-acre dog parks, three of which are "reservation only" with a \$1 per hour/per dog. This arrangement provides owners an option for privacy or they can invite their pup's pals over to play. Each park has its own water source and upon reservation, each dog owner is given a key to the park and a water bowl. The first three dog parks

were built with donations from the Athens Kennel Club. The fourth park is free with no reservation requirement.

In 2000, Memorial Park, located blocks from the University of Georgia campus, opened its overwhelmingly popular dog park. The 1.5-acre park is located on the hillside and is a mecca for canine-owning residents of the nearby Five Points neighborhood. According to Mark McCoy, Memorial Park Facility Supervisor, "Memorial Park was already popular with dogs and their owners, but there was nowhere where the dogs could be off-leash. I repeatedly had to ask people to put their dogs on leashes. I wanted them to have the park experience, but the public wanted a place to put their dogs 'off leash,' so this was the perfect solution. I took an underutilized area of the park and created the dog park."

The newest pup in the department's array of dog parks is Wigley Field at Southeast Clarke Park. This unique arrangement actually features two dog parks in one. One area is designated for small dogs, while the other section is for large dogs. The two-acre Wigley Field offers a double water fountain – a traditional size one for humans and a much smaller one for canines. Jeannie Hinson, and her pug, Puga, travel from Jackson County to enjoy Wigley Field. "Puga loves it! I love the water fountain and the fact that I don't have to worry about my small dog around all the real-

ly big dogs. I think it is really neat that they have toys for the dogs, too."

The maintenance of the dog parks is a joint effort. Owners are expected to clean up after their dogs and the park provides plastic baggie containers that encourage clean-up. Park Services staff performs general maintenance, such as fence repair and mowing.

The success of dog parks has produced an entire new source of programming ideas. SE Clarke Park has hosted a Dog-Gone Good Easter Egg Hunt at which dogs hunted for Easter egg dog treats, and Paws and Claus, where owners could take a picture of their pet with old Saint Nick. Additionally, Memorial Park offers a popular dog obedience program.

Dog parks are ideal for park managers, as they help control off-leash problems and inexpensive facility development in "non-programmable" land areas. As neighborhoods grow, with smaller or almost non-existent yards; massive apartment complexes continue to be developed; and more communities adopt stricter leash laws; recreational professionals will see the need to enhance their facilities with dog parks. As ACC Leisure Services has proven, providing a designated area for man's best friend provides an enjoyable park experience for the dog, the pet owner and the rest of the park's patrons. A dog park will make your facility the pick of the litter. ■

Barlow Street Pool

Goodbye to an Old Friend; Hello to a Modern Marvel

By Michael Coleman
Director

Americus-Sumter County Parks and Recreation

In Americus and Sumter County, people who hold memories of Barlow Street Pool are countless. Many summer afternoons were spent frolicking in the cool water, jumping from the high dive or sitting on a bench watching your friends when you crossed Mrs. Kobs. The old facility, which was built in the early 1920s, served the community well and lived until the implementation of recent health codes. My first indication that the facility was old was during a talk with a local civic club in the fall of 1999. An elderly lady spoke of learning to swim there more than 60 years ago and asked if it was still being used. At that time my answer was yes, as more than 300 children were taught swim lessons there the previous summer.

Currently, a new facility is nearing completion and hopes are it will serve as nobly for years to come. This project was a product of health codes adopted by the State of Georgia. The old pool did not meet the circulation requirements set forth in the legislation. There was only one return to the pool and one outlet sending water to the filtration system. Also, the bottom drain was just that, a drain. It allowed water out of the pool, but was not incorporated into the circulation of the water. Overall conditions of the bath house were not acceptable either, as the facility was dated and failed to comply with the new code. These conditions led to the pool being closed for the first time in 80 years during the summer of 2004.

