Recreation facilities, programs continue to recover

By Cecilia Dobbs
Parks & Recreation Department

The city's Park and Recreation Department has definitely begun its recovery process.

The Biloxi Community Center and the Donal Snyder Sr. Community Center are the only two of five buildings that the department has remaining.

The Biloxi Community Center, at 591 Howard Ave. received massive damage from the hurricane winds and rain, but for several months after the storm, it was able to serve as a disaster relief center.

The center offered clothes, food, water, and a free medical clinic to Biloxi residents. Soon, the center will recieve massive repairs.

The Donal Snyder Community Center, at 2520 Pass Road, was dealt the least amount of damage. The center was immediately set up as a disaster recovery center, acting as the city's core for FEMA and MEMA, providing residents with a location to file the proper paperwork and make necessary claims. In July 2006, FEMA and MEMA left the building and the space has been occupied by the Small Business Administration since.

Several of the center programs are now offered. The fitness center, racquetball courts, walking track, and basketball courts are open Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The pool is open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m., 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. and Tuesday and Thursday from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. for adults.

Persons ages 17 and under are able to swim Monday through Friday from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. On Saturday, the pool is open to all ages from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. Admission for the pool is $2 per adult and $1 per child.

The center also conducts senior programs, including bingo, stretch and strength class, craft class, movie and popcorn days, and senior luncheons. Beginning in October, the multi-room will be available to rent for various occasions. For more information, call 228-435-6281.

Natatorium, aquatics programs

The Parks and Recreation department has resumed many of its other programs since the hurricane. The Biloxi Natatorium on Father Ryan Avenue, which reopened its doors Nov. 15, offers swimming to adults Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. and to persons 17 and under may swim Monday through Friday from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday, all ages may swim from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. Admission to Natatorium swimming is $2 per adult and $1 per child.

The Aquatic Swimming Lessons and Biloxi Red Tide also recommenced. Lessons are Monday through Thursday for two weeks and last forty-five minutes each day.

During the summer classes are offered in the morning and in the evening. Throughout the rest of the year, lessons will be offered in the evening. Fees are $30 a person for Biloxi residents and $40 a person for non-residents.

The Biloxi Red Tide Swim Team practiced Monday through Friday from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. this summer. The team successfully completed the session on July 29 with the Championship meet that was held at the Biloxi Natatorium. For more information, call the aquatics division at 228-435-6205.

Recreation and sports programs

In addition to aquatics, the City's Summer Playground program had their eight to nine week summer program. The summer day camp is for children ages five to fourteen. Children are afforded the opportunity to attend field trips along the Gulf Coast, participate in arts and crafts and organized games. The summer playground programs concluded at the end of July. The department will also host various other programs and events: Start Smart program, Punt, Pass and Kick, holiday dances and Halloween events.

The Biloxi Sports Complex, which received wind damage, resumed most of its sports leagues. Soccer, baseball and softball held practices and conducted their tournaments from June through July. Football and Cheerleading registration began in August and will have practices in September.

The Farmers Market also began operations this year. The market, which reopened April 4, operates each week at a new location, under the I-110 overpass at Howard Avenue. It is open each Tuesday and Thursday from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m., with vendors offering fresh vegetables, fruits, and plants. For more info, call 228-435-6281 or e-mail cbell@biloxi.ms.us

City parks, playgrounds

As for the City's parks, all received damage from either winds, water or both. Since the hurricane, most of the parks have been cleaned up and are back in use. Others, such as Miramar, Henry Beck, and the Margaret Sherry parks are receiving new playgrounds.

Since July, two volunteer groups, Injury Free Coalition for Kids and KaBOOM!, have been putting up playgrounds at the three city parks. All the work is being done by volunteer groups with assistance from local volunteers.

Besides the volunteers, the City's Park and Recreation department received a $10,000 donation from the National Recreation and Parks Association. The money will be used to renovate the Dukate Gym which is located on Howard Avenue across from the Biloxi Community Center.

New playgrounds in the works

Beck Park

The Home Depot, KaBOOM! And Playworld will join with volunteers from Hands On and the surrounding neighborhoods to build new parks in east and west Biloxi. The new playspace at John Henry Beck Park on Division Street will be built on Aug. 29 and the new playspace at Miramar Park will be built on Aug. 31.

Miramar Park

Margaret Sherry Park

The All-State Foundation and the Injury Free Coalition for Kids led dozens of volunteers recently in the construction a new playground at the Margaret Sherry library on Popp's Ferry Road, north of the Bay of Biloxi.

City parks

- Bay Terrace Park, 370 Porter Ave.
- Businessmen's Park, 481 Forrest Ave.
- Cavalier Park, 259 Lawrence St.
- Clay Point Park, corner of Maple and Seventh
- D'Anella Park, 380 Bonner Drive
- Doris C. Busch Park, 645 Esters Blvd.
- Hiller Park, Hiller Drive
- John Henry Beck Park, 671 Division St.
- John Joseph O'Reilly Park, Division St.
- Lopez Park, Benachi Ave., refurbished by Lions Club
- Margaret Sherry Complex, Popp's Ferry Road
- Miramar Park, 1592 Beach Blvd.
- Oak Park, Kensington Drive
- Pennzoil Park, 385 Churchill Ave.
- Peresich Park, Oaklawn Place
- Popp's Ferry Recreation Area, 2150 Popp's Ferry Road
- Savarro Park, 1353 Irish Hill Circle
- St. Mary's Park, 1651 Wiltshire Blvd.
- Tangelwood Park, 348 Park Drive
- Todd Migues Park, 425 Parker St.
- Volunteer Park, 335 Agincort Ave.
- Woolmarket Park

City Parks & Rec buildings lost

- O'Hanlon Center, 135 Pine Street
- East Division Center, 595 Division Street
- Point Cadet Plaza, 121 Cadet Street