

Wisconsin Park & Recreation Association

2014 WPRA Partnership Award

The Waunakee Rotary Club has been selected as a co-winner of the 2014 Wisconsin Park and Recreation Association's "Partnership Award"

The Waunakee Rotary has been a partner with the Village of Waunakee in providing leisure services to the community. The club has left their imprint on the Waunakee park system in many different ways. The Rotary Club has long been a partner in many of the village's recreation programs through their donations of time and money.

The most recent project that the Rotary Club has completed is to adopt an old pond that was a factory dumping ground in the middle of town and turn it into a great recreation area. The club created a walk way around the Village Center Pond which included installing a steel bridge, path lighting and two fishing piers. This recreation area is now used by hundreds of community members each year as a place to walk, fish and enjoy the wildlife. The addition of the fishing piers has also allowed the village recreation department to offer fly fishing classes at the pond.

In addition to the Village Center Pond, the Rotary has also adopted one of the conservancy areas in town and have installed two additional bridges in this area. These bridges have connected a trail system through this conservancy that allows community members to hike, jog, bird watch, etc. in this natural area in the center of the village. In 2010 the club donated funds for new playground equipment in Village Park. The outdated equipment needed some updating and the Rotary was there to help.

The Rotary has also been very instrumental in assisting the village recreation department with providing recreational programs. The Rotary is an important partner in the annual "Santa at the Village Center" event, providing treats, marketing and most importantly Santa & Mrs. Claus. The Waunakee Rotary is also a Gold Level Sponsor for the TRI 4 Schools youth Triathlon. In addition to the monetary support of the yearly events, the Rotary Club provides many volunteers to assist on race day. This event generates over \$10,000 for area schools. The Rotary also participates in the annual village Wellness Fair. The Club collects used sports equipment that is ultimately sent to a community in Honduras. This shows that the Rotary is promoting recreation not only in Waunakee but in other parts of the world as well.

In addition to village recreation department's programs, the Rotary also participates in several community wide initiatives. They annually support Special Olympics through donations of time and money. Each spring the Rotary puts on the Village wide Easter Egg Hunt. This event draws over 200 young egg hunters each year. In the summer, the Rotary holds a senior picnic in Centennial Park. They provide a free picnic lunch for up to 150 senior citizens in Waunakee. This is a great opportunity for seniors to get out to one of the Village Parks and socialize with their peers. Each December the Waunakee Rotary Club sets up and presents the annual Rotary Lights in the Park with over 20,000 feet of lights in Village Park. Each evening throughout the month of December you will find families driving or walking through the park to view the lights. Donations received through this wonderful community event are used to further support projects throughout the Village.

Rotary is also planning for future projects to help create more leisure opportunities for community members. They are currently discussing how they could be a partner with the Village in building a splash park which would be a great asset to the community. Any time the Village needs assistance with programs, the Waunakee Rotary Club and its members are always willing to lend a hand.

Past accomplishments that the Waunakee Rotary Club has completed and that have impacted on the leisure services arena

In the past ten year period the Waunakee Rotary Club has proudly raised and donated in excess of \$ 250,000 dollars for various projects or organizations. Listed below is a partial list of some of the major past and ongoing Waunakee Rotary Club donations, accomplishments, fund raisers, and projects that have had a positive impact on the leisure services offered in Village of Waunakee and Dane County.

In 2005 the Rotary designed, and landscaped Rotary Plaza which is a small park that is located adjacent to the Waunakee Village Hall. This Plaza is located on one of the busiest intersections of the Village and includes park benches, a clock tower, new flag pole and a watering system. In addition to the Rotary Plaza, the club also donated large flower pots and welcome banners that help beautify Main Street. In 2001 the club restored the old Train Depot in the center of the Village. As part of this restoration, the club donated a \$15,000 street clock. This depot now is the home for the Chamber of Commerce and a great focal point for the community. In 1986 the Rotary built a Gazebo and restrooms in Village Park. This Gazebo is now the home of the Waunakee Community Band. The band performs 4-5 concerts in the park each summer which provides a great leisure opportunity for hundreds of community members.

The Rotary also promotes leisure opportunities in other communities besides just the Village of Waunakee. In 2004 the club donated playground equipment to Governor Nelson State Park and assisted with the installation as well. This project provided a much need asset to the State Park. As I have mentioned above, the Rotary collects used sports equipment to send to Central America along with library equipment, medicine, and school supplies.

The Rotary has also assisted with the following community projects either through the donation of time or money: the Waunakee High School Post Prom Event, Waunakee Senior Center AED, Waunakee High School Scholarship Fund, Waunakee Neighborhood Connection, Waunakee Community Foundation, Casa Hogar Jaun Pablo II Orphanage, Waunakee Fire District, Waunakee Area EMS, Waunakee Area Food Pantry, Guatemala Well Building Fund, Big Brothers & Big Sisters, Thanksgiving Breakfasts for Seniors, Waunafest Run, Six Mile Creek Cleanup, Kids Against Hunger and the Rotary International Student Exchange Program.

As you can see by the extensive list of community projects that the Waunakee Rotary is involved with, they are truly a great example of a Community Partner. Any time we need assistance with programs, the Rotary is always willing to lend a hand. If we dream it the Rotary will build it. I am very excited to be able to nominate the Waunakee Rotary for the 2014 WPRA Partnership Award. I feel they are very deserving of this honor.

News article and photos of some past projects



The Village Center Pond and Rotary Walk



Building Benches for the Village Center Pond



Building Bridges in Village Parks



Cleaning Six Mile Creek



Packing Meals at the Kids against Hunger Event



Landscaping Rotary Plaza



Volunteering at the Water Stations for the Waunafest 10K Run



Rotary Lights Set Up in Village Park



Installing handicap accessible playground equipment at Gov. Nelson State Park



Summer Picnic in the Park for Seniors



Conservancy Park Bridge during construction

Rotary Pond walk is welcome addition

Pond walk is welcome addition By Roberta Baumann | Waunakee Tribune Editor

It seems like years that I've been writing about the Village Center Pond, first as it developed into a regional storm water facility and later as the Waunakee Rotary Club continued to make improvements.

This week's story was prompted by a reader who stopped by the Tribune office to ask about the pond's upkeep and to lament the recent poor fishing. It was an extremely hot summer. I usually walk around the pond several times a week during the summer, but the heat kept me away more than usual, too. I'm sure it killed off some fish and kept others from moving much.

Probably each of us in our own nooks and crannies of this village have our own favorite recreational spots. Some probably enjoy taking their dogs to the dog park on the west side of town. Others probably have fond memories of the tennis courts, the soccer fields and baseball diamonds where they or their children play.

I tend to gravitate toward more passive recreation areas. When I first moved to Waunakee, it was the conservancy on Division Street, a place I still visit often.

But over the four years since the Waunakee Rotary Club extended the walking path around that pond, I've enjoyed coming there. More and more other residents do, too, both human and otherwise.

I've seen runners using the path as a track and lots of people fishing. And I've seen foxes, cranes, turtles, blue herons, muskrats, snakes and groundhogs. On spring mornings and evenings, you can hear the frogs singing, and during the fall, waterfowl begin to congregate as they prepare for migration.

I could be wrong, but my guess is that the pond was initially intended as just a storm water management facility. Those types of ponds seem to be more common.

But many community members envisioned a greater use for the site, and the result was a recreational facility. The Waunakee Rotary Club deserves a great deal of credit for taking the leadership and seeing that a walkway, bridge, benches, lighting and even two fishing piers could be installed.

*****This article was posted in the Waunakee Tribune.*****