Much research and study went into developing a plan to either renovate the old or construct a new facility. Many community leaders, who grew up using the pool, wanted to see it renovated as close to the original as possible. Early

attempts to fund the project were met with obstacles, but in 2003, the Sumter County Commissioners saw fit to include Barlow Street Pool on their list of SPLOST projects. Voters passed the SPLOST later that year and project discussion escalated. There were varied opinions about the loss of a historic facility and the development of a new one, but it was decided to take out the old and build new. The old girl didn't go quietly, however, fighting every step of the way. Demolition crews spent hours trying to unearth a pool that was built to last two lifetimes. The quality and quantity of materials used in construction were definitely not the reason for replacing the pool.

The new facility will meet or exceed all current health codes and will be used by Americus-Sumter County Parks and Recreation Authority (ASCPRA) in its Learn to Swim Program as well as public swim. As ASCPRA operates five public swimming pools in Sumter County, Barlow Street Pool is designated for 10-and-under participation during public swim hours. This allows a good environment for younger children, accompanied by an adult, to practice their skills without older children dominating the pool. Coordinated efforts of several agencies within Sumter County have led to the Learn to Swim Program expanding greatly. ASCPRA has joined forces with the local chapter of the American Red Cross, Boys and Girls Clubs of Americus and Plains, Sumter County



Schools ASTEP and Migrant Workers programs to offer lessons to more than 900 children in each of the last two summers. Red Cross plays a vital role through training staff, overseeing morning lesson sessions and assisting with the evaluation of the program. ASCPRA is able to employ more than 80 young people to serve as Water Safety Instructor Aides, WSI, lifeguards and pool managers. Lessons take place daily over a six-week period beginning after Memorial Day. The commitment to learning to swim in Sumter County is great and the lifetime benefits are obvious.

As the project nears an end, a beautiful building stands where the old one stood and a new pool is in place, many residents have said they are pleased with the product. Gone is the high dive, covered is the well that once filled the pool every Sunday afternoon (BC - Before Chlorination), replaced is the snack bar where nickel candy cost a nickel – all victims of progress. The old memories and stories will live on as children and grandchildren have an opportunity to create their own memories on the same ground as generations past. ■



Yesterday's Fields Compared to Today's Fields

By James Barnett, Agronomist, Cobb County Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs

I remember back in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the fields that we played on were normally just open space at a church, school or just an empty lot. If we had any ground cover, it was as much weeds as it was grass. If a field had ground cover, it was normally cut by volunteers and this happened at the most once a week during the season and was cut with either a bush hog or a snapper riding mower. Drainage was not a major concern because if a game or practice was rained out, it wasn't a problem. Some fields had fencing, but it was not a necessity to have games played on it.

The fields that we play on today are considerably different from the years gone by. We have parks departments now that strive to provide their patrons with fields that are at the highest level possible. We spray our fields to control the weeds, and add nutrients to provide a lush, safe surface to be played on. If the ball takes a bad bounce, it is the grounds keepers fault, no longer just part of the game. We cut our fields today with reel mowers and normally cut them as much as three times a week. We can make the fields faster or slower, depending on

how the home team likes it, just by changing the height of cut. Our fields are maintained by a grounds crew that must be skilled in sports-field management.

Drainage is a major concern for our fields today because we can't afford to have very many rain outs, due to the number of games being played and the length of seasons. Older fields were built much like a parking lot, without considering the best direction to carry water off the fields and once it's off the fields, what was done with it. Now we laser grade fields to make sure that water doesn't puddle and it gets off the fields as quick as possible without carrying the infield mix off with it. Once the water is off the field, we divert it away from the spectator areas and send it to retention ponds. The fields are designed and built so that the roll of the ball is not changed because of the slope of the field.

You don't see many fields today that don't have fence all the way around them, and most of the baseball/softball fields have nets that protect the fans from foul balls. I remember that some of the fields that we played on needed a parent out in the outfield, at a line where the fence should be, to determine

whether it was a homerun or a ground-rule double. This would probably cause a fight in today's time. I don't remember seeing any nets around fields unless it was to keep balls from going into the road. The fans back then had to pay attention to what was going on in the game or they could be hit by a foul ball. Wind screen and fence caps have been added to protect the players from getting caught on the fence or scrapped by it. I wish these would have been around when I played because both happened to me more times than I would like to remember.

