

THE DAVIS PLAN | IMPROVING PARKS & RECREATION

Sadly, for the health and well-being of our citizens, the City of Evansville recently was listed as the No. 1 most obese city in America. Evansville is rightly proud of many of its achievements and resources, but being ranked the No. 1 most obese city in America is not one of them.

When it comes to obesity, the City of Evansville residents must take immediate steps toward improving our health. The Rick Davis For Mayor campaign has a solution to help solve this disturbing problem. Today, I propose using the city's Parks & Recreation Department as a tool to not only shed this dangerous ranking, but also a little extra weight.

Under my administration, we will make every effort to put an emphasis on the word **"RECREATION"** in the Parks & Recreation Department.

The City of Evansville's Parks & Recreation Department has been a source of pride in our community for decades. We now have a unique opportunity to link our Parks & Recreation Department with the business community to not only shed this No. 1 ranking, but to improve the quality of life of our citizens and even help stimulate our economy as well.

In the past, the City of Evansville's men's and women's recreation leagues were robust. But over time, these numbers have fallen due to a variety of reasons. Under my administration, our City of Evansville Parks & Recreation Department would focus on reaching out to our businesses and encouraging employees to take part in our parks and recreation leagues. This would help our community in so many ways, from losing weight and overall wellness of our residents to camaraderie of the participants. The more people we encourage to participate in our leagues, the more pride they have in making sure our facilities are properly maintained. The healthier we are as a community, the less we will pay in health insurance premiums. In short, we will enjoy a greater quality of life.

Many organizations in this community host or sponsor 5K road racing events every year as fundraising opportunities. I propose the Parks & Recreation Department also host a City of Evansville Parks & Recreation 5K Run, with the proceeds going to our Parks & Recreation Department. The revenues earned from the race can be used for marketing our league programs or helping maintain and improve our recreational facilities.

Our City of Evansville Parks & Recreation Department will also list maps on its web site showing routes and courses for 1-mile dashes as well as 5K and 10K runs. This will allow residents to explore our city on the run over the weekends in their own leisure time, or during the week during work on their lunch breaks or after work. The goal is to use the Parks & Recreation Department as a tool to encourage residents to get fit and stay fit. Not everybody has access to a quarter-mile oval racetrack, and listing several routes throughout the City Limits will help encourage physical fitness.

RUN WITH THE MAYOR

To demonstrate to our youth that staying physically fit is a lifelong responsibility, I pledge to accept any invitation from any elementary, middle or high school in the county to run with at least one of their classes during their physical fitness training or testing. A middle-aged adult running alongside our youth will set a fine example that physical fitness does not end when the school bell rings or when graduation ceremonies conclude.

COMMUNITY SERVICE CORPS PROPOSED

Under my plan, the Evansville Parks & Recreation Department would receive an infusion of at least \$150,000 and an additional summer workforce of about 50 school-aged summer workers.

The Parks & Recreation Department maintains 65 parks and four other facilities on a \$10.31 million budget in 2011. But the amount of acreage is simply too much for our overworked and hard-working full-time staff to maintain. An additional 50 high school and college-aged students would comprise a Community Service Corps under the umbrella of the Evansville Parks & Recreation Department. The students would be paid minimum wage for 40 hours per week and be charged with cleaning and improving the parks and cemeteries during a 10-week summer period.

The Community Service Corps would help give teen-agers their first job, teach them discipline and encourage community spirit.

I was in attendance at an Evansville Parks Board meeting earlier this year and became dismayed as Dr. Neil Troost, an Evansville physician whose daughter was stuck with a hypodermic needle while playing in a sandbox at Sunset Park, delivered a damning presentation to the Parks Board describing the poor state of Evansville's parks.

It was clearly evident from Dr. Troost's presentation that the Parks Department is severely underfunded and undermanned and in need of immediate attention.

The proposed summer workforce would help alleviate this problem. The Community Service Corps would be responsible for cleaning and beautifying our parks and removing graffiti from parks department facilities. The citizens of Evansville deserve to let their children play in a taxpayer-funded park without worrying for their safety or exposure to profanity that has been spray-painted on children's playground equipment.

The Community Service Corps would also make improvements to city-owned cemeteries, including helping to preserve our cemetery markers.

The addition of the Community Service Corps would help ensure our families have a beautiful, safe, and enjoyable green space to enjoy. Members of the Community Service Corps would be between the ages of 16 and 20.

PARK RANGERS RE-VISITED

My campaign held 8 Town Hall meetings in January and February, and residents told me that quality of life issues, including improving the Parks & Recreation Department, are incredibly important to our community.

In 2004, the Park Ranger program was eliminated from the City of Evansville budget. Security of the parks has now fallen to our fine Evansville Police Department. However, I believe our hard-working police department personnel should be patrolling our streets and fighting narcotic sales and use, violent crimes, property crimes, and other quality of life issues in our neighborhoods. They may not have the time to address issues that are important to our parks department, including fighting graffiti and other mischief in the parks.

I propose re-visiting our Park Ranger program. Public safety is the No. 1 role of government and we should allow our highly trained Police Department officers to patrol our streets while also having a specialized Park Ranger or similar program to protect the City's investment in our extensive parks system.

ADOPT A PARK

I would encourage our neighborhood associations to "Adopt A Park" and work in conjunction with our Parks Department to help make improvements in parks located in or near their neighborhood boundaries.

IMPROVED MARKETING

Social Networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, not to mention mass email services, make marketing our Parks & Recreation Department extremely cost effective. Linking the Parks Department to sites like these in the electronic world will allow us to market our programs with our local businesses, schools and universities more effectively. These initiatives will help improve our participation levels as well.

The City's Parks & Recreation Department does not currently have a roster of every park in the city on its web site. We need to list and map every park so the public can have a better sense of pride and ownership in these parks, no matter how large or small they are.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT RICK DAVIS FOR MAYOR CAMPAIGN CHAIRMAN BILL DENTON AT 499-6312.