Keeping the field areas clean was everybody's job. I remember after every game, the coach would make his team and fans pick up all the trash on their side of the field before they left. I still see a few of the coaches make their teams clean up the dugout after the game, and a few of the fans will pick up some of the trash on the bleachers, but this is a dying trend. A lot has changed with our sports fields over the years, some good, but some not so good. It has definitely been a positive change to have today's fields maintained by skilled, trained grounds crews. ■

The Impact of Girl's Fast-Pitch Softball in Georgia

By Kim Hamilton, CPRP
Cherokee Recreation and Parks Authority
Georgia ASA – Junior Olympic Commissioner

Since the mid '90s fast-pitch softball for girls has been making its mark in Georgia. Throughout the state, recreation agencies and youth associations have been converting their girl's softball programs from slow pitch to fast pitch. Our high school programs are also primarily fast pitch. The opportunity for girls to play at a higher level after high school is also a reality.

The growth of girl's fast pitch all over the state has also had a direct impact on local recreation agencies. With the number of teams that are participating in fast pitch, the demand for weekend tournaments is rampant. Also, with this demand for tourna-

ments, local recreation agencies are involved as programmers and/or facilitators of the tournaments. Tournament play is offered across the state as early as January and ending in December.

choose to play in the travel leagues and/or on a travel tournament team. However, this does not leave behind the participant that wants to learn the game or only wants to play on a recreation team. As fast-pitch programs are developing across the state, there are many girls that start out in recreation programs and then move up into the more competitive play as their skills develop. On the flip side, there are also those girls that participate on the travel teams and then choose to take a step back and play with the recreation teams.



The increased participation in fast-pitch softball has also contributed to the rise of varying levels of play. Girls that play fast pitch have options for participation. Those that wish to be very competitive and play year-round often

In Georgia, there are many softball associations that promote girls' fast pitch. Georgia and several of our recreation agencies will be hosting premier national softball tournaments during the summer. Those agencies will include Columbus Recreation and Parks that will be hosting the 18A ASA National Championships, Cobb County Parks and Recreation that will be hosting the 14B ASA National Championships, and

Troup County Parks and Recreation that will be hosting the 16B ASA National Championships. Newton County Recreation Commission, along with Rockdale County Parks and Recreation, will also be hosting the ISA World Series. Along with these major girls' fast-pitch events there have also been agencies involved in hosting regional and national qualifiers that lead to the national tournaments. Those agencies include Forsyth County Parks and Recreation, Douglasville Parks and Recreation, and Cherokee Recreation and Parks Authority. All of these tournaments not only bring in participants from across the United States, but generate revenue for the hosting communities.

In hosting the above mentioned tournaments, close to 700 teams will have competed on the national level in Georgia alone. There will also be many Georgia teams that will travel across the United States over the next few weeks to compete in national championship play.

As girls' fast pitch continues to grow across our state, it will be interesting to also watch the opportunities for female athletes develop. As more attention is put on this sport, the opportunity for success will always be available for a girl to achieve. ■



Roswell Visual Arts: A Masterpiece in the Works

By *Delilah Southard Dawson*
Roswell Recreation and Parks Department

Every artist knows that a masterpiece is never completed in one day. Rather, each piece of artwork follows an arduous but rewarding process that begins with a dream and follows several stages from creation to completion. At last, the artist is able to view the dream as a reality and reflect on the shape that the work has taken throughout the creative process. Sometimes, this last step of contemplation and enjoyment is shared with the community and leads to bigger dreams, both by the artist and by the viewers. In Roswell, our vision of bringing art to the public unfolds in a similar progression, with each accomplishment leading to bigger dreams and a reinforced commitment to supporting and encouraging lifelong appreciation of the visual arts.

In 1983, the City of Roswell Recreation and Parks Department hired a Visual Arts Specialist to evaluate and

determine the needs of the community in the visual arts. This person responded to the challenge by creating instructional classes, workshops and special events. Utilizing the new art room at the Community Activity Building in Roswell Area Park, the program mushroomed in the mid-1980s as programming needs quickly exceeded the space available. With the same foresight that makes Roswell such a successful community, the Roswell Recreation and Parks Department recognized an opportunity to create a specialized facility for the visual arts – the first facility built especially for this purpose in Atlanta. The meticulous thought and preparation that were involved in the design and creation of the Roswell Visual Arts (VAC) Center shine through the walls like a beautifully developed sketch laying the groundwork for an exceptional painting.

In October 1991, the newly constructed building opened its doors in

Roswell Area Park, and the public was ready to view the masterpiece. Visitors welcomed the center at gallery openings and filled classes in a rainbow of media from clay to photography to watercolors to calligraphy. The building, so airy and open, included a clay studio, three classrooms, a darkroom, office space and gallery space. With four seasons of classes anchored by popular summer programs for children, the building was quickly filled with the sounds of laughing children and studious adults exploring their creativity.

As the voices grew louder and space became scarce, the Recreation and Parks Department again recognized the needs of the community and moved forward with the second construction phase of the Roswell Visual Arts Center in 1997. This addition added two large classrooms, a galley kitchen and additional gallery space to

the original facility. A second full-time position was added to handle the increased demands of programming and managing the building, and the enlarged, enhanced, state-of-the-art facility became a model for the metro Atlanta area.

The Roswell Visual Arts (RVA) program was thriving and thrumming with artistic vision, but like a pernickety artist who just can't quit, the staff and instructors continued to refine the masterpiece with unique touches that continue to enrich the program today. Recognizing a need to involve high school youths in community service, RVA piloted the Student Art Association (SAA), a group of seventh- to 12th-grade students who participate in workshops, volunteer efforts, special events and, most importantly, the Apprenticeship program. After completing an application packet, which includes a teacher recommendation, SAA members are scheduled to apprentice summer art classes. Apprentices earn points toward free art classes while aiding the instructor and learning more about art media and classroom teaching. In 2000, a special grant from the Fulton County Arts Council invited sculptor and VAC instructor Christopher Condon to offer a special workshop for the Student Art Association, during which the students worked with Mr. Condon to design the stone sculptures surrounding the VAC. The SAA has been benefiting students, instructors and the community for more than 10 years, and with an active group of more than 20 apprentices, the program is still going strong.

A more recently developed volunteer organization, the Roswell Photographic Society (RPS), has added another brilliant facet to the Visual Arts Center through their extremely active membership and high-quality programming. Founded in 1996 by Roswell Visual Arts students and instructors with a shared interest in photography and darkroom, the RPS holds meetings twice monthly at the VAC and features carefully chosen public speakers and a critique night. Their goal is to provide members, ranging from photographic

beginners to working professionals, a fun and educational forum in which to share their photographic interests and experience.

Several talented and enthusiastic RPS members are now VAC instructors, and we are proud to offer their exciting programs in Photography, Digital Photography, Photoshop, Websites and Darkroom. In the past year, RPS has sought donations of computers for our "digital darkroom" and met with tremendous success.

In addition to their monthly meetings, seminars and field trips throughout the year, the Roswell Photographic Society holds annual gallery spots for their two enormously popular photography shows. Their Expressions of Light Annual Juried Members' Exhibition takes place each spring and always presents an amazing array of more than 80 elegantly framed photographic pieces in black and white and color. Each fall, their annual Open Juried Competition and Exhibition invites the public to enter up to three pieces of photographic artwork and provides ribbons and prizes for the winners.

Another daub of glory on the masterpiece, the Clay Collective, grew from a shared love of ceramics and an interest in advancing the opportunities for the Roswell Visual Arts clay program. This active and generous volunteer organization, the recipient of the coveted 2003 GRPA Volunteer of the Year Award, holds monthly educational meetings, offers workshops by professional ceramicists, hosts an annual festival and presents a twice-yearly show and sale that has become the talk of Roswell. The first "Works in Clay" Show and Sale, held in December 1998, set a precedent for success, and the Clay Collective now greets several thousand visitors for each Spring and Holiday edition of this exciting show. Proceeds benefit Roswell Visual Arts, our clay students and working ceramicists while allowing the Clay Collective to earn money for future endeavors, including equipment, show expenses and workshop fees.

As the enthusiasm and success of the Clay Collective continued to grow, so did their membership and the Roswell Visual Arts clay program as a

whole. By voicing their needs to the Roswell Recreation and Parks Department, the Roswell Recreation Commission and the Roswell City Council, the Clay Collective impressed the leaders of Roswell with their shared interests in the arts, willingness to work toward a common goal and a sense of community. When the Roswell City Council held public hearings on the future plans for the RRPD, the Clay Collective was there with numbers and voices. The City leaders responded to this challenge by renovating a 7,000-square-foot former residence in the newly acquired Leita Thompson Memorial Park with a budget of only \$80,000. During the next year, the Roswell Recreation and Parks Department capitalized on the skills, talents and energy of the Clay Collective as both organizations worked together on the dramatic renovation of the Malcolm house, located in Leita Thompson Memorial Park.

The Clay Collective volunteers were (and continue to be!) an essential ingredient of the success of the masterpiece that has become Art Center West. Contributing architectural drawings, technical assistance in heating and air-conditioning, plumbing fixtures, tile work, carpentry, cleaning, landscaping, painting and the donations of furniture and office equipment, the Clay Collective proved that a community need existed for this facility and that an energetic group of volunteers working together can accomplish anything. In many instances, the members donated their own time while challenging local businesses and organizations to lend a hand.

Today, visitors to Art Center West can feel the creativity and positive energy in the air. Over 100 students from ages 12 to 80 participated in clay classes this past summer, and the Clay West Gallery is booked for more than a year, including our first National Juried Exhibit. The facility includes separate handbuilding and wheel studios, two glaze rooms, five electric kilns, two raku kilns, a gas reduction kiln, a soda kiln, a gallery, a cooperative gallery, a tool sale area, student and instructor studios and a beautiful backdrop of

meadows and woodland trails. An Apprentice program offers adult students the opportunity to earn free classes by supervising building hours, loading and firing artwork, mixing glazes and hosting exhibits and receptions. In addition to the twice-yearly Works in Clay extravaganza, the Clay Collective also works with Roswell to present a fall festival, West Fest. At this free annual event, the public is invited to enjoy building tours, wheel and raku demonstrations, youth art activities, clay exhibits, sidewalk sales, music, food and hayrides on the grounds.

The uniqueness of Roswell Visual Arts, including both the Visual Arts Center and Art Center West, lies in its people. Their vision, intuition, creativity and hard work set a standard for all communities. From the Recreation and Parks Department leaders who recognized a community need for the visual arts more than 20 years ago, to the hard work and dedication of staff, to the enthusiasm and determination of volunteers, the Roswell Visual Arts program is an ongoing work of art by the community. Each member of the public who takes a class, enjoys a gallery reception, purchases a piece of artwork or volunteers his or her time becomes an artist through participation and adds another layer of depth to the ongoing canvas of our program. Like any artist, however, the Roswell Recreation and Parks Department always looks toward the horizon, seeking new ways to enrich the City of Roswell by encouraging the artist in every citizen. After all, a masterpiece is never complete. ■

Therapeutic Recreation Services in Georgia's Park & Recreation Agencies

By Leslie Black
Program Specialist, Special Populations & Senior Adults
ACC Leisure Services

In July 1990, the United States government passed PL 101-336, commonly known as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), into law. In addition to the passing of this legislation that radically extended services provided to individuals with disabilities, 1990 also marked the beginning of a new era in the Georgia Recreation & Parks Association: The creation of a therapeutic branch.

Since its inception, the GRPA Therapeutic section has grown to include 68 members representing 39 different agencies across the state. Membership in the section represents therapeutic recreation specialists, general programmers and administrators from public recreation agencies. Additionally, several Therapeutic section members work with specialty organizations such as Special Olympics Georgia, the United States Disabled Athletes Fund, the Center for the Visually Impaired and the Atlanta Alliance on Developmental Disabilities. These individuals work together to provide a variety of inclusive and/or specialized recreation services for Georgia's citizens with disabilities.

The variety of programs provided by these agencies covers a broad range of disability groups and activity interests. The following are several examples of the types of programming for individuals with special needs that exist across the state.

- Alpharetta Parks & Recreation hosts "Camp Happy Hearts" each summer. This program enrolls 32 young people with

mild cognitive disabilities each week. The eight-week camp includes sports, arts and crafts, music, swimming and field trips.

- Athens-Clarke County Leisure Services has begun offering "Day-off School" programs for special education students on designated teacher workdays throughout the school year. These one-day events have a seasonal theme and incorporate art, music, outdoor activities and special presentations. Working parents have remarked that these programs provide a much-needed service for them, in addition to providing a fun activity for their children.
- The City of Atlanta, in conjunction with the Center for the Visually Impaired, provides a goalball program for young people with visual disabilities, providing them with a competitive athletic opportunity.
- Statesboro-Bulloch County Parks & Recreation offers a therapeutic horseback-riding program for children with physical and/or developmental disabilities. This program currently provides instruction to eight participants weekly. The Department plans to partner with the local Board of Education for future programming, in order to offer the therapeutic riding program as part of the student Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process.



The programs outlined here are just a small sample of what is offered by Georgia's public parks and recreation agencies. We've come a long way in the past 15 years, and the future is bright. Here's hoping that the next 15 will bring the implementation of many more therapeutic or inclusive programs within GRPA affiliated agencies! ■

Greene County Spring Fair

By Linda D. Parrish, CPRP

The Greene County Recreation Complex ventured into a partnership with the Chamber of Commerce to offer the citizens of Greene County a good old-fashioned fair with carnival rides, arcade games, cotton candy and fun. This was the first fair to hit Greene County in almost 20 years. The fair was presented by Drew Exposition and opened on Tuesday and ran through Saturday night. Greene County Recreation entered into the partnership in 2004 and has had two successful years with this company. When I initially met with the fair coordinator, I was impressed with his professionalism. The company is reputable and the workers are a friendly bunch.

So, what does it take to offer a fair? You will need to dedicate a flat piece of land to set up the rides and concessions, an area for the carnival operator's homes, and a connection to fresh water. The actual week of the fair, we did have a staff member on duty at the park to address any concerns. In addition, you would need to arrange for a dumpster and portable restrooms. Note that these items are paid by the company. Drew Exposition provides liability insur-



ance, maintains the fairgrounds, books security for each night and runs the show.

We were provided with advertising posters and discount coupons to distribute through the schools and community. The first year, we had the initial expense of signage to post at the main roadways around the county.

How do we benefit? We receive 20% of the ride gross each night and we provide a great event for the community to enjoy. Greene County is a community with a population just over 14,000. In 2004, the ride gross was \$2,553 and in 2005 it grew to \$3,205. We were informed initially that it would take a few years before we would see growth. Seeing the smiling faces and hearing the screams and laughter tell me it is worth the small amount of time it takes to coordinate this event. Interested in running a fair in your community? Let me know if I can help. ■

Spotlight On:

Annual GRPA Outdoor Institute

The Outdoor Section of GRPA held its fourth annual Outdoor Institute on April 8-9, 2005. The event, hosted by Dauset Trails, offered students and teachers the opportunity to partake in various outdoor and environmental classes. Many participants became certified in Project Wet and Project Wild, both consisting of nationally recognized

teaching curriculum. Other programs such as plant, snake and bird identification taught recognition of indigenous species. The weekend's evenings brought event instructors and participants together for camaraderie, networking, and an essential of any camping expedition: feasting. Be sure to check for dates and location of next year's Outdoor Institute. ■

Spotlight On:

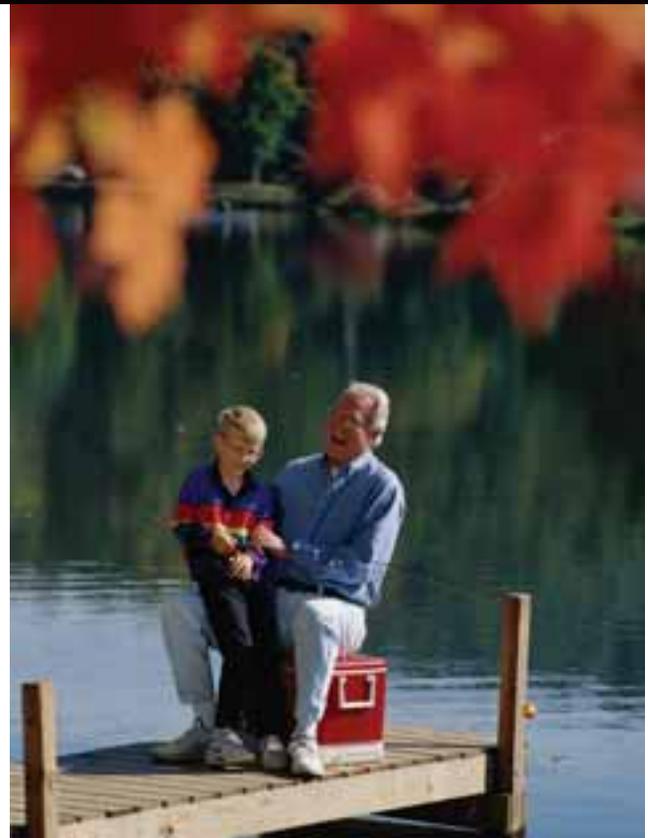
Statesboro's Hidden Treasure

By Tim Petrea
Recreation Supervisor
Statesboro-Bulloch County Parks and Recreation

I have heard the phrase "there is nothing to do in Statesboro" many times from high school and college students as well as young adults. As an outdoor recreation enthusiast, I beg to differ with them. There is no doubt that the North Georgia Mountains have many great resources to offer, the Georgia coast has many excellent opportunities for fun, but Bulloch County has many hidden treasures to offer the outdoor recreation enthusiast.

For me, there is the hidden treasure in the Ogeechee River. Within Bulloch County, one can access the Ogeechee River from a few different public access points. One is just above the Rocky Ford Bridge, on the edge of Screven County. This is where Bulloch County is introduced to a little over 58 miles of this beautiful river's trip to the Atlantic Ocean. This is a great access point for canoes, kayaks and small craft fishing boats. In this area there are currently two more public access points and they are the Highway 301 bridge and the Highway 24 bridge.

The Ogeechee River has great scenery and serenity. It is great for half-day trips, weekend camping trips, or just to get out and fish for a while. This river boasts beautiful artisan wells in many different points. Of course, enjoyment of the Ogeechee is dependant on a few factors that really should be considered. First, the water level plays a big part. This year should be a great year to enjoy the river due to the amount of rainfall received in South Georgia. Second, it is important to consider the fact that you are sharing this river with hunters on both sides. I was reminded of this a



couple of months ago when a coworker and I were enjoying some of the little backwater areas of the river and he happened upon a deer stand. These factors remind us that it is important to plan your trip in advance in order to get maximum enjoyment out of this beautiful river.

To conclude, this is one major factor as to why I cringe when I hear someone say "there is nothing to do in Statesboro." Teach a kid or an adult to canoe, kayak or fish. Who knows, there may be a hidden treasure out your back door? For more information on outdoor recreation, please email me at tpetrea@bullochrec.com. ■